

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2625

As Passed House:

February 11, 2002

Title: An act relating to eliminating the exclusivity of gill net gear in certain waters.

Brief Description: Allowing the use of purse seine and other lawful fishing gear in certain waters.

Sponsors: By Representatives Linville, Buck, Van Luven and Lysen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 1/30/02 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/11/02, 94-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows the Fish and Wildlife Commission to authorize commercial fishing for salmon with gill net, purse seine, and other lawful gear in Bellingham Bay and the designated waters in that region.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Doumit, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Sump, Ranking Minority Member; Buck, Eickmeyer, Ericksen, Jackley, McDermott, Orcutt, Pearson and Upthegrove.

Staff: Bill Lynch (786-7092).

Background:

Decades ago the Legislature enacted exclusive commercial harvest opportunities in certain geographic areas of the state based upon the type of gear used. This was done as a way of resolving conflicts between competing commercial salmon harvest gear groups. These legislatively mandated areas that dictate an exclusive type of gear have been repealed, except for the Bellingham Bay region which limits commercial salmon fishing to gill netters.

It has been suggested that the reduction in the salmon fleet and other changed conditions no longer justify an exclusive harvest right for one segment of commercial salmon fishers.

Summary of Bill:

The Fish and Wildlife Commission may authorize commercial fishing for salmon with gill net, purse seine, and other lawful gear in Bellingham Bay and the designated waters in that region.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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

Testimony For: This is permissive legislation. The Department of Fish and Wildlife currently manages fishing seasons for different gear groups to minimize conflicts. Record returns came to the Bellingham Bay area this past year, and there should be an opportunity to catch these fish.

(Neutral) This gives the agency another tool in its toolbox. Much of this area is not suitable for purse seine fishing because it is shallow, so there won't be a large increase in purse seine fishing. The department has allowed purse seine fishing in this area on occasion.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Representative Linville, prime sponsor.

(Neutral) Morris Barker, Department of Fish and Wildlife.