

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6738

As of February 2, 2010

Title: An act relating to the sale of surplus salmon from state hatcheries.

Brief Description: Concerning the sale of surplus salmon from state hatcheries.

Sponsors: Senators Kilmer and Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 2/01/10.

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.

Surplus Hatchery Salmon. DFW operates approximately 90 hatchery facilities, with about 70 facilities dedicated to salmon or steelhead production, and 20 dedicated to trout and other game fish. Surplus salmon are salmon that return to a hatchery in excess of the number needed to produce the next generation of hatchery fish.

Statute specifically authorizes DFW to give salmon and carcasses to state institutions, schools, or economically depressed people. The state may also sell surplus salmon from hatcheries, and if so must require the purchaser to process and reserve a portion for state institutions and economically depressed individuals.

Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups (RFEG). An RFEG is a local, incorporated, non-profit organization relying primarily on volunteer efforts to enhance salmon resources and develop projects designed to aid the fishery enhancement capability of DFW. Fourteen such groups have been formed. RFEGs receive funds from recreational and commercial licensing fees. Additionally, DFW distributes revenues from the sale of surplus hatchery salmon among the RFEGs.

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: DFW maintains its authority to give salmon and carcasses directly to state institutions, schools, or economically depressed individuals. Additionally, DFW may sell surplus salmon, including eggs and carcasses.

If DFW sells surplus salmon, it must give priority to one or more RFEGs that agree to collect all surplus state hatchery salmon for at least five years. DFW may require that the buyer process and reserve a portion of surplus salmon for distribution to food banks.

The bill also:

- specifies that its application is prospective, and that it does not affect any existing contracts; and
- makes numerous technical changes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on June 1, 2010.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The goals of surplus salmon disposal are to return nutrients to the environment and provide funding for RFEGs. There is room to improve the method by which the state contracts for surplus salmon disposal. There are ways to produce more revenues to support RFEGs; for example, by better utilizing salmon roe. Although food banks raise concerns, DFW would maintain control of how much fish is distributed. Stakeholders have started discussing the issues and feel it best to continue discussing the issue over the interim.

OTHER: There are concerns that altering the current successful surplus salmon disposal mechanism could cause issues. These could include problems maintaining the valuable distribution of fish and fish products to food banks. It is not as lucrative as some think to have to collect and dispose of all hatchery surplus fish. Stakeholders have started discussing the issues, and feel it best to continue discussing the issue over the interim.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Paul Ancich, RFEG Coalition; Neil Werner, Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group; Terry Willis, Grays Harbor County Commisisoner; Tony Meyer, Lower Columbia RFEG; Terry Wright, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission; Ed Owens, Coalition of Coastal Fisheries.

OTHER: Jack Field, Washington Fish Growers Assn.; Nello Picinich, Coastal Conservation Assn.; Josh Fogt, Northwest Harvest; Chuck Johnson, American Canadian; Chris Van Dyke, Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement and Harvest Assn.; Heather Bartlett, DFW.