

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2386

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Environment

**Title:** An act relating to designating Washington's shoreline as a state maritime heritage area.

**Brief Description:** Designating Washington's shoreline as a state maritime heritage area.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Van De Wege, Appleton, Hayes, Moscoso, Pettigrew, S. Hunt, Takko, Zeiger, Muri, Tharinger, Ryu and Freeman.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Environment: 1/28/14, 2/4/14 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Designates Washington's saltwater coast as the state Maritime Heritage Area.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Fitzgibbon, Chair; Senn, Vice Chair; Farrell, Fey, Kagi, Morris, Ortiz-Self and Tharinger.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Short, Ranking Minority Member; Pike, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Harris, Nealey and Overstreet.

**Staff:** Megan Mulvihill (786-7291).

**Background:**

There are 49 designated National Heritage Areas (NHAs) throughout the United States. National Heritage Areas are places recognized by Congress as having nationally important heritage resources. National Heritage Areas are locally initiated, and it is recommended that a feasibility study based on 10 criteria be completed by local entities. The feasibility study needs to demonstrate the national importance of the heritage resources and implementation ability by local communities. The feasibility study is followed by legislation to Congress.

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*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.*

National Heritage Areas are operated by local groups through public-private partnerships with the National Park Service (NPS). The NPS provides technical and financial assistance without establishing land ownership or control. The local entities involved maintain all decision-making authority. National Heritage Areas support festivals, operate museums and visitor centers, establish tour routes, create heritage maps, and administer web sites. A few examples of NHAs include:

- Blue Ridge NHA in North Carolina;
- Northern Rio Grande NHA in New Mexico; and
- Silos and Smokestacks NHA in Iowa.

Washington does not have any NHAs. The State Parks and Recreation Commission has a stewardship program in which natural and cultural heritage is preserved within state park boundaries, and the Washington State Historical Society manages various heritage capital projects around the state; however, there are no comparable state heritage areas.

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### **Summary of Bill:**

Washington's saltwater coast is designated as the state maritime heritage area. This includes all federal, state, local, and tribal lands that allow public access and are partly located within one-quarter mile inland of the saltwater shoreline.

The maritime heritage area may only be used for the purposes of heritage and tourism. The maritime heritage area does not:

- create any regulatory jurisdiction or authority;
- abridge the rights of any public or private landowner within the designated area; or
- establish any legal rights or obligations.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

### **Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) This is a smart piece of legislation that enables Washington's coastline to be designated as a state maritime heritage area. A maritime heritage area is something Washington can brag about and use to promote tourism. It is essentially rewarding Washington for being beautiful.

In 2008 the Legislature sent the Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation out to do a study to see if Washington could become a national heritage area. After speaking with several Ports, it was agreed that Washington's maritime heritage was nationally significant.

Congress has not designated a heritage area since 2009, so it was decided that a state designation could be pursued.

The heritage designation would give Washingtonians a reason to celebrate and recognize the maritime assets in our area. The assets include four historic lighthouses, active fishing fleets, and working villages and communities involved in maritime commerce. This designation would allow Washington to promote its scenic byways like Highway 101, and things like the waterfall trail and rail trail. Washington's coast is an amazing place, but we need to give people more details. This can be used to market and package a product about the Olympic Peninsula to help inspire travel. Inspiring travel is important for economics. We have 4,680 tourism-related jobs on the Olympic peninsula. There are four Native American tribes, and these tribes have around 70 percent unemployment in the winter. This designation would help produce activity on the two outer reservations while stimulating an appreciation for cultural art.

Washington families have been supported for generations by working on our shorelines. This bill increases maritime visibility to ensure that those kinds of family wage jobs are there for generations to come. The average age is just under 60, and young people are not coming into the maritime field or jobs. Boat ownership on a per capita basis is decreasing. Creating a maritime heritage area increases the profile of Washington's working waterfronts to promote these activities as economic drivers. Young people need to be exposed to maritime heritage in order to recognize the benefits of maritime jobs.

Thirty years ago the Washington State Centennial Commission established a special committee to coordinate maritime activities for the centennial. The centennial representatives wanted to continue working, networking, and promoting maritime activities, and so the Pacific Northwest Heritage Council was created. This group has continued to meet to self-promote and gain access to funds to promote maritime museums, historic ships, and nautical attractions. This bill would take promotion a step further by marketing and establishing this maritime heritage area.

This piece of legislation would not be supported if it genuinely posed significant regulatory risk. It does not interfere with coastal businesses, industries, or hinder economic development. Section 3 of the bill states there is no regulatory authority. It cannot be used for environmental purposes or administration purposes; it is just a heritage and tourism bill.

A state maritime heritage designation can help solicit grant funds for different projects and perhaps secure federal funding. In addition, it helps facilitate partnerships for a dialogue around national heritage.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Van De Wege, prime sponsor; Diane Schostak, Olympic Peninsula Visitor Bureau; Mary Thompson, National Trust for Historic Preservation; Chuck Fowler, Puget Sound Maritime Historical Society; Mike Doherty, Clallam County Commissioner; Adrian Miller, Pope Resources; Tom Klingman, Department of Ecology; Les Bolton, Grays Harbor Historical Seaport Authority; and Allyson Brooks, Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.