

RCW 77.60.150 Oyster reserve land—Pilot project—Advisory committee—Lease administration. (1) The department shall initiate a pilot project to evaluate the feasibility and potential of intensively culturing shellfish on currently nonproductive oyster reserve land in Puget Sound. The pilot program shall include no fewer than three long-term lease agreements with commercial shellfish growers. Except as provided in subsection (3) of this section, revenues from the lease of such lands shall be deposited in the oyster reserve land account created in RCW 77.60.160.

(2) The department shall form one advisory committee each for the Willapa Bay oyster reserve lands and the Puget Sound oyster reserve lands. The advisory committees shall make recommendations on management practices to conserve, protect, and develop oyster reserve lands. The advisory committees may make recommendations regarding the management practices on oyster reserve lands, in particular to ensure that they are managed in a manner that will: (a) Increase revenue through production of high-value shellfish; (b) not be detrimental to the market for shellfish grown on nonreserve lands; and (c) avoid negative impacts to existing shellfish populations. The advisory committees may also make recommendation on the distribution of funds in RCW 77.60.160(2)(a). The department shall attempt to structure each advisory committee to include equal representation between shellfish growers that participate in reserve sales and shellfish growers that do not.

(3) The department of natural resources, in consultation with the department of fish and wildlife, shall administer the leases for oyster reserves entered into under this chapter. In administering the leases, the department of natural resources shall exercise its authority under RCW 79.135.300. Vacation of state oyster reserves by the department shall not be a requirement for the department of natural resources to lease any oyster reserves under this section. The department of natural resources may recover reasonable costs directly associated with the administration of the leases for oyster reserves entered into under this chapter. All administrative fees collected by the department of natural resources pursuant to this section shall be deposited into the resource management cost account established in RCW 79.64.020. The department may not assess charges to recover the costs of consulting with the department of natural resources under this subsection.

(4) The Puget Sound pilot program shall not include the culture of geoduck. [2009 c 333 § 23; 2001 c 273 § 1.]