
**State Government Operations &
Accountability Committee**

HB 2331

Brief Description: Concerning public disclosure requirements for sensitive fish and wildlife data.

Sponsors: Representatives Blake, Buck, Upthegrove, Sump and B. Sullivan.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows release of sensitive fish and wildlife data to public utilities, accredited colleges and universities, and certain landowners.

Hearing Date: 1/11/06

Staff: Stephanie Toby (786-7106).

Background:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) manages more than 640 animal species and approximately 150 species of fish and shellfish. The Department develops and provides tools to access priority scientific data and information.

Under the public disclosure statute, certain sensitive information relating to fish and wildlife is exempt from public disclosure. However, the Department may release sensitive information to government agencies concerned with the management of fish and wildlife resources.

The definition of sensitive fish and wildlife data includes location data that could compromise the viability of a specific fish or wildlife population, where at least one of several criteria are met. One of these criterion is a known demand to visit, take, or disturb the fish or wildlife, and the species behavior or ecology renders it especially vulnerable or the species has an extremely limited distribution and concentration.

Summary of Bill:

Sensitive fish and wildlife data obtained by the Department may be released to the following entities concerned with fish and wildlife resources, in addition to government agencies:

- public utilities, and their agents; and
- accredited colleges and universities.

To be qualified to receive the data, these entities do not need to be concerned with the management of such resources.

Additionally, sensitive fish and wildlife data pertaining to the management of fish and wildlife resources on private land may be released to:

- the owner of the land;
- the lessee of the land;
- the holder of a right-of-way or easement on the land; and
- their agent or agents.

Under the public disclosure statute's definition of sensitive data, the third criterion for location data is modified. For location data to meet the third criterion, only one of the following must be present, rather than both: 1) there is a known demand to visit, take or disturb, or 2) the species behavior or ecology renders it especially vulnerable or the species has an extremely limited distribution and concentration.

Technical changes are made to make consistent references to "fish and wildlife" throughout these provisions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2006.