

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6265

As of January 24, 2018

Title: An act relating to creating a pinto abalone recovery initiative.

Brief Description: Creating a pinto abalone recovery initiative.

Sponsors: Senators Ranker, Chase, Rolfes, Palumbo, Van De Wege and Keiser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 1/23/18.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a pinto abalone recovery initiative and requires development of an action plan for the initiative.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: Role of the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) manages the state's fish and wildlife resources. Among other duties, DFW must classify wildlife and establish the basic rules and regulations governing the time, place, manner, and methods used to harvest or enjoy fish and wildlife.

Background on Pinto Abalone. According to information from DFW, pinto abalone 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 also known as the Northern abalone. Abalone cluster in aggregations and are associated with complex rocky reef habitat. Pinto abalone in Washington State are generally found between water depths of 9 to 60 feet.

A commercial fishery for pinto abalone was never authorized in Washington State. Pinto abalone were first classified in Washington as shellfish in 1959, with recreational possession and later minimum harvest size limitations imposed. In 1994, DFW closed the fishery due to its population monitoring work finding declining population abundance.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: A pinto abalone recovery initiative is established. DFW must implement the initiative in coordination with federal, tribal, and nongovernmental cooperating partners, and build on previous pinto abalone recovery efforts.

DFW must lead development of an action plan for the initiative that must include, at minimum:

- steps and necessary funding to develop a new or expanded hatchery program built on existing hatchery operations and studies;
- identify an implementation plan and timeline; and
- identify any legislative policy and funding recommendations to promote the initiative.

DFW must provide initial updates, and any recommendations, to the Legislature by September 2018 and 2019.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 11, 2018.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Abalone are culturally significant, important to our ecosystem, and tasty. Population declines have led to fishery closures since 1994, and we would like to advance this initiative and capitalize on existing recovery efforts. Populations have declined severely in recent decades, and their reproductive capacity has declined because of low abundance. Hatchery operations have put thousands of abalone back into the habitat, but current efforts are not at the scale needed to achieve recovery.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kevin Ranker, Prime Sponsor; Bob Sizemore, DFW.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.