
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 1152

Brief Description: Concerning the management of forage fish resources.

Sponsors: Representatives Fitzgibbon, Stanford, Dunshee and Tharinger.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates the recreational license requirement exemption for smelt.
- Commissions two studies regarding the populations in Puget Sound of smelt and other forage fish.

Hearing Date: 1/27/15

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

According to the forage fish management plan developed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), forage fish are small, schooling fish which serve as a food source for other fish species, birds, and marine mammals. Examples of forage fish species are herring, smelt, anchovy, and sardine.

There are both commercial and recreational fisheries that target forage fish. Although most recreational fishing in Washington requires a license from the WDFW, including recreational fishing for most forage fish, there is an exemption for smelt. A recreational fisher may catch smelt without a license.

The WDFW has the authority to condition certain hydraulic project approvals based on forage fish habitat. A person must obtain approval from the WDFW prior to commencing any construction project that will use, divert, obstruct, or change the natural flow or bed of any of the salt or fresh waters of the state. Hydraulic project approvals are issued by the WDFW to ensure

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the proper protection of fish life and may be denied or conditioned on beaches where forage fish spawning has been documented.

Summary of Bill:

The recreational license requirement exemption for smelt is eliminated. As a result, all recreational smelt fishing may only be done under a license issued by the WDFW.

Two studies are commissioned to be completed by the WDFW. The first study requires the WDFW to survey the locations of surf smelt and sand lance spawning areas throughout Puget Sound. The survey results must be used by the WDFW to expand the knowledge of documented spawning areas and to inform future regulatory actions.

The second study requires the WDFW to conduct a mid-water trawl at various depths throughout Puget Sound to evaluate the prevalence of adult forage fish. The results of this study must be integrated into the existing Puget Sound ecosystem assessments.

Both surveys must be completed by June 30, 2017.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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