
Transportation Committee

HB 2346

Brief Description: Coordinating the removal of fish passage barriers.

Sponsors: Representatives Farrell, Zeiger, Pike, Ryu, Riccelli and Pollet.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Washington State Department of Transportation to consult with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Parks, local governments, regional fishery enhancement groups, forest landowners, and tribes when determining the prioritization of fish passage barrier removal in a given biennium in order to coordinate the removal with these entities, in the most cost-effective manner possible, of fish passage barriers.
- Requires annual reporting to the Legislature regarding coordination with other entities on fish passage barrier projects.

Hearing Date: 1/27/14

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

Washington State Department of Transportation Fish Passage Barriers.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has identified more than 1,987 barriers to fish passage in the state highway system, and more than 1,519 have more than 200 meters of fish habitat upstream from the barrier. These fish passage barriers are corrected:

- as part of larger transportation projects;
- through projects designed specifically to remove such barriers; and
- as part of maintenance activities when the required work is more limited.

The WSDOT is currently subject to a United States District Court injunction requiring the removal of fish passage barriers on state highways in much of Western Washington by the year

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.

2030. The WSDOT has identified more than 1,000 fish passage barriers that are subject to the injunction, and currently estimates the cost of removal at \$2.4 billion.

Management of Fish Enhancement Projects.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the WSDOT both have the authority to administer and coordinate grant programs that involve the removal of impediments to fish passage. All such grant programs must be consistent with prioritization efforts, competitive application processes, and minimum dollar match criteria. Priority must be given to projects that immediately increase access to spawning and rearing habitat for depressed or endangered fish stocks or that are otherwise coordinated with other projects in a watershed.

Both the WDFW and the WSDOT are required establish a centralized database directory of all fish passage barrier information. The two agencies must also work in partnership to identify cooperative projects that eliminate fish passage barriers caused by state roads and highways.

Coordination between the WDFW and the WSDOT was initially developed through a jointly convened Fish Passage Barrier Removal Task Force. The task force was made up of state agencies, and representatives of tribal governments, state agencies, local government, and other interested parties. The statutory direction to convene the task force is still codified; however, the task force is no longer active.

Summary of Bill:

The WSDOT is required to consult with the WDFW, the Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Parks, local governments, regional fishery enhancement groups, forest landowners, and tribes when determining the prioritization of fish passage barrier removal on state highways in a given biennium. The WSDOT is also required, to the greatest extent practicable, to coordinate the removal with these entities, in the manner that achieves the greatest cumulative cost savings, of fish passage barriers.

The WSDOT is required to report annually to the Legislature regarding coordination with other entities on fish passage barrier projects.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.