

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2452

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to wildlife rehabilitation.

Brief Description: Creating a wildlife rehabilitation advisory committee.

Sponsors: Representatives Appleton, Campbell, Rolfes, Seaquist, Barlow, McCoy, Upthegrove, Hunt, Chase, Lantz, McIntire, Haigh and Nelson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/17/08, 1/28/08 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes a Wildlife Rehabilitation Advisory Committee within the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Van De Wege, Vice Chair; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Eickmeyer, Grant, Lantz, Loomis, McCoy and Nelson.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Kretz, Ranking Minority Member; Newhouse and Orcutt.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is in the early stages of developing a wildlife rehabilitation program that provides funding to private rehabilitation professionals. The funding from the program may be used by rehabilitation facilities for a number of activities, including diagnostic and lab services, equipment purchase, and the cost of continuing education. Revenue to fund the program comes in part from a \$2 charge collected when personalized plates are purchased from the Department of Licencing.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The WDFW is also responsible for adopting rules that relate to how wildlife affected by oil spills may be handled. These rules relate to matters such as the handling and care of oiled birds, certification requirements for those wishing to aid in wildlife rescue activities, and the establishment of training exercises.

Private facilities interested in conducting wildlife rehabilitation are required to be licensed by the WDFW and have their licenses renewed in the year 2010.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Director of the WDFW is required to establish a Wildlife Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) composed of private wildlife rehabilitation professionals and the WDFW employees with expertise in wildlife rehabilitation and the licensing of rehabilitation facilities. If possible, the Advisory Committee must include at least six private wildlife rehabilitation professionals, with no more than two individuals being employed with any one facility. The Director of the WDFW is also instructed to, if possible, include at least two members of a statewide organization representing the interests of wildlife rehabilitation facilities on the advisory committee.

The role of the Advisory Committee is to facilitate communication and partnership between the WDFW and private wildlife rehabilitation facilities. This includes improving information exchange, aiding the WDFW in tracking wildlife diseases, advising on the implementation of the WDFW's existing rehabilitation and oiled birds programs, providing feedback on how the WDFW licenses rehabilitation facilities, and identifying potential public investments in wildlife rehabilitation resources that would benefit the WDFW. The role of the Advisory Committee is to provide advice to the WDFW regarding the initial implementation of the Wildlife Rehabilitation Grant Program created by the 2007 Legislature.

Each member of the Advisory Committee that is not an employee of the WDFW is entitled to travel reimbursement.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill changes the minimum number of Advisory Committee members from five to six, eliminates the ability for the Advisory Committee to call itself into a formal meeting without the request of the WDFW, clarifies that the Advisory Committee will indeed be advisory only, and specifies that the first task of the Advisory Committee will be to aid in the development of the Wildlife Rehabilitation Grant Program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) There has historically been little formal communication between the WDFW and wildlife rehabilitation centers. This bill works in concert with existing programs to open communication and allow the WDFW to formally hear from the centers that care for injured wildlife. Both the wildlife rehabilitation centers and the WDFW need this partnership.

There is a wide variety of wildlife rehabilitation operations, and they all provide an invaluable service to the state. Wildlife rehabilitation centers are on the front line of wildlife diseases, work to save endangered species, and have facilities not available to the WDFW.

As populations increase, citizen's connection to nature decreases. Wildlife rehabilitation is a way for people to reconnect to nature. People not only work with wild animals, but wildlife rehabilitation centers also routinely host educational programs for the public.

The licensing program at the WDFW for wildlife rehabilitation began in the 1990's. Since that time, the size, number, and scope of wildlife rehabilitation centers has increased.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Appleton, prime sponsor; Tom Davis and Peggy Crain, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; Kol Medina, Muckleshoot Tribe; and Sylvia Moss, Progressive Animal Welfare Society.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.