

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1257

As Passed Senate, March 31, 2017

Title: An act relating to the release of wild beavers.

Brief Description: Concerning the release of wild beavers.

Sponsors: House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Kretz, Blake, Taylor, Fitzgibbon and Buys).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/09/17, 98-0.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources & Parks: 3/09/17, 3/21/17 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed Senate: 3/31/17, 45-1.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides Western Washington beavers may only be relocated to an area west of the crest of the Cascade Mountains.
- Provides the Department of Fish and Wildlife may require notification of adjacent landowners before releasing beavers.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Pearson, Chair; Hawkins, Vice Chair; Van De Wege, Ranking Minority Member; Fortunato and McCoy.

Staff: Kelsey Morfitt (786-7407)

Background: Under statute, wildlife are the property of the state. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) conserves and manages the state's wildlife, which includes trapping and relocating American beavers.

Legislative findings indicate that beavers help maintain the health of watersheds and stream ecosystems. These benefits can include the following:

- reduced stream sedimentation;
- stream temperature moderation;

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.

- higher dissolved oxygen levels;
- improved water quality;
- increased natural water storage in watersheds;
- reduced stream velocities; and
- improved habitat for salmon, river otters, sandhill cranes, trumpeter swans, and other riparian and aquatic species.

Currently, American beavers living anywhere in the state may only be relocated to Eastern Washington, which is defined as east of the crest of the Cascade Mountains. DFW may condition the relocation of beavers on the following factors:

- stream gradient;
- sufficiency of the water supply;
- stream geomorphology;
- adequacy of a food source;
- proper site elevation and valley width;
- age of the beavers;
- times of year for capture and relocation;
- requirements for the capture, handling, and transport of the live beavers;
- minimum and maximum numbers of beavers that can be relocated in one area; and
- requirements for the permit holder to initially provide supplemental food and lodge building materials.

Summary of Bill: DFW may only relocate American beavers located in Western Washington to an area west of the crest of the Cascade Mountains. Additionally, DFW may require notification of potentially affected landowners before releasing beavers near these landowners.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Beavers should be relocated to where they will do good, not harm, and to areas where they cannot reach because of urban development. Beavers can increase watershed storage, provide salmon-rearing habitat, and help control rising temperatures. Relocating beavers is consistent with preventing the spread of pests and disease.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Joel Kretz, Prime Sponsor; AJ Dotzauer, Tulalip Tribes; Mike Sevigny, Tulalip Tribes, Wildlife Manager; Anis Aoude, DFW.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.