
Natural Resources Committee

HB 2977

Brief Description: Increasing oversight of the management of fish and wildlife resources.

Sponsors: Representatives Doumit, Sump, Sommers, Buck, Kessler, Alexander, Eickmeyer, Grant, Schoesler, Hatfield, Jackley, Mielke, Ahern and Edwards.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Abolishes the Salmon Recovery Office with the intent that some of the savings be directed to the Fish and Wildlife Commission to hire independent staff.
- Changes the appointment authority for the Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife from the Fish and Wildlife Commission to the Governor.

Hearing Date: 2/27/02

Staff: Bill Lynch (786-7092).

Background:

The Salmon Recovery Office was created in 1998 within the Governor's Office to help coordinate the state strategy for salmon recovery in order to achieve healthy sustainable population levels of salmon. The primary purpose of the office is to coordinate and assist in developing salmon recovery plans for evolutionarily significant units, and to submit those plans to the appropriate federal agencies and tribes as part of a state-wide salmon recovery strategy. The office may also act as a liaison with local governments, tribes, Congress, and federal agencies for issues related to the state's Endangered Species Act salmon recovery plans. The state-wide salmon recovery strategy has been submitted. The office is scheduled to terminate on June 30, 2006.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission consists of nine members who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The commission appoints the Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife who serves at the pleasure of the commission. The commission has the authority to hire its own staff independent of the department, but lacks the funds to hire such staff. The commission also has final approval authority over the department's budget proposals.

Summary of Bill:

The Salmon Recovery Office is abolished. The Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife is appointed by the Governor instead of by the Fish and Wildlife Commission (commission). The commission no longer has final approval authority for the department's budget proposals. All other powers of the commission are unchanged. Legislative intent is established to direct a portion of the savings realized from the repeal of the Salmon Recovery Office to the commission so that they may have independent staff support.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 20, 2002.

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