

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6320

As of January 25, 2000

Title: An act relating to harvest management of stocks of anadromous salmonids.

Brief Description: Managing stocks of anadromous salmonids.

Sponsors: Senators Morton, Oke, Rasmussen, Sellar and Swecker.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation: 1/31/2000.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, PARKS & RECREATION

Staff: Ross Antipa (786-7413)

Background: Federal listings of threatened or endangered salmon stocks have resulted in fisheries harvest restrictions. In some cases, the level of escapement to the spawning grounds has not been sufficient even with the current high level of harvest restrictions. Insufficient spawning escapement results in undermining salmon recovery efforts and extending the time necessary for recovery of threatened or endangered stocks. There is concern that numerical escapement goals for threatened or endangered salmon stocks need to be reevaluated. Selective fishing strategies could be employed to preserve fishing opportunities while protecting threatened or endangered stocks. The role that hatchery origin salmon may play in wild salmon restoration is in dispute and requires a scientific determination, scientific peer review, and a clearly defined policy from federal regulatory agencies.

The management of anadromous salmonids should assure the spawning escapement levels are met.

Summary of Bill: A stock-specific listing of threatened and endangered salmonids and candidates for federal listings must be identified by the Fish and Wildlife Department and included in an annual report. The report also requires estimates of stock-specific run sizes, harvest rates in all jurisdictions, harvest induced mortality, minimum escapement goals, optimum escapement goals, and the actual spawning escapements. The report must be submitted to the Governor, Legislature and be made available to the public at no charge.

Surplus hatchery origin salmon or steelhead that return to hatcheries as adults must be allowed to spawn in natural conditions rather than being subject to destruction, unless: a written order is received from a federal fisheries management agency; the order has clear directions; criteria are provided to enable stock identification; the basis for genetic testing is specified; verification for genetic testing is specified; stock differentiation is based on sound science and peer review by at least three qualified independent scientists; a migration straying evaluation has been completed; and the extent of intermixing with other stocks is known.

A selective harvest study is required of the Department of Fish and Wildlife in conjunction with an advisory group of fish harvesters. The study goal is to increase returns of threatened or endangered anadromous fish by improving harvest management practices through selective fishing techniques. The report is due by December 1, 2000.

Salmon and steelhead trout management by the Department of Fish and Wildlife is altered by establishment of a two-tiered spawning escapement goal for each threatened or endangered salmonid stock. A new minimum goal is defined for purposes of meeting federal Endangered Species Act delisting purposes. Listed threatened or endangered stocks that do not meet minimum escapement goals are subject to decreased harvest so the escapements are increased by equal installments throughout two salmon life cycles, at which time the stock achieves minimum spawning escapement goals. An optimum escapement goal is established for healthy stocks to ensure full utilization of productive habitat.

The mandate of the Department of Fish and Wildlife is amended to ensure that minimum escapement goals are achieved for each salmonid stock listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 25, 2000.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.