

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1257

As Passed House:
February 9, 2017

Title: An act relating to the release of wild beavers.

Brief Description: Concerning the release of wild beavers.

Sponsors: House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Kretz, Blake, Taylor, Fitzgibbon and Buys).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/24/17, 1/31/17 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/9/17, 98-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Specifies that wild beavers from western Washington may be relocated only to another location in western Washington.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Chapman, Vice Chair; Buys, Ranking Minority Member; Dent, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Fitzgibbon, Kretz, Lytton, Orcutt, Pettigrew, Robinson, Schmick, Springer, Stanford and J. Walsh.

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

Background:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) may authorize the removal or killing of wildlife that is destroying or injuring property. The ultimate disposition of the removed wildlife is determined by the Director of the Department (Director). The Director may also enter into written agreements with landowners designed to protect the subject property from further wildlife damage. The Department may permit the relocation of wild beavers on

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.

public or private land with the permission of the landowner. Private individuals may trap beavers if they hold a state trapping license. All trapping must be conducted in accordance with the trapping seasons established by the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The Department may condition beaver relocations to maximize the success and minimize the risk of the relocation. Release site conditions that the Department may consider include the gradient of the stream, the adequacy of food sources, the elevation, and the stream geomorphology. In addition, the Department may condition how the capture and release occurs and require specific training for the capture, handling, and transport of wild beavers. Capture and release conditions may include: establishing the timing of the capture and release; specifying the amount and ages of the beavers involved; and the requirements for providing supplemental food and lodging materials. Beavers may only be relocated between two geographic areas in eastern Washington, or from an area in western Washington to an area in eastern Washington.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Beavers captured in western Washington may only be relocated to another area in western Washington. The Department may require anyone releasing wild beavers under the beaver relocation program in any part of the state to notify landowners adjacent to the site where the beavers will be relocated.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) There was legislation several years ago recognizing the benefits of relocating beavers into ecosystems where they have been absent for years due to trapping. Of particular interest is water retention high up in watersheds. There are legitimate concerns with problem beavers in orchards and blocking culverts. A beaver relocation program was established to address problem beavers, provide an alternative to lethal removal, and relocate wild beavers to places where they would do the most good. There was a recognition of the benefits of beavers to an ecosystem such as improved streamflows, reduce high winter flows, and enhanced salmon habitat. There was an exemption for western Washington, but now wildlife managers are seeing places in western Washington where beaver relocation could be beneficial. This bill would allow beaver relocation to take place in western Washington. The Department supports the bill, but would like it to address aquatic invasive species concerns. The Department would like to see more flexibility in where to release beavers, instead of keeping westside beavers on the west and eastside beavers on the east. Beavers are currently a recovering species. Relocation efforts have helped to restore beaver populations. The Tulalip tribes beaver relocation program on the Skykomish River Basin has been successful. Agreements with various governments make that program possible. There have been other

successful beaver relocation projects in other parts of the state. Nontribal entities should be allowed to conduct beaver relocation in western Washington.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Kretz, prime sponsor; Anis Aoude, Department of Fish and Wildlife; and Al Aldrich, Glen Gobin, and Molly Alves, Tulalip Tribes.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.