

RCW 77.44.040 Program goals. The goals of the warm water game fish enhancement program are to improve the fishing for warm water game fish using cost-effective management. Development of new ponds and lakes shall be an important and integral part of the program. The department shall work with the department of natural resources to coordinate the reclamation of surface mines and the development of warm water game fish ponds. Improvement of warm water fishing shall be coordinated with the protection and conservation of cold water fish populations. This shall be accomplished by carefully designing the warm water projects to have minimal adverse effects upon the cold water fish populations. New pond and lake development should have beneficial effects upon wildlife due to the increase in lacustrine and wetland habitat that will accompany the improvement of warm water fish habitat. The department shall not develop projects that will increase the populations of undesirable or deleterious fish species such as carp, squawfish, walking catfish, and others.

Fish culture programs shall be used in conditions where they will prove to be cost-effective, and may include the purchase of warm water fish from aquatic farmers defined in RCW 15.85.020. Consideration should be made for development of urban area enhancement of fishing opportunity for put-and-take species, such as channel catfish, that are amenable to production by low-cost fish culture methods. Fish culture shall also be used for stocking of high value species, such as walleye, smallmouth bass, and tiger musky. Introduction of special genetic strains that show high potential for recreational fishing improvement, including Florida strain largemouth bass and striped bass, shall be considered.

Transplantation and introduction of exotic warm water fish shall be carefully reviewed to assure that adverse effects to native fish and wildlife populations do not occur. This review shall include an analysis of consequences from disease and parasite introduction.

Population management through the use of fish toxicants, including rotenone or derris root, shall be an integral part of the warm water game fish enhancement program. However, any use of fish toxicants shall be subject to a thorough review to prevent adverse effects to cold water fish, desirable warm water fish, and other biota. Eradication of deleterious fish species shall be a goal of the program.

Habitat improvement shall be a major aspect of the warm water game fish enhancement program. Habitat improvement opportunities shall be defined with scientific investigations, field surveys, and by using the extensive experience of other state management entities. Installation of cover, structure, water flow control structures, screens, spawning substrate, vegetation control, and other management techniques shall be fully used. The department shall work to gain access to privately owned waters that can be developed with habitat improvements to improve the warm water resource for public fishing.

The department shall use the resources of cooperative groups to assist in the planning and implementation of the warm water game fish enhancement program. In the development of the program the department shall actively involve the organized fishing clubs that primarily fish for warm water fish. The warm water fish enhancement program shall be cooperative between the department and private landowners; private landowners shall not be required to alter the uses of their private property to fulfill the purposes of the warm water fish enhancement program. The director shall not impose restrictions on the use of

private property, or take private property, for the purpose of the warm water fish enhancement program. [1996 c 222 § 4.]

Effective dates—1996 c 222: See note following RCW 77.44.010.