

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2381

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation, February 23, 2006

Title: An act relating to allowing the reintroduction of beavers into the historic habitat of the species.

Brief Description: Authorizing a beaver relocation permit.

Sponsors: Representatives Kretz, Blake, Sump, Buri, Haler, Ericks and Holmquist.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/08/06, 98-0.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 2/16/06, 2/23/06 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair; Oke, Ranking Minority Member; Fraser, Hargrove, Morton, Spanel, Stevens and Swecker.

Staff: Vic Moon (786-7469)

Background: The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) has the authority to authorize the removal or killing of wildlife that is destroying or injuring property. The ultimate disposition of the removed wildlife is determined by the Director of the Department. The Director may also enter into written agreements with landowners that are designed to protect the subject property from further wildlife damage.

Private individuals may trap beavers if they hold a state trapping license. All trapping must be conducted in accordance with the trapping seasons established by the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Department is required to issue a permit, at no cost to the applicant, that will allow the holder to capture live beavers in areas of the state where large beaver populations are considered a nuisance. The permit also allows the holder to transport the beavers within the state and release the beavers on property owned by the permit holder. The permit holder must also possess a state trapping license or must contract with the holder of a trapping license for the actual capture of the beaver.

Beaver relocation permits may be limited by the Department to areas of the state where there is a low probability of released beavers becoming a problem, there is evidence of a historic endemic beaver population, and where conditions exist for the released beavers to improve the riparian area into which they are introduced. Beavers may not be relocated from areas east of the crest of the Cascade mountains to areas west of the crest, but may be relocated from west to east.

The Department may condition beaver relocation permits to maximize the success and minimize the risk of the relocation. Release site conditions that the Department may consider include the gradient of the stream, the adequacy of food sources, the elevation, and the stream geomorphology. In addition, the Department may also condition how the capture and release is performed by the permit holder. This includes establishing the timing of the capture and release, the age of the beavers involved, and the number of beavers involved.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: Beavers may be relocated from west of the Cascade Mountains to east of the mountains but may not be relocated from east to west.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: Beavers can help the environment by creating wetlands and reducing water runoff. The state should capture beavers and relocate them to areas where private and public landowners want them.

Testimony Against: The Department of Fish and Wildlife already has the ability to transfer beavers. There are very serious problems moving beavers.

Who Testified: PRO: Representative Kretz; Patrick Connor, Washington Farm Bureau.

CON: Steve Pozzanghera, Department of Fish and Wildlife.