

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2598

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Agriculture & Natural Resources

**Title:** An act relating to improving statewide coordination in support of anadromous fish recovery.

**Brief Description:** Improving statewide coordination in support of anadromous fish recovery.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Lekanoff, Bernbaum, Parshley, Ramel, Richards, Pollet, Ryu, Nance and Timmons.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/3/26, 2/4/26 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Creates the Salmon Advisory Commission to develop recommendations regarding agency actions, legislation, and budget priorities to enhance salmon and steelhead recovery.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Reeves, Chair; Morgan, Vice Chair; Bernbaum, Nance, Richards and Springer.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Schmick.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Dent, Ranking Minority Member; Engell, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McClintock and Orcutt.

**Staff:** Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

## **Background:**

### Anadromous Fish Management.

Several species of salmon, as well as Puget Sound steelhead trout, are listed as either threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is responsible for managing the state's fish and wildlife resources. Other state agencies are responsible for various other issues that relate to salmon recovery: for example, water quality, land management, and fish passage barrier removal. Those agencies include the Department of Ecology (Ecology), the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT).

### The Governor's Salmon Recovery Office.

The Governor's Salmon Recovery Office (SRO) is responsible for coordinating the statewide strategy for salmon recovery to healthy, sustainable population levels. A primary purpose of the SRO is to coordinate and assist in the development, implementation, and revision of regional salmon recovery plans. For administrative purposes, the SRO is located within the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO).

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## **Summary of Bill:**

### The Salmon Advisory Commission.

A Salmon Advisory Commission (Commission) is established to:

- improve the coordination and understanding of the factors that influence salmon and steelhead recovery;
- consider existing efforts and needs in all areas that influence salmon and steelhead recovery, in order to identify gaps; and
- develop recommendations to be submitted to the Governor and the Legislature regarding agency actions, legislation, and budget priorities to enhance salmon and steelhead recovery.

The members of the Commission are as follows:

- the Director of the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs;
- each elected tribal chair from federally recognized tribes whose lands and territories included parts of Washington, invited by the Governor, who may designate a tribal councilmember to serve as their alternate;
- the Director of WDFW;
- the Director of DNR;
- the Director of Ecology;
- the Director of the Puget Sound Partnership;
- the Director of WSDOT;
- the Director of the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation;
- the Director of the RCO;
- the Director of the State Conservation Commission;

- the Director of the Department of Agriculture;
- the Director of the Parks and Recreation Commission;
- the Director of the Department of Health;
- four legislators—one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the House of Representatives and the Senate; and
- two representatives of cities and counties, appointed by the Governor.

The Commission must meet twice per year, choose cochairs from among its legislative membership, and be staffed by legislative staff. The Commission's first report to the Governor and Legislature containing recommendations regarding anadromous fish recovery is due October 1, 2026, and subsequent reports are due by June 1 and December 1 of each year.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Salmon are not just a species, they are the fundamental essence of Washington's identity and ecosystems. Salmon and steelhead populations continue to decline. The question that persists is "who is in charge of the salmon?" Washington has strong agencies and dedicated agency staff working on salmon recovery, but decisions are often siloed. The state should ensure coordination between the executive branch, the legislative branch, and honoring the comanagement responsibilities and obligations to our Washington tribes and those tribes who have treaty rights within Washington Territory. Climate change and environmental impacts are accelerating on stream flows, water temperatures, habitat resilience, delays and misalignment now, having irreversible consequences. Tribes are bearing the brunt of these failures, as salmon decline, directly undermining treaty-reserved fishing rights upheld by the state and the federal law. This process does not replace the government-to-government relationship between the state and tribes, and it does not replace agency authority. The goal is to identify and address gaps and overlaps to improve salmon recovery. Tribes are not stakeholders, but sovereign governments and comanagers and the state's partners and allies.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) Some of the best salmon recovery efforts have been done by tribes. Tribes have both local knowledge and accountability, and that is what is necessary to keep salmon recovery on track. There is not a need for more bureaucracy. The state has had trouble

recovering salmon, and the solution is to put more decisions in the hands of those with local knowledge and experience. The Legislature, unfortunately, has allowed the streamlining of certain permitting processes to lapse.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Debra Lekanoff, prime sponsor.

(Other) Todd Myers, Washington Policy Center.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.