



## Tribal Committee bill progresses through legislature

Parimal M. Rohit 🕒 April 21, 2017

SACRAMENTO — A State Senate bill proposing to create a formal Tribal Committee within California's Fish and Game Commission was placed on the suspense file after passed its second committee on April 3.

Bill proposals placed on the suspense file – which applies to any legislation costing \$150,000 or more annually – are heard at a hearing once the state budget has been prepared. No testimony is heard at the suspense file hearing.

Senate Bill 161 (SB 161) was introduced by State Sen. Mike McGuire in January and was first head in committee on March 14. The Senate's Natural Resources and Water Committee unanimously supported SB 161. Members of the Senate's Appropriations Committee voted 7-0 in favor of moving SB 161 forward.

SB 161, if it becomes law, could cost the state \$150,000 annually for staffing and overhead expenses, according to the Appropriations Committee.

“The Department [of Fish and Wildlife] indicates that the Commission will need a Senior Environmental Scientist position to act as a tribal liaison,” Appropriations Committee staff stated in a legislative analysis. “Staff contends that the redirection of staff resources necessary in the absence of the liaison has resulted in significant delays in meeting other obligations. They further assert that the number of agenda items and communications with [tribal communities] has dramatically increased, and is expected to continue to increase, making it impossible to continue to absorb related workload.”

McGuire's proposal would help the Fish and Game Commission honor a state mandate to consult with tribal interests on policy developments directly affecting local tribes. Gov. Jerry Brown issued an executive order in 2011 requiring state agencies and the Department of Fish and Wildlife “to encourage consultation with tribes and to permit tribal governments to provide meaningful input into the development of policies that may affect tribal communities.”

The commission, according to a legislative analysis, often collaborates with tribal governments “to promote sustainable management of natural resources of mutual interest.”

“Many [tribal communities] have also entered into treaties with the federal government that reserve the [communities’] hunting and fishing rights for salmon,” a legislative analysis out of the Appropriations Committee stated. “In these cases, the commission and [tribal communities] may have concurrent or overlapping jurisdictions related to sport fish and game.”

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