

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2049

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to Puget Sound marine resource committees.

Brief Description: Authorizing the creation of marine resource committees.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Select Committee on Puget Sound (originally sponsored by Representatives Rolfes, Strow, Appleton, Hunt, Springer, McDermott, VanDeWege, Seaquist, McCoy, Eickmeyer and Lantz).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Select Committee on Puget Sound: 2/16/07, 2/20/07 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/28/07, 97-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/5/07, 48-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates a mechanism for each county bordering Puget Sound to establish a Marine Resource Committee to address the needs of the marine ecosystem local to that county.
- Designates the Puget Sound Action Team as the coordinating entity for all Marine Resource Committees.

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON PUGET SOUND

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Upthegrove, Chair; Eickmeyer, Vice Chair; Rolfes, Vice Chair; Sump, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; O'Brien, Pearson and Springer.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

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.

Congress created the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative (Conservation Initiative) in 1998 as a conservation and restoration program serving the northwest portion of the Puget Sound. The Conservation Initiative is charged with establishing community-based marine stewardship, conducting citizen-driven scientific studies on marine species and their habitat, and restoring marine habitat.

The Conservation Initiative has established seven Marine Resource Committees (MRCs), one for each of the following counties: Clallam, Island, Jefferson, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom. Each of these MRCs is citizen-based, with representatives from local government, tribal government, and the scientific, economic, recreational, and conservation communities. Each MRC has specific preservation and protection actions that are pertinent to their area. Current MRC projects include surveys of marine habitats, mapping eelgrass beds, outreach and education to local communities, compiling scientific data, and protecting rocky-reef fish.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Each county bordering Puget Sound is authorized to establish an MRC to address the needs of the marine ecosystem local to that county. An MRC may only be created by a county legislative authority, in cooperation with cities and local special districts. A county may delegate management and oversight of an MRC to a coastal city within its boundaries, and may designate and delegate more than one MRC if different cities within the county border sufficiently distinct waters. Residents may petition their county legislative authority for the establishment of an MRC, and the county must respond to that petition within 60 days of receipt.

The membership of the MRC is established by the initiating local government, and must include balanced representation from the local government, the scientific community, and economic, recreational, scientific, and conservation interests.

Once created, an MRC is directed to review existing data and conservation programs in order to make prioritized recommendations as to what else could be done in the area local to the MRC. In addition to making conservation recommendations, the MRC may work to help implement any accepted recommendations, promote public outreach, and engage in other activities deemed appropriate by the initiating local government.

The Puget Sound Action Team (PSAT), or its successor organization, is designated as the coordinating entity for the various MRCs. As such, PSAT is to help coordinate communication, pool grant funding, and assist local projects that fit within regional goals.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S):

Limits new marine resources committees to certain counties, allows counties on the outer coast to form marine resources committees, requires counties forming marine resources

committees to invite tribal participation, removes the authority for a county to form multiple marine resources committees to be managed by different cities, designates the Department of Fish and Wildlife to serve as the coordinating entity for coastal marine resources committees, requires marine resources committees to coordinate with the Northwest Straits Commission, requires coastal marine resources committees to coordinate with other parties and address ocean policy issues.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The MRCs established by the federal government in the Conservation Initiative effort are working well for the portion of the Puget Sound that are eligible to participate in the program by allowing those living close to the water to participate in the restoration and protection of the water. The model that has worked so well in the north Puget Sound should be expanded statewide, so that all Puget Sound communities can participate. Currently only about one-third of the Hood Canal, and much of the Puget Sound, does not have an opportunity to participate in the MRC process.

The MRC model connects people to the marine environment and produces valuable advice and information for local governments. The MRCs can make great strides in restoration efforts, and once up to speed, quickly build positive momentum that produces innovative products and projects. The MRC model was a unique opportunity for northern Puget Sound, and has been replicated in Oregon and California.

The MRC model is in-line with the Governor's Puget Sound Partnership initiative, is a compliment to existing watershed management efforts, and aids the state in working with local stakeholders.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Rolfes, prime sponsor; Duane Fagergren, Northwest Straits Commission; Tom Clingman, Department of Ecology; Fran McNair, Department of Natural Resources; Chris Stearns; Jody Kennedy, Surfrider Foundation; and Kevin Ranker, San Juan County Council.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.