

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2349

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Energy, Natural Resources & Marine Waters, February 23, 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, 2/23/12 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, NATURAL RESOURCES & MARINE WATERS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Ranker, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Delvin, Ranking Minority Member; Morton, Ranking Minority Member; Fraser, Hargrove, Murray, Stevens and Swecker.

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.

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.

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

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

Beavers may be relocated between areas in eastern Washington or from western Washington to eastern Washington. DFW may further limit areas where beaver release is allowed to those areas where there is a low probability of released beavers causing damage; where there is the potential for increased riparian function; and where 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.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY ENERGY, NATURAL RESOURCES & MARINE WATERS COMMITTEE (Recommended Amendments): Allows relocation of beavers only between areas in eastern Washington or from western Washington to eastern Washington.

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 as Heard in Committee: 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.