

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6255

As of January 12, 2010

Title: An act relating to sexually altered, pinioned mute swans.

Brief Description: Concerning mute swans.

Sponsors: Senator Kilmer.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 1/11/10.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: Role of the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). DFW serves as manager of the state's fish and wildlife resources. Among other duties, DFW must classify wildlife and establish the basic rules and regulations governing the time, place, manner, and methods used to harvest or enjoy fish and wildlife.

Deleterious Exotic Wildlife. The statute authorizes DFW to designate a non-native species of wildlife as deleterious exotic wildlife if the species is dangerous to the environment or wildlife of the state. It is a Class C felony for a person to knowingly release deleterious exotic wildlife within the state. Additionally, DFW may order the person to pay the costs incurred in controlling the deleterious exotic wildlife released.

Mute Swan Identification and Status. Mute swans (*Cygnus olor*) are large birds, often weighing between 25-30 pounds and measuring 56-62 inches in length. They possess distinctive orange bills with black knobs, as well as white plumage and long necks.

DFW has classified mute swans as deleterious exotic wildlife by rule.

Summary of Bill: DFW may not designate a mute swan as deleterious exotic wildlife if:

- the mute swan is both sexually altered and pinioned;
- the mute swan is located on private property containing water bodies totaling no more than 20 acres; and
- there are no more than two swans located on each property.

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.

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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Mute swans have helped reduce a goose problem on Sylvia Lake, near Gig Harbor, which in turn helps address environmental problems caused by an overabundance of geese in lakes. The bill proponents want to be responsible and allow only swans that will not travel or reproduce. These swans have coexisted peacefully with people and pets, and other animals that are still allowed, such as bass, have caused many more problems.

CON: Mute swans have been designated as deleterious exotic wildlife since 1991. They are aggressive, even when sexually altered and pinioned. Allowing them in some circumstances would create an enforcement challenge, requiring an examination of each swan to determine if they are allowed. Mute swans have attacked people and pets.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kilmer, prime sponsor; Cindy Willis, Pierce County Council; Sarah Polyaza, Sylvia Lake; William Higday and John Davidson, Sylvia Lake Country Club.

CON: Martha Jordan, Wildlife Biologist; Dan Brinson and Steve Pozzanghera, DFW.