Washington State
House of Representatives
Office of Program Research

BILL ANALYSIS

State Government & Tribal Relations Committee

HB 1631

Brief Description: Establishing the state marine forest.

Sponsors: Representatives Nance, Mena, Griffey, Salahuddin, Low, Parshley, Hunt, Walsh, Ramel, Paul, Duerr, Bernbaum, Chase, Peterson, Shavers, Ryu, McEntire, Richards, Reed, Kloba, Simmons, Tharinger, Zahn, Thomas and Timmons.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes bull kelp forests as the state marine forest.

Hearing Date: 2/4/25

Staff: Connor Schiff (786-7093).

Background:

Bull kelp (*Nereocystis luetkeana*) forests provide numerous animals with nutrients and habitat, including kelp crabs, red sea urchins, sea stars, kelp greenling, kelp perch, and Pacific herring. Kelp forests, along with eelgrass meadows, also play a role in traditional fishing, hunting, and food preparation and storage for some Northwest tribal nations. Bull kelp in south and central Puget Sound regions have declined by more than 90 percent in the last 150 years. In 2022 legislation was enacted that requires the Department of Natural Resources to create a statewide Kelp Forest and Eelgrass Meadow Health and Conservation Plan to conserve and restore at least 10,000 acres of kelp forest and eelgrass meadow habitat by 2040.

Bull kelp forests are found along the coast from Alaska to central California. Bull kelp is an annual seaweed, which means it grows from a spore to maturity within a single year. It can reach heights of up to 100 feet and grow at a rate of up to 10 inches per day.

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

Summary of Bill:

Bull kelp (*Nereocystis luetkeana)* forests are the state marine forest of Washington.

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.