S-3512.1

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**SENATE BILL 6265**

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**State of Washington 65th Legislature 2018 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Ranker, Chase, Rolfes, Palumbo, Van De Wege, and Keiser

AN ACT Relating to creating a pinto abalone recovery initiative; adding a new section to chapter 77.12 RCW; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that abalone populations worldwide have been in serious decline due to overharvest and habitat degradation. Pinto abalone (*Haliotis kamtschatkana*) is an abalone species with a distribution ranging from Baja California, Mexico to Alaska. It is the only abalone species commonly encountered in Washington state, British Columbia, and Alaska and is therefore also referred to as the "northern" abalone.

The legislature further finds that pinto abalone were first classified in Washington as shellfish in 1959 when a daily personal harvest possession limit of three was imposed. In 1980, a three and one-half inch minimum harvest size was implemented. In the early 1990s, fisheries biologists responded to signs of pinto abalone population decline by imposing harvest gear restrictions, reducing the daily possession limit, and increasing the minimum harvest size to four inches. Despite these management measures, populations continued to decline and in 1994 the fishery was closed and has remained closed ever since. A commercial fishery for pinto abalone was never authorized in Washington state.

The legislature finds that, despite the harvest closure in 1994, Washington state abalone populations continued to decline. This prompted cooperative pinto abalone restoration efforts between the state, federal government, tribes, and nongovernmental organizations, beginning in 2002. The overall goal of the abalone recovery efforts has been to halt the decline of abalone populations in the Pacific Northwest and to return populations to self-sustainable levels. Steps toward achieving this overall goal include hatchery program expansion, recovery planning and implementation, and public education and outreach.

Building on these previous efforts, the legislature intends to initiate expanded efforts to achieve these worthy goals and recovery of the pinto abalone.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 77.12 RCW to read as follows:

(1) A pinto abalone recovery initiative is established by the legislature, building on the previous efforts of the state and federal, tribal, and nongovernmental partners identified in section 1 of this act.

(2) In implementing the pinto abalone recovery initiative, the department must coordinate with its federal, tribal, and nongovernmental cooperating partners and develop an action plan. At minimum, the action plan must: Include steps and necessary funding to develop a new or expanded hatchery program building on previous and current hatchery operations and studies; identify an implementation plan and timeline; and identify any legislative policy and funding recommendations to promote the pinto abalone recovery initiative.

(3) The department must provide initial updates to the legislature on the implementation of this section, and provide any legislative recommendations, by September 1, 2018, and September 1, 2019.

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