

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5291

As of February 3, 2011

Title: An act relating to recreational fishing opportunities.

Brief Description: Improving recreational fishing opportunities in Puget Sound and Lake Washington.

Sponsors: Senators Swecker, Rockefeller, Ranker, Fraser, Stevens, Nelson, Kohl-Welles and Conway; by request of Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources & Marine Waters: 1/31/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON 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 preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage fish and wildlife, including establishing the time, place, manner, and methods used to harvest or enjoy fish and wildlife.

Puget Sound Recreational Fisheries Enhancement (PSRFE) Program. In 2003 the Legislature established the PSRFE program, finding that it is important to restore recreational fisheries and enhance salmon and marine bottomfish resources. The statute addresses both salmon and marine fish enhancement, setting a number of short-term goals, long-term responsibilities, and specific planning, research, and action directives to DFW in implementing the program. DFW's major duties under the program include:

- *Delayed-Release Chinook Goals.* Establishes a statutory annual production and planting goal for the program of three million delayed-release chinook;
- *Freshwater Rearing of Chinook.* Requires DFW to develop at least four freshwater pond sites, specified by region, for delayed-release chinook rearing;
- *Marine Bottomfish Enhancement.* Directs DFW to research and implement programs for the artificial rearing and release of marine bottomfish species, specifying several species of importance in the recreational fishery; and
- *Other Requirements.* Specifies a number of additional research, coordination, planning, and action functions DFW must meet in administering the PSRFE program.

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.

PSRFE Program Oversight Board (Board). The Board consists of at least seven members representing recreational fishing interests. The Board advises DFW on all aspects of the PSRFE program and provides guidance on the program's budget.

Summary of Bill: Changes PSRFE Program Responsibilities. DFW must manage the PSRFE Program to maximize benefits to the recreational fishery consistent with available revenue, Fish and Wildlife Commission policies, and the Endangered Species Act. This broader directive replaces many of the current, more specific, short-term and long-term program goals.

Establishes Increased Recreational Opportunity as a PSRFE Program Goal. The PSRFE program must facilitate continued and improved recreational fishing opportunities in Puget Sound as measured by increased angler trips. Methods to meet this goal may include artificial rearing techniques, expanded use of mark-selective fisheries, and new catch and release methods. DFW and the Board must develop goals and objectives to assess PSRFE program effectiveness.

Specifies Additional Coordination Between DFW and the Board. In addition to the current role of the board, additional coordination is specified between DFW and the board to review PSRFE program goals and objectives; seek to reach a consensus regarding program activities and expenditures; and report biennially to the Legislature on program effectiveness.

Provides additional flexibility to the PSRFE Program. Many aspects of the PSRFE program are changed from mandatory to permissive, including specified research and coordination activities. Other specific mandates are repealed, including specified research, planning, third party consultation, and predator management activities.

Technical changes are made.

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 helps to address audits by the State Auditor's Office and Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee which raised concerns about conflicts between the PSRFE, the Endangered Species Act, changing wild fish management practices, and Commission policy. The bill allows DFW to work cooperatively with recreational stakeholders to develop and achieve outcome-based goals for the PSRFE. DFW and the stakeholders will work to provide improved recreational fishing opportunities while at the same time benefitting wild fish.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Clint Muns, Puget Sound Recreational Fisheries Enhancement Program Oversight Committee; Steve Thiesfeld, Jo Wadsworth, DFW.