

PUBLIC TESTIMONY SUMMARY

I-900 STATE AUDITOR'S PERFORMANCE AUDIT:

Department of Fish and Wildlife Delayed-Release Chinook Salmon (April 9, 2010)

As Heard by the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Sub-Committee on I-900 Performance Audits
on April 21, 2010

The performance audit being discussed at this hearing was conducted solely and independently by the office of the State Auditor, under the authority of legislation approved by the voters in Initiative 900. The State Auditor is elected directly by the people of the State of Washington and operates independently of the Legislature and the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee. Staff to the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee prepare a summary of public testimony on State Auditor reports. These summaries are for informational purposes only, and do not serve as an assessment by committee staff of the findings and recommendations issued by the State Auditor nor do they reflect a staff opinion on legislative intent.

Title: Department of Fish and Wildlife Delayed-Release Chinook Salmon

Audit Scope and Objectives:

SAO reports that the audit was designed to determine if the Department of Fish and Wildlife:

- Achieved the statutory goal to increase the production and planting of delayed-release Chinook salmon to a level of 3 million annually by the year 2000;
- Uses sufficiently reliable and high quality data to monitor the activity and support management decisions.

SAO indicates that, in addition, it considered the nine elements contained in Initiative 900.

SAO Findings:

Key conclusions of this audit:

- The Department does not meet the statutory goal to release 3 million delayed-release Chinook annually.
- The statutory goal is not an effective or efficient strategy for restoring the Puget Sound Chinook salmon recreational fishery.
- The Department has reliable, high-quality data to monitor the program and support management decisions. However, it has not fully used that data to support policy discussions and decision-making by the Program's sport fishing Oversight Committee, the Fish and Wildlife Commission or the Legislature.

SAO Recommendations:

1. The Legislature should replace the statutory provision requiring the Department to release 3 million delayed-release Chinook annually with outcome-oriented goals that align with the Hatchery Scientific Review Group's recommendations.
2. The Legislature also should require the Department to report regularly on its progress toward meeting the revised goals.
3. If the Department continues to produce delayed-release Chinook, it should define the term, including which yearlings to count as delayed-release Chinook.

Agency Responses in Audit Report?	Yes, in Appendix D
Legislative Action Requested?	Yes; Recommendations 1 and 2 above are to the Legislature.

Agencies Testifying:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Jo Wadsworth, Fish Program Deputy Assistant Director; Heather Bartlett, Hatcheries Division Manager)

Summary of Testimony from Audited Agencies:

The Department strongly supports the use of performance audits as a tool to improve state government. The Department concurs with the report recommendations. The Department did not meet the 3 million delayed-release target due to increasing environmental constraints and to the risks posed to the ESA-listed Puget Sound Chinook. By December 2010, the Department will formalize a definition of delayed-release Chinook. The Department supports the necessary legislative changes, and the Department will follow the policy direction provided by the Legislature.

Other Parties Testifying:

Laurence Bucklin

Written remarks from Dave Croonquist submitted by Polly Fischer, Puget Sound Anglers President

Summary of Testimony from Other Parties:

In addition to these verbal comments, I am also submitting comments in writing. It is important that those who write the legislation establishing endorsements be careful in structuring how the money is to be spent and watch it closely. There was at one point an effort to stop this valuable program without a commensurate reduction in the license fees; the late Senator Oke prevented that from happening. As a result of a Public Disclosure Act request to the State Auditor’s Office, it was determined that SAO decided to not include an audit of fund expenditures in the three recent performance audits (this one, Eastern Washington pheasants, and Dungeness crab). SAO instead planned to put that information into a combined fourth audit for release in June 2010. It is critical to the validity of the numbers in this audit to know whether those funds were spent appropriately. I would ask that the Committee consider these three audits incomplete pending the completion of that fourth audit. We would hope that there would be an opportunity at that point to address the audits in their entirety. Since there is not a separate \$10 fee for this fishery, I would like to know if SAO audited the validity of how the Department determines who is fishing for Chinook versus other types of fish.