

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6074

As Passed Senate, May 17, 1995

Title: An act relating to the role of the state commission on fish and wildlife as recommended by the commission on fish and wildlife.

Brief Description: Expanding the authority of the fish and wildlife commission.

Sponsors: Senators Sutherland and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

First Special Session: Passed Senate, 5/17/95, 29-13. Reconsidered; Passed Senate, 5/17/95, 30-14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Staff: Ross Antipa (786-7413)

Background: A state commission has been involved in the management of game fish and wildlife since 1933, when a voter initiative created the state Department of Game and the Game Commission. The new commission was charged with hiring the director of the department, establishing the direction and priorities of the agency, adopting hunting and fishing regulations, and other duties. Funding for the agency for the next few decades came primarily through the sale of various licenses, tags, and permits and from excise taxes on sporting goods.

By 1987, the agency was in a precarious fiscal situation. Legislation enacted in 1987 changed the name of the agency to the Department of Wildlife and provided an infusion of \$8 million to the agency from the state general fund. The legislation also changed the commission's name to the Wildlife Commission, and appointment authority for the agency's director shifted from the commission to the Governor.

In 1993, the Department of Fisheries and the Department of Wildlife merged into the current Department of Fish and Wildlife. The legislation merging the two agencies directed the commission (renamed the Fish and Wildlife Commission) to review its area of responsibility in the consolidated agency and to provide recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor on any necessary changes in its statutory authority.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission completed its review and submitted its recommendations in November 1994. The commission recommends that its authority be expanded to include the following: