

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6682

As Passed Senate, February 12, 2004

Title: An act relating to regional programs for the recovery of fish runs listed under the federal endangered species act.

Brief Description: Allowing for regional programs to provide for the recovery of fish runs.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Parks, Fish & Wildlife (originally sponsored by Senator Sheahan).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Parks, Fish & Wildlife: 2/3/04 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 2/12/04, 46-3.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON PARKS, FISH & WILDLIFE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6682 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Oke, Chair; Sheahan, Vice Chair; Doumit, Jacobsen, Spanel and Swecker.

Staff: Kari Guy (786-7437)

Background: Seventy-five percent of the geographic area of Washington is affected by the listing of 15 species of salmon as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). For each listed species, the ESA requires federal agencies to develop a recovery plan that contains goals for delisting, a list of the actions necessary to achieve the delisting goals, and an estimate of the cost and time required to carry out those actions.

The state 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 evaluation and potential funding. The Salmon Recovery Funding Board may also provide block grants to a lead entity or other recognized regional recovery entity if consistent with a habitat project list developed for the region.

The Salmon Recovery Act also requires the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office to coordinate and assist in the development of salmon recovery plans. The Governor's Office and the Salmon Recovery Funding Board are working with regional organizations to develop local salmon recovery plans. One regional board, the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board in southwest Washington, is created by statute. Other regional salmon recovery groups have formed to develop regional salmon recovery plans in Puget Sound, the Upper Columbia, the Yakima Basin, and the Snake River. However, these regional salmon recovery efforts are voluntary and are not established by state law.

Summary of Bill: A program for regional fish recovery is created for Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Walla Walla, and Whitman counties. A management board is created consisting of representatives of local and regional interests. The number of members, qualifications, terms, and responsibilities of the management board must be specified through an interlocal agreement or resolution of the local governments.

At a minimum, the management board must develop and implement a salmon and steelhead recovery plan, and ensure that watershed management and fish recovery plans are consistent and compatible with each other. The board must develop criteria for funding projects and programs, and prioritize and approve projects and programs related to salmon and steelhead recovery.

The board must coordinate local government efforts prescribed in the recovery plan, and may make recommendations to cities and counties regarding potential code changes or incentive programs. However, the board may not exercise authority over land or water within the region, or otherwise preempt the authority of the local governments.

The management board must also: assess the factors for decline of salmon populations; work with state and local governments to implement a regional public education and involvement effort; hire and fire staff; enter into contracts; and accept funds. In addition, the management board must report quarterly to the legislative bodies participating in the interlocal agreement.

The management board must appoint a technical advisory committee with representatives from the state Department of Natural Resources, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Ecology, and Department of Transportation. Evaluation of harvest and hatchery programs remain the responsibility of the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Creating a board in southeast Washington will enhance collaboration among local governments, tribes, and state and federal agencies. There is great work going on in southeast Washington, and this will allow them to enhance their efforts. Greater local involvement and ownership in planning increases the local buy-in.

Testimony Against: The bill should specify that WDFW is the lead for recovery planning related to hatcheries and harvest. Tribes should be included on the technical advisory committee.

Testified: Senator Sheahan, prime sponsor (pro); Marnie Tyler, WDFW (pro w/concerns).