
**Rural Development, Agriculture, &
Natural Resources Committee**

HB 2666

Brief Description: Establishing the warm water fishing advisory group.

Sponsors: Representatives McCaslin, Blake, Dent, Ryu, Chandler, Young, Dufault, Eslick and Shea.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands the Warm Water Game Fish Program (Program) to include enhancing opportunities to fish for yellow perch, and to improve opportunities for warm water game fishing, generally.
- Modifies the habitat, fish culture programs, and population management aspects of the Program.
- Creates the Warm Water Game Fish Advisory Group (Advisory Group) and provides a procedure for selecting Advisory Group members.
- Requires the Department of Fish and Wildlife to administer the Program in consultation with the Advisory Group

Hearing Date: 1/29/20

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

Background:

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is responsible for the management of fish and wildlife and their habitats in the state. The WDFW is governed by the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) comprised of members appointed by the Governor. The WDFW provides and regulates recreational and commercial fish- and wildlife-related opportunities which include hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing, and is responsible for maximizing hunting,

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fishing, and outdoor recreation opportunities compatible with healthy fish and wildlife populations.

Warm Water Game Fish Program.

The Warm Water Game Fish Enhancement Program (Program) was created in 1996 to enhance and increase opportunities to fish for warm water game fish, such as walleye and bass, using cost-effective management. A portion of each freshwater and combination freshwater and saltwater fishing license is deposited into the Warm Water Game Fish Account to fund the Program. In funding the Program, the WDFW has a duty to minimize administrative costs and maximize productive activities in the field.

Activities that are a part of the Program include habitat improvement and development of new habitat while minimizing impacts to native fish and wildlife populations and cold-water fish species. Fish culture programs must be used for stocking high-value species including walleye and smallmouth bass. Population management using fish toxicants must be an integral part of the program.

Advisory Groups, Generally.

The Commission has authority to adopt rules to implement the state's fish and wildlife laws; however, there are a variety of advisory groups that provide input on topics related to the WDFW's and Commission's responsibilities. Examples of existing advisory groups include:

- the Columbia River Recreational Fishing Advisory Group;
- the Master Hunter Advisory Group;
- the Wildlife Rehabilitation Advisory Group; and
- the Wildlife Diversity Advisory Council.

Membership on advisory groups vary, but can include representatives of state, local, or tribal governments, constituent groups, or members of the public.

Summary of Bill:

Warm Water Game Fish Program.

The Warm Water Game Fish Program (Program) must address increasing opportunities to catch yellow perch in addition to the other warm water game fish already addressed by the Program. The Program must also be designed to improve warm water fishing in addition to increasing opportunities. Largemouth bass are added as a high-value species for which fish culture must be used. Finally, instead of an integral part of the Program, population management using fish toxicants must be a limited part of the Program.

Warm Water Game Fish Advisory Group.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) must work with a designated representative, chosen by the primary warm water advocacy groups in Washington, to form the first Advisory Group by cooperatively selecting Advisory Group members. The WDFW must administer the Program in consultation with the Advisory Group.

The Advisory Group must consist of at least five but no more than nine members at any one time. Members must equitably represent various geographic areas of the state where warm water fishing occurs and must include members from recognized recreational fishing and warm water advocacy groups and organizations regardless of political affiliation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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