

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1193

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to the director of the department of fish and wildlife.

Brief Description: Directing the governor to appoint the director of the department of fish and wildlife.

Sponsors: Representatives B. Sullivan and Pearson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/25/07, 2/8/07 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates a task force to study the structure of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Blake, Vice Chair; Kretz, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dickerson, Eickmeyer, Grant, Hailey, Lantz, McCoy, Newhouse, Orcutt, Strow and VanDeWege.

Staff: Jaclyn Ford (786-7339).

Background:

The Governor appoints a chief executive officer for each of the executive agencies, except the Director of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Director). The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) consists of the State Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) and the Director. The Commission appoints the Director of the WDFW, who serves at the pleasure of the Commission.

The Director's duties include supervising the administration and operation of the WDFW, performing the duties delegated by the Commission, and performing other duties given by

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law. In addition to these duties, the Director is also the ex officio secretary of the Commission.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

A legislative task force will study the structure of the WDFW. There will be 12 voting members consisting of two members each from the House of Representatives and the Senate, and eight members from interested parties. There will be three non-voting members appointed by the Governor, consisting of two representatives from the WDFW and one member from the Governor's office.

The task force will review and make recommendations regarding various aspects of the structure of the WDFW and roles of employees, staff, and members of the WDFW and the Commission. The task force will report its findings and recommendations by December 1, 2007.

This Act expires on June 30, 2008.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The original bill authorized the Governor to appoint the Director of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Having trust and accountability in state agencies is important. The Legislature often feels frustrated with some state agencies because of the lack of accountability. Often the Commission does not have the financial means and staff support to deal with certain complex issues.

(Opposed) It is appropriate to look at the structure of the WDFW. However, a four-corners study should be conducted to look at various solutions pertaining to accountability, term limits of the Commission, the role of a citizens' ombudsman, and restructuring the Commission to focus more on policy. The regulated communities would often like an independent opinion, such as an ombudsman. There are a multitude of problems with the WDFW, but we would like an ad hoc citizen's committee to study other solutions. The Commission is not perfect, but it is working, and continues to work as long as everyone is involved.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Brian Sullivan, prime sponsor.

(Opposed) Ed Owens, Hunters Heritage Council; Mark Cedargreen, Westport Charter Association; and Tony Wells, Citizens for Washington Wildlife.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.