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HOUSE BILL 2349

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State of Washington

62nd Legislature

2012 Regular Session

By Representatives Kretz, Blake, Billig, Short, Hinkle, Upthegrove, Fitzgibbon, and McCune

Read first time 01/12/12. Referred to Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources.

1 AN ACT Relating to the management of beavers; adding a new section  
2 to chapter 77.32 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 77.36 RCW;  
3 creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that beavers have  
6 historically played a significant role in maintaining the health of  
7 watersheds in the Pacific Northwest and act as key agents in riparian  
8 ecology. The live trapping and relocating of beavers has long been  
9 recognized as a beneficial wildlife management practice, and has been  
10 successfully utilized to restore and maintain stream ecosystems for  
11 over fifty years. The benefits of active beaver populations include  
12 reduced stream sedimentation, stream temperature moderation, higher  
13 dissolved oxygen levels, overall improved water quality, increased  
14 natural water storage capabilities within watersheds, and reduced  
15 stream velocities. These benefits improve and create habitat for many  
16 other species, including endangered salmon, river otters, sandhill  
17 cranes, trumpeter swans, and other riparian and aquatic species.  
18 Relocating beavers into their historic habitat provides a natural

1 mechanism for improving the environmental conditions in Washington's  
2 riparian ecosystems without having to resort to governmental regulation  
3 or expensive publically funded engineering projects.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 77.32 RCW  
5 to read as follows:

6 (1) The department shall offer a beaver relocation permit that  
7 allows the holder or the holder's agent to capture live beavers in the  
8 areas of the state where elevated beaver populations are considered a  
9 nuisance or are causing damage, transport the beavers, and release the  
10 live beavers on property owned or managed by the permit holder.  
11 Priority of issuing permits must be based on properties in which beaver  
12 populations are considered a nuisance.

13 (2) The department may limit the availability of beaver relocation  
14 permits to areas of the state where:

15 (a) There is a low probability of released beavers becoming a  
16 nuisance or causing damage;

17 (b) Conditions exist for released beavers to improve, maintain, or  
18 manage stream or riparian ecosystem functions; and

19 (c) There is evidence of historic endemic beaver populations.

20 (3) The department may condition beaver relocation permits to  
21 maximize the relocation's success and minimize risk. Factors that the  
22 department may condition include:

23 (a) Stream gradient;

24 (b) Sufficiency of the water supply;

25 (c) Stream geomorphology;

26 (d) Adequacy of a food source;

27 (e) Proper site elevation and valley width;

28 (f) Age of the beavers relocated;

29 (g) Times of year for capture and relocation;

30 (h) Requirements for the capture, handling, and transport of the  
31 live beavers;

32 (i) Minimum and maximum numbers of beavers that can be relocated in  
33 one area; and

34 (j) Requirements for the permit holder to initially provide  
35 supplemental food and lodge building materials.

36 (4) The department shall provide beaver relocation permits at no  
37 charge to the applicant.

1 (5) The holder of a beaver relocation permit must either obtain a  
2 trapping license under RCW 77.65.450 or employ a trapper licensed under  
3 RCW 77.65.450 to capture and transport the beavers that are to be  
4 relocated. The department may require additional training specific to  
5 trapping and relocating beavers.

6 (6) Nothing in this section creates any liability against the state  
7 or the beaver relocation permit holder nor authorizes any private right  
8 of action for any damages subsequently caused by beavers released  
9 pursuant to a beaver relocation permit.

10 (7) For the purposes of this section only, beaver may be relocated  
11 from west of the crest of the Cascade mountains to areas east of the  
12 crest of the Cascade mountains, but may not be relocated to any area  
13 west of the crest of the Cascade mountains.

14 (8) For the purposes of this section, "beaver" means the American  
15 beaver (*Castor canadensis*).

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 77.36 RCW  
17 to read as follows:

18 (1) Whenever the department undertakes the trapping of nuisance or  
19 problem-causing beavers, the department must, if the option is  
20 available, capture the beavers with a live trap and work with the  
21 holders of beaver relocation permits issued under section 2 of this act  
22 to relocate the beavers onto properties that have requested their  
23 placement.

24 (2) The department must keep records of all nuisance beaver calls,  
25 requests for relocation, and relocated beavers in order to develop an  
26 updated understanding of beaver population dynamics.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) The department of fish and wildlife must  
28 develop a beaver damage management plan, with the input of interested  
29 stakeholders, that outlines a strategy for a sustained, statewide  
30 effort to utilize beavers as agents for habitat restoration and water  
31 storage through the year 2020.

32 (2) The beaver damage management plan must address population  
33 management, damage management, watershed restoration, disease and  
34 nuisance management, and public education and outreach. This planning  
35 must account for, at a minimum, the following:

- 1           (a) Maintaining beaver populations with their current distribution  
2 in appropriate habitat;
- 3           (b) Increasing the consistency in the response options available  
4 for beaver damage and increase the frequency of use of nontraditional  
5 management options;
- 6           (c) Improving riparian habitats, associated streams, and wetlands  
7 in a minimum of ten streams through translocating beavers into  
8 unoccupied, suitable habitat;
- 9           (d) Minimizing the possibility of spreading aquatic diseases and  
10 aquatic nuisance species from known contaminated sources to clean  
11 watersheds as a result of beavers moving among drainages;
- 12           (e) Increasing stakeholder awareness of, and the appreciation for,  
13 the role of beavers in Washington ecosystems; and
- 14           (f) Improving the understanding of all government employees  
15 involved in beaver management and ensure consistent transmission of  
16 information and the application of management actions.
- 17           (3) The beaver damage management plan must be completed by June 30,  
18 2013.
- 19           (4) This section expires June 30, 2014.

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