

VETO MESSAGE ON HB 2381

March 28, 2006

To the Honorable Speaker and Members,
The House of Representatives of the State of Washington

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am returning, without my approval, House Bill No. 2381
entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to allowing the reintroduction of
beavers into the historic habitat of the species."

House Bill 2381 would require Washington State's Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to issue a permit to individuals for the capture of live beavers in areas of the state where beaver populations are considered a nuisance. The permit also allows the transport and release of beavers within the state on property owned by the permit holder.

I understand that some landowners wish to have beavers released on their property, and that beavers can contribute positively to stream restoration and wildlife habitat. Certainly, in circumstances where relocation can be achieved without causing harm to adjacent properties, WDFW should be responsive, and should exercise its existing authority to trap beavers in problem areas and relocate them. The issue that House Bill 2381 addresses is not about the need for legislative authority so much as it is about receiving priority attention within WDFW.

While I am vetoing this bill, I have secured a commitment from WDFW to take three steps to be more responsive to landowner requests for beaver relocation.

WDFW has committed in writing to:

1. Instruct WDFW field staff to work more aggressively with interested landowners to relocate beavers on appropriate private properties where the benefits clearly outweigh the potential risks associated with future beaver-related damage;
2. The WDFW's Director will work with senior WDFW enforcement staff to identify a point person responsible for development and implementation of an effective beaver relocation process, and;
3. The WDFW will deliver to the Office of the Governor and all relevant legislative committees of the Washington State House and Senate, a report on beaver relocation activity conducted during 2006. The report will be delivered by January 1, 2007, and shall include information on the number of

landowner requests for beavers, the number of requests that were filled, and the number of beavers actually relocated.

I believe these steps will address the underlying frustration behind House Bill No. 2381. I look forward to tracking WDFW's performance according to above-noted measures.

For these reasons, I have vetoed House Bill No. 2381 in its entirety.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine O. Gregoire
Governor