

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5844

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As of February 18, 2015

**Title:** An act relating to ensuring that fishing opportunities in Washington are consistent with the economic contributions provided by the fishing user groups.

**Brief Description:** Ensuring that fishing opportunities in Washington are consistent with the economic contributions provided by the fishing user groups.

**Sponsors:** Senators Rivers, Lias, Rolfes, Braun, Warnick, Hewitt, Angel, Parlette and Conway.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Natural Resources & Parks: 2/18/15.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

**Staff:** Bonnie Kim (786-7316)

**Background:** The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) acts to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage Washington's wildlife, food fish, game fish, and shellfish. WDFW must conserve fish and wildlife resources in a manner that seeks to maintain the economic wellbeing and stability of the state's fishery resources. WDFW must promote orderly fisheries and enhance and improve the state's recreational and commercial fishing.

**Summary of Bill:** WDFW must conserve fish and wildlife resources in a manner that optimizes the economic value of the state's fishery resources. WDFW must, when making fisheries management determinations and setting fishing seasons, maximize recreational fishing opportunity within available harvests before determining commercial fishing opportunity. The Fish and Wildlife Commission, when utilizing hatcheries to enhance fishing opportunities, must, consistent with tribal treaty obligations, prioritize hatchery production based on their contribution to recreational fisheries.

All license fees and tax revenues deposited into the state wildlife account and received from specific user groups, including hunters, recreational fishers, and commercial fishers, must be appropriated to activities that directly support or benefit the user group from which the funds were received.

**Appropriation:** None.

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*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.*

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**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: We have a tremendous opportunity for economic development through the recreational fishing industry. Sports fishers pay user fees and we are the largest user group. We also help educate and promote youth and senior fishing. It is time we compare the economic impacts of how we allocate funds. Shifting salmon funds to the recreational fishers will be of great economic benefit. Fishing with my family is an invaluable experience I would not want to sacrifice. Washington has a dense population and we need to decide to invest our capital to promote recreational fishing. More recreational fish opportunities would keep fishers in Washington. We have lost much of our salmon populations. We need stable, predictable fishing seasons. This bill recognizes the importance of recreational fishers. Canada addressed this issue ten years ago and concluded the best use of coho and chinook salmon was recreational fishing. We should prioritize recreational fishing prior to setting seasons for commercial fishing. WDFW is facing shortfall in funding and this bill would send a strong message to the public to purchase fishing licenses because the opportunities will be better. The few opportunities we have are being crushed due to lost opportunities around the state. Changing policies against the anglers have not had positive results.

CON: Commercial fishermen fish for the vast majority of people who do not fish. Sports fishermen only fish for themselves. Rather than arguing over whose fish are worth more, we should be working with all parties to resolve the population losses. The Commission gives vast economic authority to unelected officials. The Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) wants commercial fishers off Washington water. We need to put our efforts to make the pie larger. The fishing communities suffer because of the instability they face. Over 90 percent of Americans eat fish caught by commercial fishermen. You have to remove ten commercial fish to replace one recreational fish. Society will not tolerate these surpluses. We should not fight over the last fish in the oceans and river.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Carl Carver, Save Our Fish, Auburn Puget Sound Anglers, CCA; Ron Garner, President, Puget Sound Anglers; Thomas Nelson, Owner, The Outdoor Line LLC; Andrew Marks, Vice President, CCA; John Jovanovich, Jovanovich Supply Company; Liz Hamilton, NW Sportfishing Industry Assn.; Andy Marks, CCA; Ron Garner, Puget Sound Anglers; Frank Haw, Fish NW, CCA; Donald Hyde, Gregg Robinson, Assn. of NW Steelheaders; Haley Cox, BS Fish Tales; Curt Smitch, Fish NW; Don Kinsey, Don Kinsey Guide Service; Mark Heirigs, Chair, Clark-Skamania Flyfishers Conservation; Mark Gavin, Curt Kraemer, Lewis Boyd, Rick Estes, Dave Patterson, Dave Swisher, Aaron Brady, Larry Carey, citizens.

CON: Joe Verdoes, President, Puget Sound Prawn Assn.; Htoohtoo Po; Say Say Po; Bill Gardner, Joel Kawahara, Peter Cannon, Commercial Fishermen; Steven Wilson, Secretary, Coastal Trollers Assn.; Irene Martin, Kent Martin Salmon For All; Ray Toste, Dale Beasley, CCF; Bob Lake, Willapa Bay Gillnetters; Paul Alexander, Commercial Fishermen of WA;

Greg Mueller, WA Trollers Assn.; John Campbell, Dave Parker, Greg Johnson, Bob Franks, Bryce Divine, citizens.