

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**SJM 8002**

**AS PASSED SENATE, JANUARY 29, 1992**

**Brief Description:** Requesting that the coast guard prohibit dumping of ballast water in United States waters.

**SPONSORS:** Senators Metcalf, Conner and Roach.

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Metcalf, Chairman; Oke, Vice Chairman; Amondson, Barr, Conner, Snyder, and Sutherland.

**Staff:** Vic Moon (786-7469)

**Hearing Dates:** January 22, 1991

**BACKGROUND:**

Ballast water is the water taken on by a tanker or freight vessel to stabilize the vessel during its journey to a port to pick up cargo. Ballast water is not the same as bilge water which is the water from decks and from the ocean which flows into a separate storage area. A vessel will take on ballast water in its port of origin, either from the open sea or more often from an estuary at the mouth of a river. It is possible to transmit aquatic organisms from foreign ports, and if the water is released in a somewhat enclosed area like the Puget Sound, organisms can develop in the new environment and compete with or damage native species.

Freighters and tankers have spread several planktonic and benthic organisms and have caused specific problems in the bay of San Francisco and in the Great Lakes. Ballast water has been found to contain worms, bi-valve larva, medusa, juvenile fish, grasses, plants and other types of life forms that are found in river estuaries and bays.

In the case of the transportation of oil or other petroleum products, federal and international laws carefully control the release of ballast and bilge water. There are no such mandatory controls for other tankers and vessels. Vessels coming into Washington waters to take on wood chips, lumber and containers often release their ballast water within the waters of the state of Washington.

While there is little ballast water research, the Sea Grant program at Coos Bay has investigated some of the environmental problems caused by the dumping of ballast water. As much as 20,000 metric tons of water can be dumped from a single vessel. This is equivalent of a body of water 50 feet square and 70 feet deep.

Open ocean exchange does not necessarily remove all of the sediments that can be held in the ballast areas of a vessel, although it is the current best method for dumping ballast prior to entering into state waters.

A recent study has shown that PSB, an element which is toxic to shellfish, has been found in ballast water in Australia. Since almost all cargo ships carry ballast water at some point in their voyage, the problem of transmittal of disease and non-native plants and sea organisms is significant.

Canada and Australia and the United States all have policies that ballast water should be dumped outside of state waters. The program for the Great Lakes in the United States and for the bays and ports of Australia have gained 80 to 90 percent compliance with a voluntary sea water exchange program. That program could be extended to all waters surrounding the United States.

The fishing industry in Washington has had problems with the introduction of disease and the introduction of plants and sea life forms which are not native and upset the natural balance within the Puget Sound. While there are problems in de-ballasting a ship in rough weather, it is the current best method to protect the Puget Sound marine environment.

**SUMMARY:**

The Legislature asks the United States Coast Guard to adopt regulations prohibiting the dumping of ballast water originating in foreign ports. The Coast Guard is asked to ban dumping in all United States waters. Ballast water should be dumped at sea and exchanged for open ocean water prior to the entry into the state of Washington. Copies of the memorial will be sent to the President and Congress and the Commandant of the United States Coast Guard.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** none requested

**TESTIMONY FOR:**

Dumping of ballast water has introduced organisms harmful to sea life in California and has created a non-native shellfish population in the Great Lakes. Clean water is essential for raising salmon.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:** None

**TESTIFIED:** FOR: Janet Kelly, University of Washington Graduate School of Oceanography; Ed Manary, Dept. of Fisheries; Jim Zimmerman, Troutlodge