

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 2349

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As of February 22, 2012

**Title:** An act relating to the management of beavers.

**Brief Description:** Concerning the management of beavers.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Kretz, Blake, Billig, Short, Hinkle, Upthegrove, Fitzgibbon and McCune).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/10/12, 96-0.

**Committee Activity:** Energy, Natural Resources & Marine Waters: 2/22/12.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, NATURAL RESOURCES & MARINE WATERS

**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 protect and manage fish and wildlife, including establishing the time, place, manner, and methods used to harvest or enjoy fish and wildlife.

Beaver Management Generally. Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) are classified as furbearing game animals by the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission). In general, a person holding a trapping license may trap a beaver consistent with trapping seasons established by the Commission.

Wildlife Conflict Authorities. A property owner or tenant may trap or kill specified wildlife, including beaver, when causing damage to private property. Landowner options to address wildlife conflicts include allowing general season hunters on their property, entering into damage prevention agreements with DFW, or utilizing wildlife control operators.

A person may release specified wildlife species, including beaver, within its established range after obtaining a permit from DFW.

**Summary of Bill:** Specifies Provisions for Beaver Relocation. DFW must permit the release of beaver on public and private lands with agreement from the property owner.

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Areas where beaver release is allowed may be limited to those where there is a low probability of released beavers causing damage; there is the potential for increased riparian function; and there is evidence of historic populations. DFW may condition beaver release to maximize the success of relocation and minimize risk, including such factors as available water supply and food sources.

Specifies the Provision of Public Information Regarding Beaver. DFW must inform those inquiring of the locations where surplus beaver are available for capture and relocation, if any. Each calendar quarter, DFW must report information including nuisance beaver activity, beaver trapping, and beaver relocation on the agency website.

Requires a Beaver Management Stakeholder Forum. By January 1, 2013, DFW must initiate a beaver management stakeholder forum and report the outcomes to the Legislature.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**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: This bill is a follow up bill on beaver management following the veto of a bill several years ago. There are many complaints about beaver nuisances that are addressed through the killing of the offending beaver. However, these issues can often be handled non-lethally by live trapping the beaver in question and relocating it to an area where it can be utilized to enhance high elevation water storage, to increase in-stream river flows, and to improve water quality and wildlife habitat. In recent years the Lands Council has removed over 40 beavers that may have otherwise been lethally dispatched. The Council wants to make sure information is available about potential beaver surplus populations and potential habitat.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Kretz, prime sponsor; Neil Beaver, The Lands Council.