

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2217

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, April 2, 1997

Title: An act relating to fish passage barrier removal.

Brief Description: Removing fish passage barriers.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation Policy & Budget (originally sponsored by Representatives K. Schmidt, Doumit, Buck, Blalock, Hatfield and Kessler).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 3/31/97, 4/2/97 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Prince, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Goings, Haugen, Heavey, Horn, Jacobsen, Morton, Oke, Patterson, Rasmussen and Sellar.

Staff: Mary McLaughlin (786-7309)

Background: There is a growing need to remove fish passage barriers associated with transportation facilities. Washington's increasing population and transportation system improvements needed to meet this growth have exacerbated the problems associated with culverts, creating barriers to fish passage.

In the past, the Department of Fish and Wildlife (F&W) has worked with cities, counties and private organizations to achieve successful, but limited, correction of the problem. The current management efforts: (1) lack necessary coordination on a watershed, regional and statewide basis; (2) have inadequate funding; and (3) fail to maximize the use of available resources.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) has a barrier removal program that is jointly managed with F&W. That program could be expanded to include cities and counties, and the funding and coordination efforts could be increased.

Summary of Amended Bill: The purpose of this act is to: (1) develop a statewide coordination program for removal of transportation-related fish passage barriers; (2) develop a statewide coordination mechanism for identifying, prioritizing and funding the removal; and (3) fully coordinate the fish passage and stormwater programs.

DOT and F&W are charged with development and implementation of a fish barrier identification program to coordinate funding and grants. A Fish Passage Removal Committee (FPRC) is established, consisting of representatives from DOT (acting as chair), F&W, the Department of Ecology, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), cities,

counties, Indian tribes, an environmental organization, and a business organization. Other representatives may be added to serve as members or in an advisory capacity.

The FPRC is charged with developing criteria for a grant program, prioritizing fish passage retrofit projects eligible for grant funding, determining the cost-saving and ecological benefits of the proposed projects, determining the role intermittent streams play in the production of salmon, and making recommendations for ongoing funding sources for the program (federal dollars, motor vehicle fund, transportation fund, natural resource-based funds, contributions, user fees, etc.). Funds may be provided to cities, counties, port districts, municipal corporations, special purpose districts, conservation districts, Indian tribes, DNR, F&W and DOT. DOT coordinates committee activities and grant administration.

Other issues to be addressed in the program are greater statewide coordination, encouraging multijurisdictional projects, developing priorities on a watershed basis, sharing technical resources, inventorying and mapping, etc.

By January 1, 1999, DOT and F&W must jointly submit to the Legislature a report on implementation of the fish barrier removal and funding program. The report will include proposed criteria for project selection, procedures for managing the program, and recommendations of achieving the program's objectives.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The provision that the fish passage barrier removal program does not apply to fish barriers in seasonal streams and drainage ditches is removed. The role that intermittent streams play in the production of naturally spawning or artificially cultured salmon is added as an objective of the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Developing a statewide coordination program similar to the stormwater program will be beneficial for the state, local government, Indian tribes and the environment.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Ron Shultz, National Audubon Society; Ed Manary, Fish and Wildlife; Scott Merriman, WA Environmental Council; Eric Berger, County Road Administration Board; Jerry Alb, WSDOT.