
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

SB 5127

Brief Description: Concerning the governance of the department of fish and wildlife.

Sponsors: Senators Jacobsen and Haugen.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Changes the appointment authority for the Director of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife from the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) to the Governor.
- Reduces the number of members on the Commission from nine to five.
- Reduces the terms of members on the Commission from six to three years.
- Vacates the remaining terms of sitting Commission members and requires a new round of appointments.

Hearing Date: 3/24/09

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117)

Background:

Composition of the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) consists of nine members who serve six-year terms. Members are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. Each odd-numbered year, the Commission must elect one of its members as Chair and another member as Vice-Chair.

Persons eligible for appointment as members of the Commission must have general knowledge of the habits and distribution of fish and wildlife and must not hold another state, county, or

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municipal elected or appointed office. In making appointments to the Commission, the Governor must seek to maintain a balance reflecting all aspects of fish and wildlife, including representation recommended by sport fishers, commercial fishers, hunters, private landowners, and environmentalists.

Commission Geographic Residency Requirements.

Three commissioners must reside east of the summit of the Cascade mountains, three must reside west of the summit, and three are appointed at-large. No two commissioners may be residents of the same county.

Commission Meetings.

The Commission must hold at least one regular meeting each calendar quarter. The Commission may also hold special meetings when called by the Chair and five members. Five members constitute a quorum to transact business.

Authority to Appoint the Director.

The Commission has the authority to appoint the Director of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). The Director must supervise the administration and operation of the WDFW and perform duties as prescribed by law and delegated by the Commission.

Role of the Commission.

The Legislature has authorized the Commission to establish policies regarding fish and wildlife species and to monitor the WDFW's implementation of those policies. Among other duties, the Commission classifies wildlife and establishes basic rules and regulations governing the time, place, manner, and methods used to harvest or enjoy fish and wildlife.

Summary of Bill:

Authority to Appoint the Director.

The authority to appoint the Director is changed from the Commission to the Governor. Consent of the Senate is still required to confirm an appointment. The Commission is required to advise the Governor on the selection of a Director.

Composition of the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The number of members on the Commission is reduced from nine to five, and the terms of Commission members are reduced from six years to three. The term of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Commission is reduced from two years to one.

Of the five members, two must be from eastern Washington, two from western Washington, and one member must be appointed at large. No two members may reside in any one of the administrative regions recognized by the WDFW.

As of January 1, 2010, the terms of all sitting members of the Commission are vacated. The Governor is required to appoint five new members with the consent of the Senate. Of the initial five new members, one must be appointed for a three-year term, two for a two-year term, and two for a one-year term.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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