

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 5381

C 289 L 21
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Addressing fish passage project permit streamlining.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Hobbs, Fortunato, King and Warnick).

Senate Committee on Transportation
House Committee on Environment & Energy

Background: Hydraulic Project Approval for Fish Habitat Enhancement Projects. A hydraulic project approval (HPA), issued by the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), is required for any project that will use, divert, obstruct, or change the natural flow or bed of any of the salt or fresh waters of the state. If a project meets certain criteria qualifying it as a fish habitat enhancement project and is approved by certain entities, it is eligible for a streamlined review and approval process. Fish passage barrier removal projects are classified as fish habitat enhancement projects. Local governments have a 15-day comment period on applications, and WDFW must make a decision on the permit within 45 days. Local governments may not charge fees or require other permits for fish habitat enhancement projects that qualify for and receive streamlined HPA review.

Floodplain Management. The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), managed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), makes federally backed flood insurance available in those states and communities that agree to adopt and enforce floodplain management ordinances to reduce future flood damage. In Washington, the Department of Ecology (Ecology) is the lead state agency for floodplain management, while local governments are responsible for implementing local floodplain management plans as well as the NFIP.

Shoreline Management Act Permits. The Shoreline Management Act (SMA) of 1971 governs shoreline usage of the state. The SMA requires that most developments near state shorelines be consistent with shoreline master programs developed by local governments. Certain projects require a substantial development permit reviewed by the local government

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and filed with Ecology. Public or private projects, designed to improve fish or wildlife habitat or fish passage, receiving a streamlined HPA review are exempt from the SMA.

Federal Permitting. Depending on site location and conditions, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) fish passage barrier removal projects commonly need federal permits under the Clean Water Act, Rivers and Harbor Act, Endangered Species Act, and National Historic Preservation Act. Occasionally, federal permits are also needed through the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Gold and Bald Eagle Protection Act, and Marine Mammal Protection Act. WSDOT has statutory guidance to implement a multiagency permit program and to establish programmatic agreements and permits with both state and federal agencies, as appropriate.

Summary: Hydraulic Project Approval for Fish Habitat Enhancement Projects. WSDOT fish passage barrier correction portions of broader transportation projects are established as eligible for the existing streamlined review and approval process for fish habitat enhancement projects (FHEPs). WSDOT is directed to use an online permit application system or a joint aquatic resource permit application form to apply for permit approval, and for WSDOT projects WDFW must make a decision on the permit within 30 days.

Fish habitat enhancement projects and restoration projects sponsored by federally recognized tribes are added to the list of projects eligible to receive expedited permit processing as FHEPs.

Floodplain Management. Local governments are authorized to charge fees or impose requirements, or both, on streamlined fish habitat enhancement projects to comply with National Flood Insurance Program requirements.

Shoreline Management Act Permits. Public projects for the primary purpose of fish passage improvement or fish barrier removal are exempt from the substantial development permit requirements of the SMA. Forest practices hydraulic projects designed to improve fish or wildlife habitat or fish passage are exempt from the substantial development permit requirements of the SMA when the project has been approved by the Department of Natural Resources and local government notification requirements have been met.

Federal Permitting. WSDOT must implement a multiagency effort, in coordination with Ecology and WDFW, and work with the relevant federal environmental permitting agencies to streamline the acquisition of commonly needed environmental permits and approvals for WSDOT fish passage barrier correction projects. Expected results include developing programmatic permit options that:

- simplify the application process;
- reduce paperwork; and
- reduce the amount of time and cost it takes to acquire these permits and approvals.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	49	0	
House	98	0	(House amended)
Senate	48	0	(Senate concurred)

Effective: July 25, 2021