

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6043

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As of February 25, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to the governance structure of the department of fish and wildlife.

**Brief Description:** Requiring the joint legislative audit and review committee to review the governance structure of the department of fish and wildlife.

**Sponsors:** Senators Holmquist and Benton.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 2/26/07.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

**Staff:** Kim Johnson (786-7346)

**Background:** Current law directs the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) to establish policies regarding fish, including both food fish and game fish, shellfish, and wildlife species and to monitor the Department of Fish and Wildlife's implementation of those policies. Among other duties, the Commission also classifies wildlife and establishes the basic rules and regulations governing the time, place, manner, and methods used to harvest or enjoy fish and wildlife. The Commission consists of nine members who serve six-year terms. Members are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate.

The Director of Fish and Wildlife (Director) must supervise the administration and operation of the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and perform duties as prescribed by law and delegated by the Commission. The Commission has the authority to appoint the Director. The Director must have general knowledge of the fisheries and wildlife resources of the state, and of its commercial and recreational fishing industry. DFW manages approximately 800,000 acres that provide habitat and migration routes to wild species as well as a variety of recreational opportunities to the state's citizens. It also operates numerous boat ramps and other access areas to Washington's wild places.

In 1957, the Legislature created the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to bring together seven boards and agencies responsible for protecting public natural resources and managing the state trust lands. DNR is steward of about 5.6 million acres of state lands in perpetuity. The Commissioner of Public Lands, a state-wide elected office, manages the Washington State Department of Natural Resources and chairs the Board of Natural Resources, which sets policy for the management of the state's lands.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Summary of Bill:** The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) is directed to examine the governance structure of the DFW. JLARC must report to the Legislature on whether providing appointment authority of both the Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Director of DFW to the Commissioner of Public Lands would provide for a more unified public land management approach and more effective use of public resources.

The JLARC review must include an examination and recommendations regarding the Commission's role as an advisory body to the Commissioner of Public Lands, rather than a regulatory body.

JLAR must also review and report on the issues surrounding consolidating DFW into DNR and solutions to make the consolidation as seamless and effective as possible.

The report is due to the Legislature by December 1, 2009.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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