

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1681

As Reported By House Committee On:

Natural Resources
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to state purchase of privately grown trout for planting in state waters.

Brief Description: Establishing a program to purchase and plant privately grown trout.

Sponsors: Representatives Buck, Grant, Sump, Schoesler, Boldt, Mastin and McMorris.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 2/16/99, 3/2/99 [DPS];

Appropriations: 3/5/99, 3/6/99 [DP2S(w/o sub NR)].

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Allows the Department of Fish and Wildlife to purchase and plant privately grown hatchery trout.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Buck, Republican Co-Chair; Regala, Democratic Co-Chair; Anderson, Democratic Vice Chair; Sump, Republican Vice Chair; G. Chandler; Clements; Eickmeyer; Ericksen; Pennington and Rockefeller.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Doumit.

Staff: Josh Weiss (786-7129).

Background:

In 1998 a private Washington-based fish farm supplied 60,000 rainbow trout to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Colville Confederated Tribes, and various

fishing and outdoor clubs. These fish were planted in Eastern Washington lakes, but can be planted in any freshwater body that has sufficient water quality to support fish life.

Since the fish are sterile, having been bred with three chromosomes instead of two (triploid), they do not interbreed with wild stocks, and continue to grow throughout their lives. This continued growth along with aggressive feeding habits allow the fish to grow much larger than wild stocks. At the time of planting the fish ranged between one and two pounds.

These trout are being offered to the state at a price of \$2 per fish.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife is authorized to purchase and plant privately grown trout to supplant existing trout hatchery production. Planting may only occur in water bodies with water quality sufficient to support fish life and must not have an adverse impact on wild trout populations. The Fish and Wildlife Commission in consultation with the Department of Fish and Wildlife is required to determine the maximum number of fish to be planted. The department is required to geographically distribute the planting. In addition, the department must report to the Legislature by February 1, 2001, on implementation of the program. A sum not to exceed \$200,000 is appropriated per fiscal year for the program.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill replaced the language of the original bill. The original bill allowed the department to plant 100,000 trout in 1999 and up to 1 million in 2000. The original bill appropriated \$3 million for the biennium. The substitute bill provides an emergency clause.

Appropriation: The sum of \$3 million is appropriated to the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: As salmon fishing opportunities have been reduced, the state needs a substitute while salmon runs are being rebuilt. In addition, the state could use the revenue. For every salmon license sold, \$8.50 comes back to the state from the federal government. This revenue is an additional loss. Sixty thousand trout were stocked in eastern Washington lakes last year. This resulted in numerous positive comments and

articles. The fish are two or three times larger than those usually stocked and can grow to record sizes. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife wants the fish. Columbia River Farms can grow more, and with notice can grow up to a million more. There were 385,000 angler trips in the state last year producing \$12 million in new economic activity. The fish released were triploid and therefore sterile. These types of fish are not believed to predate on smaller fish and Columbia River Farms has never found a smaller fish in the stomach of a triploid. The 1 million for the year 2000 was suggested by the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

With cutbacks in salmon fishing, this is a positive program. Sixty-eight percent of the fishers in eastern Washington come from western Washington. This program provides economic benefit, without adding employees to state agencies. The state does not have the technology to duplicate these fish. It would cost the department \$4 per fish that would be smaller. This bill increases revenue to the department. The Colville Tribe routinely buys these fish and stocks them in Lake Rufus. An emergency clause is necessary in this bill since the fishing season will be over before the fish are actually planted.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife supports this bill. However, this program should not be implemented at the expense of existing priorities. This has been a popular program in the past. The department has operated a limited trophy trout program in Bellingham on an experimental basis. Fishing does increase if people know that they can catch bigger fish. The bill is not limited to any portion of the state. The department is not geared up to produce triploid species, however we can grow a larger fish to stock, but this is more expensive than other fish. This all comes down to economics and rearing space. Any larger fish will feed on a smaller fish. The department does not stock to current carrying capacity. This bill would do a lot for rural economic development in the state.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (Original bill) Representative Jim Buck, prime sponsor; Dan Swecker, Troutlodge and Washington Fish Growers Association; John Forester, Columbia River Fish Farms and Washington Fish Growers Association; Allan Woodbridge, Western Fish and Wildlife and Washington State Rifle and Pistol Association; Diane Nelson, Colville Confederated Tribes; Frank Urabeck, Northwest Marine Trade Association; Gene Tillett, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; and Jim Haase, Washington State Grange.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Natural Resources. Signed by 31 members: Representatives Huff, Republican Co-Chair; H. Sommers, Democratic Co-Chair; Alexander, Republican Vice Chair; Doumit, Democratic Vice Chair; D. Schmidt, Republican Vice Chair; Barlean; Benson; Boldt; Carlson; Clements; Cody; Crouse; Gombosky; Grant; Kagi; Keiser; Kenney; Lambert; Linville; Lisk; Mastin; McIntire; McMorris; Mulliken; Parlette; Regala; Rockefeller; Ruderman; Sullivan; Tokuda and Wensman.

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7157).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee on Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee on Natural Resources: The substitute bill removed the appropriation. If funding for the bill is not provided by June 30, 1999, in the omnibus appropriations act, the bill is null and void.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available on original bill.

Effective Date of Second Substitute Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: (Substitute bill) Columbia River Farms sold 60,000 trout last year to the Department of Fish & Wildlife, the Colville Tribes, and others to plant in lakes. Recreational fishing provides economic benefits to rural areas of the state. An increase in license sales of approximately 23,000 could generate sufficient revenue to pay for this program. There is also the potential to generate substantial revenue. Washington State receives \$8.50 from the federal government from each fishing license it sells. The Colville Tribes support the program, bought 10,000 trout last year, and expect to buy an additional 10,000 - 20,000 this year. This program would provide additional recreational fishing opportunities in both eastern and western Washington.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Dan Swecker, Washington Fish Growers Association; Diane Nelson, Colville Tribe; Jim Zimmerman, Troutlodge, Inc.; and Bruce Crawford, Department of Fish and Wildlife.