

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

SSB 5683

Title: An act relating to funding Puget Sound salmon recovery.

Brief Description: Creating the Puget Sound foundation to facilitate salmon recovery funding.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation (originally sponsored by Senators Jacobsen, Swecker, T. Sheldon, Oke, Fraser, Eide, Rossi and Winsley).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Meeting Date: March 30, 1999.

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

Background: Eighteen stocks of salmon and steelhead are presently listed as threatened or endangered in Washington. 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 restoration projects identified on an annual project schedule. At present, funding for habitat protection or preservation occurs through a variety of federal, state, local and private programs, including the federal Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program; Chapter 43.98A RCW, which authorizes the acquisition of critical habitat and outdoor recreation lands; King County's Waterways 2000-initiative regional fisheries enhancement groups; and private non-profit land trusts. No coordination mechanism presently exists on a statewide or Puget Sound basis to determine how much land is being preserved, which parcels of land are beneficial for salmon, and how these parcels relate to each other.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature finds that an intensive, short-term effort to preserve high quality salmon habitat in Puget Sound is essential and that it is in the public interest to create a non-profit foundation to guide private investments in salmon habitat protection. The Puget Sound salmon and river conservation program is established. Its purpose is to create a network of key habitats, that in combination with regulatory efforts, provides a stable base for long-term salmon survival.

A non-profit foundation is established to collect and distribute private funds for the purpose of salmon habitat preservation and restoration. The foundation may not disburse public funds. The foundation is governed by a board of 18 directors, four of whom are legislators.

The foundation has the following duties:

- . It must establish a science panel to advise the foundation on development of criteria to guide investments in salmon habitat and to evaluate grant requests.
- . It must identify high quality salmon habitats for preservation and associated opportunities for restoration.
- . It must seek funding and contributions from private sources to fund the preservation and restoration of Puget Sound salmon habitat.
- . It must conduct a competitive grant process at least annually to award funds for preservation and restoration of high quality habitats in Puget Sound.
- . It must monitor the results of preservation and restoration activities.
- . It must work with the salmon recovery funding board and the interagency review team to coordinate the distribution of public and private funds.

Detailed criteria are established for distribution of competitive grants. The foundation must ensure to the extent practicable that each water resource inventory area receives grant funding over the 10-year period of the foundation.

The foundation hosts an annual conference to ensure that the best available science is used to preserve high quality habitats in Puget Sound. The foundation is also required to establish performance measures to evaluate its progress toward establishment of a network of high quality habitats. Beginning in 2000, the foundation must provide a biennial report to the Governor and the Legislature summarizing results and ongoing needs.

The chapter that is created by this act expires in 2009.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Passed Senate: 3/15/99, 48-1