

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

E2SSB 5595

Title: An act relating to salmon recovery funding.

Brief Description: Establishing the salmon recovery funding board.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Jacobsen and Fraser).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Meeting Date: March 26, 1999

Bill Analysis Prepared by: Carole Richmond (786-7114)

Background: The Legislature created a salmon recovery framework when it adopted House Bill 2496 in 1998. The framework includes a number of elements, including funding for habitat project lists identified on an annual project schedule. State funding is provided in the form of grants for salmon restoration projects to lead entities, or directly to project sponsors if no lead entities exist. The Interagency Review Team (IRT), currently comprised of the Conservation Commission, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife, is charged with distributing those grants in compliance with certain criteria. The IRT is also required to provide a summary of funding for restoration project lists to the Governor and Legislature by December 1 of each year.

In June 1998, the IRT received 75 project applications requesting a total of \$10.4 million. In that month, 22 projects were funded out of 75, and 8 lead entities were funded out of 11 that applied. Approximately \$6 million were spent on salmon restoration projects and limiting factors analysis in FY 1998.

In addition, on January 1, 1999, the state received nearly \$20 million in federal funding for salmon and steelhead recovery throughout the state. The allocation of funds was made by Congress.

Summary of Bill: A salmon recovery funding board is created. The board is comprised of three members appointed by the Governor and subject to Senate confirmation. Board members must have the expertise necessary to provide strong fiscal oversight of salmon recovery expenditures. The Governor appoints the members to staggered terms and appoints the chair.

The board is responsible for making grants and loans for salmon recovery projects from the amounts appropriated to the board for this purpose. The board may adopt rules to carry out this purpose and may accept gifts and other property.

The board is charged with developing procedures and criteria for allocation of funds for projects and activities that address the highest priorities for salmon habitat protection and restoration on a statewide basis. The board must base most new funding on higher priority salmon recovery needs, using scientific principles and information addressing stock status, fish production potential, genetic diversity, habitat condition, and near-term risk. The board's procedures may be waived to conform with specific legislative appropriations.

The board must seek the assistance and guidance of the IRT in developing allocation procedures and standards. The Department of Ecology is added to the IRT. The IRT is required to advise the board on whether submitted habitat project lists comply with existing criteria, and if the board agrees, it is required to accord substantial weight to the list's project priorities when making funding decisions within the area covered by the list.

The board shall consider any recommendations on funding that may be made by the Government Council on Natural Resources. Prior to finalizing funding decisions, the board is required to consult with interests representing irrigated and non-irrigated agriculture, sport and commercial fishing interests, large and small scale timber interests, conservation districts, and county and city governmental interests.

A salmon recovery account is created in the state treasury. The board must track all funds allocated for salmon recovery projects and activities and for water quality improvements, including funds allocated by the board and by other state and federal entities. Beginning in December 2000, the board is required to provide a biennial report to the Legislature on salmon recovery expenditures.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect July 1, 1999.

Passed Senate: 3/15/99, 35-14