

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5661

As of February 15, 2011

Title: An act relating to derelict fishing gear.

Brief Description: Regarding derelict fishing gear.

Sponsors: Senators Nelson, Pridemore, Swecker, White, Morton and Fain.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources & Marine Waters: 2/14/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & MARINE WATERS

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: Role of the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). DFW serves as manager of 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.

Northwest Straits Commission. Congress created the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative (Conservation Initiative) in 1998 as a conservation and restoration program serving the northwest portion of 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 are citizen-based, with representatives from local government, tribal government, and the scientific, economic, recreational, and conservation communities.

Derelict Fishing Gear Database and Reporting. Current law requires DFW to work in partnership with the Northwest Straits Commission, the Department of Natural Resources, and other interested parties to ensure maintenance of a database containing information on known derelict fishing gear and shellfish pots.

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.

A person who loses or abandons commercial fishing gear or shellfish pots is encouraged to report the location and gear type lost to DFW within 48 hours.

Summary of Bill: Requires Reporting of Lost Commercial Net Gear. A person who loses or abandons commercial net fishing gear must report the location and gear type lost to DFW within 48 hours.

As under current law, a person who loses or abandons shellfish pots is encouraged to report the loss.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Derelict fishing nets are a hazard that pose threats to salmon and marine mammals. Commercial fishers are currently not reporting their lost nets. Reporting is the right thing to do, and making it mandatory should help with compliance. In addition to salmon, birds and rockfish are also impacted. These derelict nets kill year after year for no reason.

OTHER: The Northwest Straits Commission has been the lead organization in addressing derelict gear, including removing almost 2500 nets with stimulus money from the federal government.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Nelson, prime sponsor; Jerry Joyce, Seattle Audubon; Mike Racine, WA Scuba Alliance; Robert Holmes, citizen; Carl Burke, Puget Sound Anglers, NW Sportsfishing Ind.; Rob Tobeck, Outdoor Line; Doug Meyers, People for Puget Sound; Craig Burley, DFW; Gregg Bufundo, Trout Unlimited.

OTHER: Ginny Broadhurst, Northwest Straits Initiative.