

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6337

As Passed Senate, February 18, 2008

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: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 2/06/08, 2/07/08 [DPS].
Passed Senate: 2/18/08, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6337 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; Hatfield, Vice Chair; Morton, Ranking Minority Member; Fraser, Hargrove, Rockefeller, Spanel, Stevens and Swecker.

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

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

Current statute provides general direction to DFW regarding fish and wildlife management. DFW must conserve the fisheries resources of the state in a manner that does not impair the resource. Consistent with this conservation objective, DFW must seek to maintain the economic well-being and stability of the fishing industry. DFW must promote orderly fisheries, and work to enhance and improve both recreation and commercial fishing.

The Department of Agriculture (Agriculture) may establish a commodity board for purposes including to assist agricultural producers with product development, marketing, commodity-related education, and to minimize economic waste. In 2005 Agriculture created the Puget Sound Salmon Commission (PSSC) to promote the marketing of Puget Sound gillnet salmon. Puget Sound gillnet harvesters pay an assessment totaling two percent of the landing value of their salmon harvest to fund the PSSC's activities.

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.

Summary of Substitute Bill: DFW must work with appropriate commercial fishers and commercial fishing associations to consider ways to facilitate the commercial harvest of Puget Sound salmon in a manner that: Conserves the resource; maintains the economic well being of the fishing industry; promotes orderly fisheries; and enhances and improves commercial fishing in the state.

The discussions must consider the well-being of all aspects of the Puget Sound commercial salmon industry. Additionally, the discussions must address commercial fisheries issues and are not to impact non-commercial fisheries or fishing interests.

DFW must carry out this task within existing funds. Additionally, DFW must provide a report to the Legislature summarizing the discussions by November 1, 2008.

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 Original Bill: PRO: Prioritizing the management of fish to encourage local processing and sale will greatly benefit local people and the local economy. The bill is not about allocation, but about where Puget Sound fish head after they are caught. It seeks to prioritize fish going to local markets over going out to the global economy. This is about more than just fishers, but also ties into local processing and value added products. DFW has put off prioritizing local markets and the surrounding discussions for years. The PSSC is set up to help market gillnet caught salmon, and a longer season and high quality product would greatly help.

CON: Although the intent is understandable, DFW is already trying to work with the gillnetters and commodity board to develop markets. The bill is poorly constructed, creating vague responsibilities that will be difficult to monitor. This bill would also be tough for DFW to enact, as it is difficult for DFW to track the end point of sale. Fish allocation should not be conducted through legislation. If allocation is a problem, all involved should be at the table to discuss the matter.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Ray Honea, Puget Sound Harvesters Assn.; Fred Malinkovich, Puget Sound Harvesters Assn.; Nick Jones, Puget Sound Harvesters Assn.; Ezra Eickmeyer, Puget Sound Harvesters Assn.; Peter Knudson, Puget Sound Harvesters Assn.; Bob Franks, Puget Sound Harvesters Assn.; David Harsila, Puget Sound Salmon Commission.

CON: Ed Owens, Coalition of Coastal Fisheries; Robert Lende, Purse Seine Vessel Owners Assn.; Patrick Pattillo, Department of Fish and Wildlife.