
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

SSJM 8007

Brief Description: Requesting Congress to provide the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries with sufficient resources to expedite its endangered species act and national environmental policy act review of Puget Sound hatchery and genetic management plans and that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries prioritize and conduct immediate review and approval of Puget Sound hatchery and genetic management plans.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Parks (originally sponsored by Senators Pearson, Hatfield, Hewitt, Chase, McAuliffe, Dangel and Warnick).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requests the United States Congress to provide the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration with sufficient resources to expedite its review of Puget Sound hatchery and genetic management plans under the National Environmental Policy Act and Endangered species act review.

Hearing Date: 3/17/15

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is responsible for preserving, protecting, perpetuating, and managing the state's fish and wildlife resources. As part of that mission, the WDFW operates 83 hatchery facilities throughout the state. According to the WDFW, 75-80 percent of hatcheries are dedicated to producing salmon and/or steelhead and

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another 20-25 percent rear trout and other gamefish. There are also 51 tribal hatcheries and 12 federal hatcheries operating within Washington's waters.

The Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

Salmon and steelhead hatchery programs operating in regions with Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed populations must be evaluated and permitted through the federal government to ensure consistency with both the ESA and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). There are eight such regions in Washington affecting over 20 different salmonid populations.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) oversees the ESA and NEPA-compliance reviews for salmon and steelhead. The ESA provides different permitting processes depending on the hatchery operator and the federal listing designation. For species affected by the ESA, hatcheries operated by the WDFW may not harm the species unless the NOAA issues an incidental take permit or another relaxation of the standard ESA restrictions.

Hatchery and Genetic Management Plans.

Hatchery and Genetic Management Plans (HGMP) are technical documents that describe the composition and operation of each hatchery program. According to the WDFW, the primary goal of an HGMP is to describe biologically based artificial propagation management strategies that ensure the conservation and recovery of ESA-listed salmon and steelhead populations.

NOAA Fisheries uses the information provided by HGMPs to evaluate impacts on ESA-listed salmon and steelhead species. Completed HGMPs may also be used for regional fish production and management planning by federal, state, and tribal resource managers. The WDFW is currently consulting with the NOAA to finalize the HGMPs for its Puget Sound and Columbia River Basin hatchery operations.

Summary of Bill:

The United States Congress is asked by the House of Representatives and the State Senate to provide the NOAA with sufficient resources to expedite its review of Puget Sound hatchery and genetic management plans under the NEPA and the ESA. Additionally, the NOAA is requested to prioritize and conduct immediate review and approval of the plans.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.