

HOUSE BILL REPORT

4SSB 5159

As Reported By House Committee On:

Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to a warm water game fish enhancement program.

Brief Description: Creating the warm water game fish enhancement program.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Owen, Oke, Haugen and Hochstatter).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 2/23/96 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Fuhrman, Chairman; Buck, Vice Chairman; Basich, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Regala, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Beeksma; Elliot; Hatfield; Keiser; Sheldon and B. Thomas.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Pennington, Vice Chairman; Stevens and L. Thomas.

Staff: Rick Anderson (786-7114).

Background: The Department of Fish and Wildlife manages warm water game fish. Washington's warm water fish species include bass, catfish, crappie, perch, bluegill, walleye, pumpkinseed, sunfish and others. Warm water fish do not receive a great deal of management emphasis from the department.

Summary of Bill: A warm water game fish enhancement program is created within the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The program is designed to enhance fish populations by improving both fish habitat and culture. The new program is funded by a warm water fish stamp with an annual fee of \$5, which is required to fish for bass, channel catfish, walleye, crappie, and tiger musky. The warm water fish stamp takes effect January 1, 1997. A dedicated account is established in the state wildlife fund, subject to legislative appropriation. The revenue from the new surcharge shall not replace funding for warm water fish projects existing on December 31, 1994.

Funds from the warm water game fish account may not be used for the operation or construction of the warm water fish culture project at the Ringold warm water fish culture project. The Department of Fish and Wildlife is directed to report to the Legislature an operational and management plan for the Ringold project by December, 1996.

The sum of \$200,000 is appropriated from the state general fund to the warm water game fish account so that the department can begin implementing the bill in July 1996. These funds must be repaid to the general fund after the warm water game fish surcharge has begun to be collected, but no later than June 30, 1997.

Appropriation: The sum of \$200,000 is appropriated for fiscal year ending June 30, 1997 from the general fund to the warm water game fish account.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Sections 1, 2, and 4 through 7 of this bill take effect on July 1, 1996. Section 3 of this bill takes effect January 1, 1997.

Testimony For: The people who fish for warm water species want to pay the additional \$5. The increased opportunity to fish for these species is well worth the price of the surcharge.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Ed Manary, Department of Fish and Wildlife; Barb Lindsey, N.W. Sportfishing Industry Association; Ed Owens, private citizen; Jim Owens, Washington State Bass Federation; Bill Orr, Walleye Unlimited, Washington; Rod Meseberg, Central Washington Fish Advisory Committee; and Jack Swanberg, Northwest Marine Trade Association (all in favor).