
HOUSE BILL 2381

State of Washington 59th Legislature 2006 Regular Session

By Representatives Kretz, Blake, Sump, Buri, Haler, Ericks and Holmquist

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1 AN ACT Relating to allowing the reintroduction of beavers into the
2 historic habitat of the species; adding a new section to chapter 77.32
3 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 77.36 RCW; and creating a new
4 section.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that beavers have
7 historically played a significant role in maintaining the health of
8 watersheds in the Pacific Northwest and act as key agents in riparian
9 ecology. The live trapping and relocating of beavers has long been
10 recognized as a beneficial wildlife management practice, and has been
11 successfully utilized to restore and maintain stream ecosystems for
12 over fifty years. The benefits of active beaver populations include
13 reduced stream sedimentation, stream temperature moderation, higher
14 dissolved oxygen levels, overall improved water quality, increased
15 natural water storage capabilities within watersheds, and reduced
16 stream velocities. These benefits improve and create habitat for many
17 other species, including endangered salmon, river otters, sandhill
18 cranes, trumpeter swans, and other riparian and aquatic species.
19 Relocating beavers into their historic habitat provides a natural

1 mechanism for improving the environmental conditions in Washington's
2 riparian ecosystems without having to resort to governmental regulation
3 or expensive publically funded engineering projects.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 77.32 RCW
5 to read as follows:

6 (1) The department shall offer a beaver relocation permit that
7 allows the holder or the holder's agent to capture live beavers in the
8 areas of the state where elevated beaver populations are considered a
9 nuisance, transport the beavers, and release the live beavers on
10 property owned or managed by the permit holder. Priority of issuing
11 permits must be based on properties in which beaver populations are
12 considered a nuisance.

13 (2) The department may limit the availability of beaver relocation
14 permits to areas of the state where:

15 (a) There is a low probability of released beavers becoming a
16 nuisance;

17 (b) Conditions exist for released beavers to improve, maintain, or
18 manage stream or riparian ecosystem functions; and

19 (c) There is evidence of historic endemic beaver populations.

20 (3) The department may condition beaver relocation permits to
21 maximize the relocation's success and minimize risk. Factors that the
22 department may condition include:

23 (a) Stream gradient;

24 (b) Sufficiency of the water supply;

25 (c) Stream geomorphology;

26 (d) Adequacy of a food source;

27 (e) Proper site elevation and valley width;

28 (f) Age of the beavers relocated;

29 (g) Times of year for capture and relocation;

30 (h) Requirements for the capture, handling, and transport of the
31 live beavers;

32 (i) Minimum and maximum numbers of beavers that can be relocated in
33 one area; and

34 (j) Requirements for the permit holder to initially provide
35 supplemental food and lodge building materials.

36 (4) The department shall provide beaver relocation permits at no
37 charge to the applicant.

1 (5) The holder of a beaver relocation permit must either obtain a
2 trapping license under RCW 77.65.450 or employ a trapper licensed under
3 RCW 77.65.450 to capture and transport the beavers that are to be
4 relocated.

5 (6) Nothing in this section creates any liability against the state
6 or the beaver relocation permit holder nor authorizes any private right
7 of action for any damages subsequently caused by beavers released
8 pursuant to a beaver relocation permit.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 77.36 RCW
10 to read as follows:

11 Whenever the department undertakes the trapping of nuisance or
12 problem-causing beavers, the department must, if the option is
13 available, capture the beavers with a live trap and work with the
14 holders of beaver relocation permits issued under section 2 of this act
15 to relocate the beavers onto properties that have requested their
16 placement.

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