

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6337

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to the state's management of the Puget Sound commercial salmon fishery.

Brief Description: Regarding the state's management of the Puget Sound commercial salmon fishery.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation (originally sponsored by Senator Jacobsen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/25/08, 2/27/08 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to initiate discussions with commercial fishers and commercial fishing associations regarding the commercial Puget Sound salmon fishery.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Kretz, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Eickmeyer, Grant, Lantz, Loomis, McCoy, Nelson and Newhouse.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Van De Wege, Vice Chair; Kristiansen and Orcutt.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is authorized to establish policies regarding fish, shellfish, and wildlife species. Among other duties, the WDFW classifies wildlife and establishes the basic rules and regulations governing the time, place, manner, and methods used to harvest or enjoy fish and wildlife.

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.

Current law provides general direction to the WDFW regarding fish and wildlife management. The WDFW is directed to conserve the fisheries resources of the state in a manner that does not impair the resource. Consistent with this conservation objective, the WDFW must seek to maintain the economic well-being and stability of the fishing industry and promote orderly fisheries.

Summary of Bill:

The WDFW is required to initiate discussions with commercial fishers and commercial fishing associations. The discussions must be aimed at facilitating the commercial harvest of salmon in the Puget Sound in a way that conserves the resource, promotes orderly fisheries, and enhances commercial fishing. The discussions must consider the impacts of economic changes in the fishing industry, and keep in mind the well-being of all aspects of the commercial salmon fishing industry in Puget Sound.

The discussions must be funded within available funds. A summary must be provided to the Legislature by November 1, 2008.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The proposed conversations between the WDFW and the commercial fishers will attempt to address the broader picture regarding the public efforts and investments made by the state in building salmon stocks to a level which can sustain commercial harvest, but then managing the harvest in a manner that encourages the harvested salmon to be exported from Washington and not enjoyed by the residents that make the sacrifices necessary to have a harvestable salmon stock available. The state needs to rethink its model of catching all of the harvestable salmon at one time, only to encourage the export of the product by dumping the catch into the market. The WDFW is hesitant to transition from the historic industrial, export fishery management model to a model that supports local economies. Fish are a finite resource, and the salmon culture must be rebuilt locally.

State fisheries management should encourage local food consumption over the global export market. Locally purchased fish provides a greater profit for local fishers and increases state tax revenue. There is a high demand for local, fresh fish, but the current harvest rules set by the WDFW discourage local sales. The WDFW understands the problem, but needs to be pushed in the right direction. This is why the bill is not superfluous.

(Neutral) The bill does not define a new obligation for the WDFW and proposes to address issues for which a process has already been initiated. The well-being of the commercial salmon industry in Puget Sound must be viewed both for the gill-net fishers and the purse seine fishers.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Ezra Eickmeyer and Ray Honec, Puget Sound Harvesters Association; Janie Morris, Washington State Farmers Association; and Nick Jones, Puget Sound Salmon Commission.

(Neutral) Patrick Pattillo, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.