

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2920

As Reported by House Committee On:

Fisheries, Ecology & Parks
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to special economic recreational fisheries.

Brief Description: Allowing the creation of special economic fishery advisory committees.

Sponsors: Representatives Pearson, Sump, Mielke, Boldt, Hinkle, Condotta and Buck.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Fisheries, Ecology & Parks: 2/5/04, 2/6/04 [DPS];
Appropriations: 2/9/04 [DPS(FEP)].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes the creation of a Special Economic Fishery Advisory Committee (Committee) to review and provide guidance on fishing seasons that accomplish fishery objectives and maximize economic benefits to local communities.
- Directs the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Fish and Wildlife Commission to work with the Committee to evaluate alternative fishing seasons and consider economic impacts to local economies.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Cooper, Chair; Upthegrove, Vice Chair; Sump, Ranking Minority Member; Hinkle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buck, Hatfield, O'Brien, Pearson and D. Simpson.

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7157).

Background:

The Washington State Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) has the authority to set seasons for the harvest of food fish and game fish. This authority includes the ability to establish the times and places when the taking of fish is lawful.

For salmon and steelhead, however, a larger and more complex management framework exists. Salmon and steelhead are managed in cooperation with the federal government, treaty

tribes, Canada, and other states through several forums. Through the Pacific Salmon Commission and the Pacific Fisheries Management Council, annual salmon fisheries levels for Washington are established. State harvest must be consistent with these levels. The 1974 federal court case U.S. v. Washington (Boldt Decision) re-affirmed tribal rights to harvest salmon and steelhead and established them as co-managers of Washington fisheries. In Washington, the North of Falcon process and the Columbia River Compact are used to allocate fisheries in state waters. These fisheries must also be consistent with the federal Endangered Species Act in areas where listings occur.

The Department of Ecology has defined 62 water resource inventory areas (WRIAs) for the purposes of watershed management. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) has established six administrative regions statewide to manage fish and wildlife programs.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Recreational fishing stakeholders within a Department administrative region may form a Special Economic Fishery Advisory Committee (Committee). A Committee must have at least five and no more than 15 members representing a balance of recreational fishers, sportfishing organizations, commercial fishing interests, and local business owners. A Committee may review and provide guidance on proposed recreational and commercial fishing seasons and advise the Department of significant economic impacts to local economies of proposed fishing seasons. The Committee may work with the Department and the Commission to develop alternative fishing seasons that accomplish fishery management objectives and maximize economic benefits to local communities. The Committee may not meet with the Department more than three times per year unless additional meetings are approved by the director of the Department.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute authorizes the creation of a Committee within a Department administrative region, rather than within a WRIA or multiple WRIAs. The substitute specifically adds commercial fishing interests to the Committee, and limits the number of meetings to not more than three per year, unless approved in writing by the Director of the Department. The substitute clarifies non-Indian steelhead trout harvest allocations shall be managed as a recreational fishery for non-Indian fishers.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For:(In support) Fisheries can provide significant economic benefits to local communities. The Governor's proposed budget supports funding for a fishery on Lake Washington that will generate millions of dollars in economic activity. Money is being spent out-of-state by residents seeking opportunities to participate in fisheries. Fishers spend money on gas, hotels, restaurants, gear, and licenses that generates much needed income for local businesses. Fewer fishing opportunities means fewer jobs. A variety of different organizations contribute a significant amount of time and effort into the resource, but feel left out of the decision making. Some fishers have extensive experience and expertise and the Department can benefit from their involvement.

(With concerns) Commercial fishing is not the same size it used to be, and the industry works hard to reduce conflicts between commercial and sportfishing interest. Some clarifying amendments would be helpful to understand the intent and what species are included.

Testimony Against: The Department is concerned about workload and how to incorporate this new activity into current planning processes. The North of Falcon process creates open public discussion and participation in the harvest allocation process. The Department supports public involvement in fishing management discussions, and currently participates in several fishery advisory groups.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Pearson, prime sponsor; Doug Cooper and Rick Hoskin, Snohomish County Sportsmen's Association; Sam Ingram, Monroe Trout Unlimited; Roger Lowe, Sports Fishermen Boating Enthusiasts; and Ron Lauigoeure, Sky-Valley Trout Unlimited.

(With concerns) Ed Owens, Coalition of Coastal Fisheries; and Joe Williams.

(Against) Rich Lincoln, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill by Committee on Fisheries, Ecology & Parks be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 26 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Sehlin, Ranking Minority Member; Pearson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Anderson, Boldt, Buck, Chandler, Cody, Conway, Cox, Dunshee, Grant, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Linville, McDonald, McIntire, Miloscia, Ruderman, Schual-Berke, Sump and Talcott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Clements.

Staff: Dave Johnson (786-7154).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Fisheries, Ecology & Parks:

No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available on original bill.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: None.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.