

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5347

As of February 26, 2003

Title: An act relating to enhancement of fish habitat on public lands in Skagit county.

Brief Description: Creating a program for restoration and enhancement of salmonid habitat on publicly owned lands.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, Swecker, Doumit, Morton, Rasmussen and Horn.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Parks, Fish & Wildlife: 3/3/03.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON PARKS, FISH & WILDLIFE

Staff: Kari Guy (786-7437)

Background: The Salmon Recovery Act of 1998 created a voluntary and locally-based program for salmon habitat restoration. Lead entities designated jointly by cities, counties, and tribes within a watershed develop a prioritized list of habitat projects. The habitat project list is then submitted to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board for potential funding.

The Skagit Watershed Council, a 36-member nonprofit organization with a range of government, utility, landowner, and nonprofit members, serves as the lead entity for the Skagit watershed. According to a 1999 Public Lands Inventory, approximately 62 percent of Skagit County is publicly owned, including lands owned by the federal Forest Service and National Park Service, and state forest lands and wildlife areas.

There is some concern by private landowners in Skagit County that public lands are not being adequately used for salmon habitat restoration.

Summary of Bill: The Skagit salmon habitat enhancement initiative is created for the restoration of salmon habitat on publicly-owned lands in Skagit County. The purpose of the initiative is to provide for the systematic examination of opportunities to enhance habitat for salmon on public lands, set project priorities, seek funding, and manage projects to completion.

A management board is created with nine members representing local and state government, citizens, tribes, and diking and drainage districts. The board is the lead entity under the state Salmon Recovery Act. The board must participate in the review and development of a restoration and enhancement plan on public lands, and is responsible for implementing the plan. The board must prioritize projects for restoration and enhancement of salmon habitat, and seek funding from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

The management board may not preempt the authority of cities, counties, or diking and drainage districts. The board must report on its progress on a quarterly basis to the county

legislative authority and state natural resource agencies, and prepare a final report at the conclusion of the program to be submitted to the agencies, the county, and the Legislature.

The program terminates July 1, 2006.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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