

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6264

As Reported By House Committee On:
Fisheries & Wildlife

Title: An act relating to an interstate compact for restoration of native salmonid fish runs.

Brief Description: Authorizing a regional compact for restoring salmon runs.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Senators Sutherland, Oke and Fraser).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Fisheries & Wildlife, February 24, 1994, DP.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives King, Chair; Fuhrman, Ranking Minority Member; Sehlin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Chappell; Foreman; Quall and Scott.

Staff: Keitlyn Watson (786-7310).

Background:

Compacts

A compact is generally initiated by individual states, in order to generate coordinated multi-state activity to resolve a common problem. A compact is both a statute and a contract. Once compact language is agreed to, ratification is achieved by each state enacting statutory language. For agreements that affect a power delegated to the federal government, congressional consent is also required.

Endangered Salmon Status and Recovery Efforts

In 1991 and 1992 three salmon stocks on the Columbia River were listed as endangered or threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). A draft recovery plan for the Snake River sockeye salmon was issued this month by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). NMFS has been petitioned to list other stocks in the state including mid-

Columbia summer chinook, coastal coho salmon, and Deer Creek steelhead.

Efforts to reverse these declines are several, as follows:

Columbia River Salmon Flow Measures: The Army Corps of Engineers (ACE), Bureau of Reclamation, and the Bonneville Power Administration conducted a reservoir drawdown experiment on the Snake River in March 1992, to determine whether such a drawdown would increase flows and thereby the speed of juvenile fish passage, and whether such a project would have adverse effects on the dam, roads, irrigators, etc. The draft results of the experiment were published in November 1992, and although the test provided substantial information on physical effects, the biological and environmental effects remain inconclusive. The ACE is currently developing an environmental impact statement for another, longer drawdown experiment, not to be implemented until 1996 at the earliest.

Northwest Power Planning Council Amendments: The Northwest Power Planning Council (NWPPC), which is the regional planning body for power in the Northwest, is also charged under the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act of 1980 with planning for coordinated protection of fish and wildlife. In response to the precarious situation on the Columbia and Snake Rivers, the NWPPC is amending its Fish and Wildlife Program. Many of its recommendations are advisory and not mandatory.

Federal Recovery Plan for Columbia River Salmon: The draft NMFS recovery plan for Columbia River sockeye was just issued.

Endangered Species Act Reauthorization: The ESA is up for reauthorization in Congress this year.

ESHB 1309: In 1993, the Legislature passed ESHB 1309, which took several steps toward wild salmonid stock conservation.

Oregon Legislature: In 1993 the Oregon Legislature passed SJR 42, which encourages the states of California, Washington, Idaho and the Northwest Indian Treaty Tribes to join Oregon in creating regionally-planned and coordinated restoration efforts for anadromous salmonid populations in coastal waters.

Summary of Bill: Washington State is authorized to enter into an interstate compact with California, Idaho and Oregon to protect and restore coastal ecosystems to levels that will prevent the need for listing any native salmonid fish species under the Endangered Species Act. Until such a

compact is finalized, the Governor is authorized to establish cooperative agreements with the states of California, Idaho and Oregon that allow the states to coordinate their individual efforts in developing state programs to accomplish the salmonid protection objectives.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on February 24, 1994.

Effective Date: July 1, 1994.

Testimony For: Coordinating regional efforts to restore salmon is a great idea. The bill would provide the state of Washington with a mechanism to enhance consistency with the other states' salmon restoration efforts. Fiscal impact is expected to be nil, and the fiscal note is being revised to reflect this expectation.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Cyreis Schmitt, Department of Fisheries (pro).