

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 6206

As Reported By House Committee On:
Fisheries & Wildlife

Title: An act relating to game fish.

Brief Description: Creating the warm water game fish enhancement program.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Owen, Oke, Hargrove, Erwin and Haugen).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Fisheries & Wildlife, February 25, 1994, DPA.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 7 members: Representatives King, Chair; Sehlin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Chappell; Foreman; Quall and Scott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Orr, Vice Chair; and Fuhrman, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Keitlyn Watson (786-7310).

Background: Game fish licenses are issued by the Department of Wildlife (WDW) for the following fees: \$17 for residents from 15-69 years of age, \$3 for residents 70 years of age or over, and \$48 for nonresidents. The license is valid for sport fishing of all classified game fish species, including warm water fish. License revenue is dedicated to the state Wildlife Fund.

Summary of Amended Bill: A warm water game fish surcharge on fishing licenses is required to fish for the following warm water species: largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, walleye, black and white crappie, channel catfish and tiger muskie. Except for persons under the age of 15 and residents 70 years of age or older, holders of an annual fishing license pay a \$5 surcharge, and holders of a temporary fishing license pay a \$2 surcharge. Residents 70 years of age or older pay a \$1 surcharge.

The appropriated Warm Water Game Fish Account is created within the Wildlife Fund. The account is funded by the warm water game fish surcharge.

The director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife shall make every effort to proportionally divide game fish license revenues among game fish programs.

Moneys in the Warm Water Game Fish Account are subject to legislative appropriation and shall be used to fund a Warm Water Game Fish Enhancement Program in the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The enhancement program shall improve warm water fishing opportunities and shall include:

- ∅ necessary research;
- ∅ the development of new ponds and lakes that will not increase undesirable fish;
- ∅ efficiency and cost-effectiveness;
- ∅ coordination with the Department of Natural Resources to reclaim surface mines and develop fish ponds;
- ∅ coordination with the conservation of cold water fish;
- ∅ fish culture programs in conditions where they will prove to be cost-effective, with consideration of urban area put-and-take opportunities and introduction of exotic strains of warm water game fish;
- ∅ fish culture for stocking high-value species;
- ∅ population management of undesirable fish;
- ∅ habitat improvement, with secondary benefits to other species; and
- ∅ involvement of cooperative groups and organized warm water fishing clubs in the program.

The surcharge takes effect January 1, 1995. The Warm Water Game Fish Enhancement Program and the Warm Water Game Fish Account take effect July 1, 1994.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill: The surcharge for a temporary fishing license is reduced from \$5 to \$2. The use of fish toxicants in the Warm Water Game Fish Enhancement Program is changed from being an "integral" part of the program to being a management option. Research is added to the list of elements of the enhancement program.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect July 1, 1994, except for section 2, which provides for the warm water game fish surcharge and takes effect July 1, 1995.

Testimony For: The decline in salmon and steelhead recreational fishing is likely to soon result in increased pressure on warm water game fish. It is a good idea to

start enhancing warm water game fish populations now, before a problem develops. The bill would raise significant revenues for warm water game fish management, in effect quadrupling the amount the Department of Wildlife is currently able to allocate to warm water fish enhancement. The bill is supported by game fishers, who want to see funds go directly to fish enhancement programs rather than administration.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Senator Owen, prime sponsor (pro); Cliff Kuppinger, King County Outdoor Sports Council (pro); Dick Streater, Western Bass Club (pro); and Bruce Crawford, Department of Wildlife (pro).