
HOUSE BILL 2598

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

By Representatives Lekanoff, Bernbaum, Parshley, Ramel, Richards, Pollet, Ryu, Nance, and Timmons

Read first time 01/20/26. Referred to Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources.

1 AN ACT Relating to improving statewide coordination in support of
2 anadromous fish recovery; amending RCW 77.85.005; adding a new
3 section to chapter 77.85 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that in recognition
6 of the cultural, treaty, economic, recreational, and legal importance
7 of salmon in Washington, many state agencies' role is to implement
8 policy and laws, and they devote significant program attention and
9 resources to supporting the recovery, viability, and protection of
10 anadromous fish. Further, the legislature recognizes the importance
11 of a coordinated approach to statewide salmon recovery not just
12 between state agencies, but also in partnership with the state's
13 tribal comanagers. The legislature intends to ensure that all
14 pertinent state agencies share in and support the mission of
15 recovering and protecting salmon in Washington by creating a venue
16 through which state agencies and tribes can come together to review
17 overall progress towards salmon recovery. However, the legislature
18 does not intend to reallocate among state agencies any existing
19 programs or responsibilities related to salmon recovery in Washington
20 through this act.

1 **Sec. 2.** RCW 77.85.005 and 2009 c 345 s 9 are each amended to
2 read as follows:

3 (1) The legislature finds that repeated attempts to improve
4 salmonid fish runs throughout the state of Washington have failed to
5 (~~avert listings of~~) recover salmon and steelhead runs that are
6 listed as threatened or endangered under the federal endangered
7 species act (16 U.S.C. Sec. 1531 et seq.). These (~~(listings)~~)
8 continued declines threaten the (~~(sport)~~) recreational, commercial,
9 and tribal fishing industries as well as the economic well-being and
10 vitality of vast areas of the state. It is the intent of the
11 legislature to (~~(begin)~~) strengthen activities required for the
12 recovery of salmon stocks as soon as possible, although the
13 legislature understands that successful recovery efforts may not be
14 realized for many years because of the life cycle of salmon and the
15 complex array of natural and human-caused problems they face.

16 (2) The legislature finds that it is in the interest of the
17 citizens of the state of Washington for the state to retain primary
18 responsibility for managing the natural resources of the state,
19 rather than abdicate those responsibilities to the federal
20 government, and that the state may best accomplish this objective by
21 (~~(integrating)~~) improved integration of local and regional recovery
22 activities into a statewide strategy that can make the most effective
23 use of provisions of federal laws allowing for a state lead in salmon
24 recovery, delivered through implementation activities consistent with
25 regional and watershed recovery plans.

26 (3) The legislature also (~~(finds that a)~~) supports the statewide
27 salmon recovery strategy (~~(must be developed and implemented through~~
28 ~~an)~~) and recognizes the state's active public involvement process in
29 order to ensure public participation in, and support for, salmon
30 recovery.

31 (4) The legislature also finds that there is a substantial link
32 between the provisions of the federal endangered species act and the
33 federal clean water act (33 U.S.C. Sec. 1251 et seq.).

34 (5) The legislature further finds that effective habitat
35 protection and restoration is a vital component of salmon recovery
36 efforts. With amplified climate change effects and human population
37 growth, the legislature must protect what the state currently has and
38 will have in the future, and thus must vastly increase the scope and
39 scale of restoration, also including investments and inclusion of
40 salmon recovery in the growth management act. Therefore, it is the

1 intent of the legislature to specifically address salmon habitat
2 protection and restoration for properly functioning watershed
3 conditions for salmon in a coordinated manner and to develop a
4 structure that allows for the coordinated delivery of federal, state,
5 tribal, and local assistance to communities for habitat projects that
6 will assist in the recovery and enhancement of salmon stocks. A
7 strong watershed-based locally implemented plan is essential for
8 local, regional, and statewide salmon recovery.

9 (6) The legislature also finds that credible scientific review
10 and oversight is essential for any salmon recovery effort to be
11 successful.

12 (7) The legislature further finds that it is important to monitor
13 the overall health of the salmon resource to determine if recovery
14 efforts are providing expected returns. It is important to monitor
15 salmon habitat projects and salmon recovery activities in a
16 coordinated manner to determine their effectiveness in order to
17 ~~((secure))~~ maintain federal acceptance of the state's approach to
18 salmon recovery. Adaptive management ~~((cannot exist without~~
19 ~~monitoring))~~ can only occur when the state has identified a baseline,
20 from which it can then monitor the benefits of its actions and how
21 the salmon and steelhead are responding to improved watershed
22 functions. For these reasons, the legislature believes that a
23 coordinated and integrated monitoring system should be ~~((developed~~
24 ~~and implemented))~~ expanded.

25 (8) The legislature therefore finds that a coordinated framework
26 and enhanced leadership for responding to the salmon crisis is needed
27 immediately. To that end, the governor's salmon recovery office
28 ~~((should be created to))~~ provides overall coordination of the state's
29 response; an independent science panel ~~((is needed to))~~ provides
30 scientific review and oversight; a coordinated state funding process
31 ~~((should be established))~~ is implemented through a salmon recovery
32 funding board and the fish passage barrier removal board; the
33 appropriate local or tribal government ~~((should))~~ provides local
34 leadership in identifying and sequencing habitat restoration and
35 acquisition projects to be funded by state agencies; habitat projects
36 should be implemented without delay; and a strong partnership between
37 federal, state, tribal, and locally based efforts to restore salmon
38 habitat ~~((should be established by providing))~~ provides a framework
39 to allow citizen volunteers to work effectively.

1 (9) Furthermore, the legislature declares it to be the goal of
2 the state to support the recovery and enhancement of salmon and
3 steelhead stocks in order to support Washington's tribal treaty
4 obligations, support nontribal commercial and recreational fisheries,
5 and achieve the delisting and recovery of threatened or endangered
6 salmon and steelhead runs under the federal endangered species act.
7 State agencies should strive to apply the laws of the state of
8 Washington, and the rules and policies of the agency, to advance the
9 goal established in this section.

10 NEW SECTION. Sec. 3. A new section is added to chapter 77.85
11 RCW to read as follows:

12 (1) The salmon advisory commission is established to improve the
13 coordination and understanding of the habitat, harvest, hydro,
14 hatcheries, predation, and other factors that influence salmon and
15 steelhead recovery. The commission also shall consider existing
16 efforts and needs in all areas that influence salmon and steelhead
17 recovery, in order to identify gaps; receive and discuss monitoring
18 adaptive management needs; and develop recommendations to be
19 submitted to the governor and the legislature regarding agency
20 actions, legislation, and budget priorities to enhance salmon and
21 steelhead recovery.

22 (2) The salmon advisory commission includes the following
23 members:

24 (a) The director of the governor's office of Indian affairs, or
25 the director's designee;

26 (b) (i) Each elected chair of a federally recognized Indian tribe
27 whose traditional lands and territories include parts of Washington,
28 by invitation of the governor;

29 (ii) Each member invited pursuant to (b) (i) of this subsection
30 may designate an elected councilmember of a federally recognized
31 Indian tribe whose traditional lands and territories include parts of
32 Washington, to serve as the invited member's alternate;

33 (c) The director, or the director's designee, of the following
34 agencies:

35 (i) The department of fish and wildlife;

36 (ii) The department of natural resources;

37 (iii) The department of ecology;

38 (iv) The Puget Sound partnership;

39 (v) The department of transportation;

1 (vi) The department of archaeology and historic preservation;

2 (vii) The recreation and conservation office;

3 (viii) The state conservation commission;

4 (ix) The department of agriculture;

5 (x) The parks and recreation commission; and

6 (xi) The department of health;

7 (d) One member from each of the two largest caucuses of the house
8 of representatives, appointed by the speaker of the house of
9 representatives;

10 (e) One member from each of the two largest caucuses of the
11 senate, appointed by the president of the senate; and

12 (f) Two representatives of cities and counties, appointed by the
13 governor.

14 (3) The salmon advisory commission shall choose cochairs from
15 among its legislative membership. One cochair must be a member of the
16 senate, and one cochair must be a member of the house of
17 representatives.

18 (4) The salmon advisory commission shall convene at least twice
19 per year.

20 (5) Staff support for the commission shall be provided by the
21 senate committee services and the house of representatives office of
22 program research.

23 (6) Legislative members of the salmon advisory commission are
24 reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120.
25 Nonlegislative members are not entitled to be reimbursed for travel
26 expenses if they are elected officials or are participating on behalf
27 of an employer, governmental entity, or other organization. Any
28 reimbursement for other nonlegislative members is subject to chapter
29 43.03 RCW.

30 (7) The salmon advisory commission shall provide semiannual
31 reports in accordance with RCW 43.01.036 on its activities including
32 any recommendations on agency actions, potential legislation, and
33 budget priorities to enhance salmon and steelhead recovery to the
34 governor and the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the
35 legislature. The first report is due by October 1, 2026, and
36 subsequent reports are due by June 1st and December 1st of each year.

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