

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**SB 5753**

**AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS, MARCH 7, 1991**

**Brief Description:** Establishing an advisory council and other programs to enhance upland game bird population.

**SPONSORS:** Senators Oke, Bauer, Owen, Craswell, Metcalf, Roach, Nelson, L. Smith, Amondson and Thorsness.

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5753 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Metcalf, Chairman; Oke, Vice Chairman; Amondson, Barr, Conner, Owen, Patterson, and Snyder.

**Staff:** Vic Moon (786-7469)

**Hearing Dates:** February 19, 1991; February 25, 1991

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS**

**Majority Report:** That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5753 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McDonald, Chairman; Craswell, Vice Chairman; Bailey, Bauer, Gaspard, Johnson, L. Kreidler, Metcalf, Murray, Newhouse, Niemi, Rinehart, Saling, L. Smith, Talmadge, West, Williams, and Wojahn.

**Staff:** Michael Groesch (786-7715)

**Hearing Dates:** March 6, 1991; March 7, 1991

**BACKGROUND:**

The Department of Wildlife has indicated that the two state pheasant rearing farms on Whidbey Island and in Lewis County may have to be closed because of budget considerations.

**SUMMARY:**

An upland bird habitat advisory committee consisting of 13 members is created in the Department of Wildlife. The committee will be appointed by the director, representing hunters, landowners, nonconsumptive users, conservation interests, local government and the Indian tribes. One representative from each group must be from western Washington and one from eastern Washington. Members will serve staggered terms at the will of the director and will be reimbursed for travel and expenses. The committee must meet at least twice a year.

The committee will advise the director on statewide upland bird habitat and advise the department on ways to enhance pheasant populations in both eastern and western Washington and to improve all facilities statewide that support the upland bird habitat program. The committee may seek grants and funding to help support the upland bird habitat program. The advisory committee will establish a volunteer network of citizens including committee members who wish to assist the department with the program.

The department will study and fully fund the existing game bird farms on Whidbey Island and in Lewis County and provide information and assistance to encourage the maintenance of these farms. The department will reduce pheasant hunting seasons for eastern Washington with the goal of increasing the pheasant populations to the five-year level of 1975-80. The department will increase the enforcement of wildlife regulations by wildlife officers and will apply all of the money collected from the pheasant permit to programs designed to enhance pheasant habitat throughout the state. The Department of Wildlife will conduct an upland bird habitat assessment in eastern Washington and will report to the Legislature by January 1, 1992. In addition, the department will conduct a study for the needs of an additional upland bird farm or farms in both eastern and western Washington. The Department of Wildlife and the Department of Corrections will jointly review the feasibility and costs of creating a pheasant-rearing program for inmates at McNeil Island Prison.

A western Washington permit will be required to hunt pheasant until January 31, 1992. The permit will be \$35. After this time, the fee will be \$15 for each two-week period of an eight-week season. For punchcard for a minor, the amount will be \$15 for a full season and a punchcard for two consecutive days will be \$20.

**EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:**

The Legislature finds that the state's upland wildlife habitats are in transition and that the state's population increases preservation of upland wildlife habitat will require greater protection and maintenance. The Legislature finds that there's an increased need for acquisition and management of habitat areas, both public and private. The Legislature recognizes that the Department of Wildlife is establishing an Upland Wildlife Habitat Advisory Council and that this council should have membership that will affect various interested parties. It is the intent of the Legislature that the Department of Wildlife will work with this council in furtherance of the study required by this act and review other issues that are related to upland habitat, especially for pheasant.

The Department of Wildlife will prepare a study and report to the Legislature by January 1992. The study will address the following programs and information relating to upland bird populations and the restoration of habitat in the following areas: 1) increases in both public and private habitat

acquisitions; 2) increase partnership between the Department of Wildlife and county, state and federal agencies, land owners, conservation organizations and the citizens of the state; 3) restoration of critical upland habitats will be established through a strategic acquisition and complementary enhancement of private lands; 4) the department will study implementation of good neighbor policies relating to the stewardship of acquired and restored upland bird lands; 5) the committee will review recommendations regarding future efforts necessary to further and promote the state's ecosystems program; 6) the committee will review the upland bird populations and recreational opportunities with respect to these populations; 7) improvements and associated costs with respect to both eastern and western Washington upland bird programs will be analyzed; 8) an enhanced use of citizen volunteers to assist the department will be reviewed; 9) existing game farms on Whidbey Island and in Lewis County will be maintained and the productivity of these facilities and the need for additional bird farms in both eastern and western Washington will be studied; 10) there will be an evaluation of the status of the upland bird release program in other states; 11) the department will develop a program to encourage and assist agricultural and rangeland owners to maintain sufficient upland wildlife habitat; 12) there will be a development of an enforcement plan that will enhance enforcement of the unlawful taking of upland birds and provide stricter adherents to bag limits; 13) there will be wildlife habitat assessment for eastern Washington that will include operation and maintenance cost for acquired and managed properties; 14) the department will provide information demonstrating the upland bird population trends and hunter harvest data for both eastern and western Washington; and, 15) the department will recommend supplemental licensing and fees for the hunting of upland birds that will support the hunting program.

A renewal fee is established for the western Washington Upland Bird Hunting License. The fee will be \$35 for all licenses from the effective date of the act through January 1, 1992. Following January 1, 1992, the permit shall be available as a full season option, an early season option and a late season option. For the full season the fee will be \$35, for the early season the fee will be \$25, for the late season the fee will be \$25, for a juvenile season-long permit the fee will be \$20, and a two-day consecutive hunting permit will be \$20. Persons under the age of 15 will be considered juveniles for the purposes of this act.

The Wildlife Commission will establish, by rule, an enforcement punchcard to be used for the hunting of pheasants in western Washington.

The sum of \$770,000 is appropriated to the Department of Wildlife from the wildlife fund for the upland bird program.

**EFFECT OF PROPOSED SECOND SUBSTITUTE:**

The appropriation of \$770,000 is deleted and enactment of the bill is conditioned upon provision of funding in the budget.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** yes

**Fiscal Note:** requested

**TESTIMONY FOR (Environment & Natural Resources):**

Increased user funding is needed to operate the pheasant farms in western Washington. The Department of Wildlife needs to review the whole upland bird program in eastern and western Washington.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST (Environment & Natural Resources):** None

**TESTIFIED (Environment & Natural Resources):** Jeff Parson, National Audubon Society; Ron Peregrin, Ruth Poelker, Department of Wildlife; George Prescott

**TESTIMONY FOR (Ways & Means):**

Maintenance of upland bird hunting is important to the state's economy and quality of life.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST (Ways & Means):** None

**TESTIFIED (Ways & Means):** Senator Oke (pro)