

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1071

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources & Parks, March 26, 2013

Title: An act relating to state and private partnerships for managing salmonid hatcheries.

Brief Description: Regarding state and private partnerships for managing salmonid hatcheries.

Sponsors: House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Blake and Chandler).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/06/13, 95-0.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources & Parks: 3/14/13, 3/26/13 [DP, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Pearson, Chair; Smith, Vice Chair; Rolfes, Ranking Member; Hargrove and Kline.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Hewitt and Parlette.

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: Role of the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). DFW serves as manager of the state's fish and wildlife resources. Among other duties, DFW must protect and manage fish and wildlife including establishing the time, place, manner, and methods used to harvest or enjoy fish and wildlife.

DFW Hatcheries Generally. DFW operates approximately 80 hatchery facilities throughout the state, with about 75 percent of facilities raising salmon or steelhead and 25 percent rearing trout and other game fish.

Salmon Hatchery Partnership Agreements. Seven hatcheries were identified for closure in the Governor's proposed 2009-11 Operating Budget. In 2009, the Legislature passed a bill that required DFW to establish a program to utilize partnerships to resume or continue operation of salmon hatcheries closed or scheduled for closure during the 2009-11 biennium.

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 legislation established provisions for these agreements including the following:

- requirements for those wishing to partner with DFW, including that the partner has a long-range business plan;
- prioritization for applications that would maximize hatchery production; and
- requirements that partnership agreements be consistent with existing law and policy relating to hatchery management.

Summary of Bill: The current scope of the authority to establish partnership agreements for salmon hatcheries is modified to allow such agreements to be used for salmon hatcheries located in the Hood Canal basin.

The long-range business plan required of partners may allow the partner to harvest hatchery chum salmon in a designated area as provided by DFW permit or rule of the Fish and Wildlife Commission. All chum salmon harvested must be sold at a price commensurate with the current market, with proceeds used to operate the hatchery.

In addition to a number of existing requirements, hatchery partnership agreements must be consistent with federally recognized tribal rights and require that partners give preference to retaining classified employees wherever possible.

DFW must provide a report to the Legislature by October 31, 2016, summarizing the actions taken to implement the hatchery partnership program and providing recommendations for the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: During these challenging state budget times, there is a need to find creative solutions like these partnerships to support hatcheries. Hatchery partnerships offer a way to help maintain hatcheries to avoid closures, which would decrease fish production and reduce Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups (RFEGs) carcass and egg revenues. Proponents see the bill as sustaining hatcheries, not taking funding away from anyone.

CON: RFEGs are partners with the state in salmon recovery and understand the need for partnerships as a tool. However, the movement of hatcheries from state-funded to partnership status threatens to reduce one funding source received by RFEGs, which is revenue from surplus salmon and egg sales that return to hatcheries. The new surplus salmon disposal contract negotiated by DFW brought in increased revenues for RFEGs, but this bill could result in reductions at a time when these groups may also see federal cuts. RFEGs are looking at sustainable alternative funding sources to bring to the Legislature in the next year or two.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Kelly Cunningham, DFW; Bob Kehoe, Purse Seine Vessel Owners Assn.; Matt Zuvich, WA Federation of State Employees.

CON: Margaret Neuman, Doug Miller, RFEG; Larry Zalzanick, Regional Fisheries Enhancement Coalition.