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**Natural Resources, Ecology &  
Parks Committee**

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**HCR 4406**

**Brief Description:** Establishing a joint select legislative task force to review watershed health and salmon recovery plans.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Williams, Buck, Moeller, Hinkle, B. Sullivan, Linville and Takko.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Establishes a Joint Select Legislative Task Force (Task Force) to evaluate and make recommendations regarding implementation of watershed health and salmon recovery plans.
- Directs the Task Force to evaluate current organizational structures, plans, and funding sources and make recommendations for ongoing implementation and funding by December 31, 2005.

**Hearing Date:** 2/22/05

**Staff:** Jeff Olsen (786-7157).

**Background:**

Processes to conduct watershed planning and recover salmon involve federal, state, tribal, and local governments, in addition to lead entities, watershed planning groups, regional recovery groups, and in some watersheds sub-basin planning for the Northwest Power and Conservation Council. Many of these salmon and watershed processes are at the point of developing watershed level or regional salmon recovery plans

Watershed Planning (ESHB 2514, Chapter 247, Laws of 1998)

The Watershed Management Act of 1998 allows local governments to conduct watershed planning. If a local government conducts watershed planning, they must include a water quantity element, and may include water quality and habitat elements and the recommending minimum instream flows. The watershed planning area, similar to lead entities, may be conducted on a single or multi-WRIA (watershed resource inventory area) basis. Currently there are 31 planning units representing 40 WRIsAs conducting watershed planning.

Salmon Recovery Planning (ESHB 2496, Chapter 246, Laws of 1998)

The Salmon Recovery Act of 1998 established several new provisions including the creation of the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office, the requirement for a biennial State of the Salmon Report, an Independent Science Panel, the creation of local salmon recovery groups or "lead entities", and an Interagency Review Team to disperse funds for habitat restoration projects. Currently, there are 27 lead entities organizations in Washington.

Salmon Recovery Funding (2ESSB 5595, Chapter 13, Laws of 1999, 1st Spec. Sess.)

The Salmon Recovery Funding Act of 1999 primarily established the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) within the Interagency Office for Outdoor Recreation (IAC), but also included several other salmon recovery provisions. The SRFB makes grants for salmon habitat projects and salmon recovery activities pursuant to legislative appropriation. The IAC provides grant and loan administration assistance to the SRFB. The SRFB must develop procedures and criteria for allocating funds on a state-wide basis to address the highest priorities for salmon habitat protection and restoration.

#### Regional Salmon Recovery Organizations

Five regional organizations have formed to address salmon recovery on an Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU) scale. Of those established, two regional recovery organizations have been created statutorily, the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board (ESHB 2836, Chapter 60, Laws of 1998), and the Snake River Salmon Recovery Board (2004 Supplemental Capital Budget, ESHB 2573, Chapter 277, Laws of 2004, Partial Veto). The other three regional entities include the Puget Sound Shared Strategy, the Yakima Sub-basin Fish and Wildlife Planning Board, and the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board.. Regional recovery groups are in the process of completing regional recovery plans. When completed, the plans will contain strategies to address habitat, harvest, hatchery, and hydropower activities for recovering salmon populations within the region.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

A Joint Select Legislative Task Force (Task Force) is established to evaluate and make recommendations to the legislature regarding the implementation of watershed health and salmon recovery plans. The Task Force must select a chair, and staff support will be provided by staff from the House of Representatives Office of Program Research and Senate Committee Services.

The Task Force must evaluate and make recommendations including:

1. A review of local watershed and salmon recovery plans and projects;
2. A review of the current funding for administration, planning, and project implementation;
3. A review of the organizational structured of the regional recovery organizations and watershed level entities;
4. The development of recommendations for changes to current organizational structures;
5. The development of recommendations for sources of funding for ongoing activities; and
6. The development of recommendations for improving the allocation of mitigation funding on a watershed basis.

The Task Force includes the Chair and Ranking Minority from the following Committees in the House of Representatives:

- Economic Development, Agriculture, and Trade Committee;

- Natural Resources, Ecology, and Parks Committee; and
- Capital Budget Committee.

The Task Force includes the Chair and Ranking Minority from the following Committees in the Senate:

- Water, Energy, and Environment Committee;
- Natural Resources, Ocean, and Recreation Committee; and,
- Ways and Means Committee.

The Task Force may establish an advisory committee composed of the following members or their designees:

- The Director of the Department of Ecology;
- The Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife;
- The Chair of the Salmon Recovery Funding Board;
- A representative from the Office of the Governor;
- A representative from a watershed planning group;
- A representative from a lead entity;
- A representative from a regional salmon recovery group;
- A representative from the federal fisheries service; and,
- A representative from federally recognized Indian tribes.

The task force must be established by June 1, 2005, and report its evaluations and recommendations to the appropriate legislative committees by December 31, 2005. The task force expires January 1, 2006.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.