



STATE LAWMAKERS RECOMMENDED THAT LIMITS ON LARGEMOUTH BASS, LIKE THIS ONE CAUGHT AT A NORTHWEST WASHINGTON LAKE, AS WELL AS SMALLMOUTH BASS, WALL-EYE AND CHANNEL CATFISH LIMITS BE LIBERALIZED IN WATERS BEARING SEA-GOING SALMONIDS LIKE CHINOOK. (YO-ZURI PHOTO CONTEST)

The House Rural Development, Agriculture, & Natural Resources Committee this morning voted 8-6 to amend HB 1579 to that effect in giving it a do-pass recommendation.

The bill mostly deals with enforcement of hydraulic codes, but targets the nonnative smolt eaters as part of its suite of changes meant to help out struggling orcas and their key feedstock.

"I think we should do everything we can to encourage recreational fisheries to catch as many of those fish as possible so that they're not predating on Chinook salmon," prime sponsor Rep. Joe Fitzgibbon (D-Burien) said during a public hearing last week.

There already are no size or catch limit restrictions on smallmouth, largemouth, walleye and channel cats in the Columbia below Chief Joseph Dam and Snake and both of their tribes, a move WDFW implemented in 2016 following ODFW's lead.

But as written the change would liberalize regulations for the species on Lakes Washington and Sammamish and a host of other stillwaters connected to streams that serve as spawning and rearing habitat for not only Chinook but also coho, sockeye, steelhead, bull trout and other anadromous species.

For instance, Cottage Lake near Woodinville, Big Lake near Mt. Vernon, and Lake Sawyer east of Auburn.

WDFW's *SalmonScape* illustrates the scope of other potentially affected waters.

And it also shows ones that may not, at least under the bill as it's currently written — important spinyray lakes such as Banks, Billy Clapp, Moses, Potholes, Scooteney and Sprague in Eastern Washington, along with Seattle's Green, Snohomish County's Goodwin and Roseiger, and Bellingham's Whatcom.

The state mapping product shows those have not been documented to have salmon present in or above them.

But eventually Rufus Woods and Lake Roosevelt could, if efforts to reintroduce Chinook to the Canadian Columbia go through.

Walleye and smallmouth are primarily in the Columbia system and largemouth are ubiquitous in lakes across Washington, and all can spawn naturally, but channel cats, which tend to only be able to spawn in the warmest of our relatively cool waters, have been planted in select lakes when funding has been available to buy them from other states.

While the issue of how to classify fish that are from the Midwest and elsewhere east of the Rockies is of concern to WDFW and the state's warmwater anglers and guides, the bill has primarily elicited pushback for the elements strengthening how the agency permits work around water, including repealing all but automatic approvals for residential bulkheads on the saltwater, which can impact forage fish spawning habitat.

Rep. Bruce Chandler, a Republican from eastern Yakima County, called the bill "an imposition of changes that really apply to Puget Sound."

Chairman Brian Blake, a Democrat who represents Washington's South Coast, termed it a "work in progress," but nonetheless asked fellow lawmakers to move it forward.

All eight Democrats voted to recommend it pass, while six of the seven Republicans voted against, with the seventh absent.

The amended bill also would require anglers who fish for smelt in saltwaters to buy a license, a move that would annually yield an estimated \$37,400, according to a legislative analysis.



A version in the Senate, [SB 5580](#), had a public hearing yesterday. It was supported by WDFW and tribal and environmental groups, and opposed by building and business associations, with concerns from the state farm bureau.

To go into law, they would have to pass both chambers and be signed by Governor Inslee, and then, at least as far as bass, walleye, and channel cats go, the Fish and Wildlife Commission would need to make the changes to the regulations, though it could be also be done via an emergency rule.

◀ BASS    ◀ CHANNEL CATFISH    ◀ CHINOOK    ◀ COHO    ◀ COLUMBIA RIVER    ◀ FISHING    ◀ LARGEMOUTH  
◀ LEGISLATURE    ◀ ORCAS    ◀ SMALLMOUTH    ◀ SNAKE RIVER    ◀ SOUTHERN RESIDENT KILLER WHALES  
◀ STEELHEAD    ◀ WALLEYE    ◀ WASHINGTON    ◀ WDFW



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