

SB 6053 - DIGEST

(SUBSTITUTED FOR - SEE 1ST SUB)

Finds that the state's food fish and shellfish resources are of great cultural and economic value to the state, providing benefits to commercial and recreational fishers, resource-based communities, the tourism industry, and all the citizens of Washington.

Finds that management of this precious resource is a challenging task that requires constant attention to issues including habitat, biology, harvest, water quality and quantity, and monitoring. Food fish and shellfish management also requires regular discussions and negotiations with local, regional, national, international, and tribal entities.

Declares that, in order to achieve the long-term sustainability of Washington's food fish and shellfish resource, the state must have a mechanism to evaluate and hold the manager of this resource accountable for those rules and policies adopted or foregone. The legislature finds that it is in the best interest of both Washington and the resource to provide management authority over food fish and shellfish to an individual who has expertise in fisheries issues, who is available full time to respond to matters involving the resource, and who may readily be held accountable to the people of the state, to the legislature, and to the governor.

Declares an intent for the director of fish and wildlife to manage the state's food fish and shellfish resources. Further, the legislature intends for the director to exercise all authorities and rule-making power provided to the department regarding: Management and harvest of food fish and shellfish; licensing and management of the state's commercial fisheries; aquatic animal species infestations; hydraulic project approvals and fishways; salmon enhancement and recovery activities; aquaculture disease control; ballast water management; and marine fin fish aquaculture programs.

Declares that this act transfers management authority and rule-making power over food fish, shellfish, and other specified matters from the fish and wildlife commission to the director of the department of fish and wildlife. No substantive fish and wildlife policy changes are intended.

Declares that the transfer of management authority and rule-making power from the fish and wildlife commission to the director of the department of fish and wildlife provided for in this act does not invalidate policies or rules adopted under the authority of the fish and wildlife commission prior to the effective date of this act.