

Natural Resources Committee

SSB 5637

Brief Description: *Creating a program of watershed health monitoring and assessments.*

Sponsors: *By Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Parks & Shorelines (originally sponsored by Senators Jacobsen, Regala, Costa and Oke).*

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- *A monitoring oversight committee is established and consists of the directors, or their designees, of the Salmon Recovery Office, the Department of Ecology, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Conservation Commission, the Puget Sound Action Team, the Department of Natural Resources, the Independent Science Panel, the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, and treaty Indian tribes.*
- *The monitoring oversight committee must provide an action plan to the Governor, Senate, and House of Representatives by June 30, 2002, for achieving a comprehensive watershed-related monitoring program.*
- *The action plan must make recommendations based upon the goal of completing enhanced coordination and modification of existing programs by June 30, 2007.*
- *State and local agencies that implement, fund, or direct watershed-related monitoring activities must consider specified objectives when designing and implementing monitoring activities.*

Hearing Date: *3/26/01*

Staff: *Bill Lynch (786-7092).*

Background:

A number of projects and programs have been undertaken within the state to help restore the health of watersheds and the species that inhabit them. Although many of these programs monitor various indicators, these efforts are largely uncoordinated and unlinked

among programs, have different objectives, use different indicators, and lack support for sharing data. There is also a lack of shared statistical designs to address specific issues raised by listing of salmonid species under the federal Endangered Species Act.

The Independent Science Panel was created by the Legislature in 1998 to provide scientific oversight of the state's salmon, steelhead, and trout recovery efforts. In response to a legislative directive, the panel issued a report containing recommendations regarding monitoring. This report stated that the development and implementation of a comprehensive statewide monitoring program was fundamental to salmonid recovery in the state, and that efforts to recover these fish stocks would not be scientifically credible without comprehensive monitoring focused on recovery objectives.

Summary of Bill:

A monitoring oversight committee is established and consists of the directors, or their designees, of the Salmon Recovery Office, the Department of Ecology, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Conservation Commission, the Puget Sound Action Team, the Department of Natural Resources, the Independent Science Panel, the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, and treaty Indian tribes. The director of the Salmon Recovery Office serves as the chair of the committee.

The monitoring oversight committee must provide an action plan to the Governor, Senate, and House of Representatives by June 30, 2002, for achieving a comprehensive watershed-related monitoring program. The action plan must make recommendations based upon the goal of completing enhanced coordination and modification of existing programs by June 30, 2007. The action plan must identify key monitoring activities that support all levels of monitoring. The action plan must make recommendations for increasing public access to relevant monitoring information and analysis to support ongoing watershed-related programs and activities. The action plan must also describe measures needed for individual monitoring activities to further the objectives that state and local agencies must consider when designing and implementing monitoring activities.

State and local agencies that implement, fund, or direct watershed-related monitoring activities must consider furthering the following objectives when designing and implementing monitoring activities: 1) clear articulation of goals, objectives, and questions that need to be addressed; 2) statistical designs that are appropriate to the objectives; 3) meaningful performance measures that are defined by objectives and address the appropriate geographical, temporal, and biological scales; 4) standardized monitoring protocols to allow for comparison among locations, times, entities, and programs; 5) procedures that ensure quality assurance and quality control of all data; 6) data management systems that allow easy access, sharing, and coordination among different collectors and users of data; 7) stable and adequate funding; and decision support systems that help to integrate monitoring information into decision making.

Watershed-related monitoring activities– are defined as monitoring and data analysis relating to the management, protection, and restoration of state water resources, water quality, riparian habitat, and fish and wildlife species with life cycles principally located in state waters and adjacent riparian areas.

The chair of the monitoring oversight committee is directed to convene the oversight committee from time to time to review the progress that state and local agencies are making towards achieving a comprehensive and coordinated monitoring program. The advisory committee may make recommendations for improving the coordination and characteristics of monitoring activities. The advisory committee may review budget request proposals for monitoring upon the request of the Office of Financial Management. The advisory committee must consider the recommendations of the Independent Science Panel and other committees that have responsibility for reviewing or implementing monitoring programs related to watershed health.

The committee established by the lead entity in an area for salmon recovery must consider the specified objectives when reviewing and developing the monitoring elements of projects included on the habitat project list. The committee and the technical advisory group must consider the specified objectives when developing the monitoring components of limiting factors, analysis and habitat work schedules. The committee must share the habitat work schedule, limiting factors analysis information, and technical support and assessment information with a watershed planning unit addressing a habitat component under watershed planning.

Other entities that must consider the specified monitoring objectives are 1) the Department of Ecology for purposes of watershed planning, water quality, and water resources; 2) the Department of Fish and Wildlife, regional fisheries enhancement groups, lead entities, and the Salmon Recovery Funding Board for salmon recovery purposes; 3) the Department of Natural Resources; 4) the Forest Practices Board, and advisory groups for purposes of forest practices; 5) the Puget Sound Action Team for purposes of the Puget Sound ambient monitoring program; and 6) the Conservation Commission and conservation districts for purposes of activities related to watershed health.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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