

5969-S

Sponsor(s): Senate Committee on Agriculture (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen, Swecker and Rasmussen)

Brief Description: Providing natural resource protection in Skagit county.

SB 5969-S.E - DIGEST

(AS OF SENATE 2ND READING 3/19/03)

Finds that a collaborative process to examine reasonable and feasible alternatives to enhance tidal fish habitat should be used to focus and expedite efforts where there is a gain in tidal fish habitat without harming designated agricultural lands. The legislature also finds that pilot projects may be needed to test creative solutions to achieve the dual goals of enhancing tidal fish habitat while protecting designated agricultural lands.

Declares that the purposes of this act are: (1) To protect lands designated by the county as agricultural land of long-term commercial significance from the effects of saltwater intrusion and diminishment of drainage capability for drainage infrastructure, including flood gates, pump stations, ditches, and tide gates;

(2) To require examination of opportunities to enhance tidal fish habitat on hundreds of acres of publicly owned land while maintaining habitat for migratory birds and that opportunities on publicly owned lands outside the dikes be considered first; and

(3) To allow tide gates located on bona fide streams to proceed through a fish habitat restoration planning process to find opportunities to use fish habitat while avoiding harm to existing land uses.

Provides that, from funds appropriated to the department of fish and wildlife for salmon restoration activities, the fish and wildlife commission, in coordination with the Skagit county legislative authority and diking and drainage district commissioners, and local landowners, shall establish the Skagit tidal fish habitat pilot project to jointly develop a strategy and to propose projects to enhance tidal fish habitat and address the management, operation, and maintenance of tide gates on streams in Skagit county while assuring no net loss of agricultural lands or their productivity. The strategy and proposed projects must be submitted to the appropriate standing committees of the legislature by December 1, 2004.