

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5560

As of February 18, 2025

Title: An act relating to designating the Pacific razor clam as the state clam.

Brief Description: Designating the Pacific razor clam as the state clam.

Sponsors: Senators Chapman, Pedersen, Lias, Nobles, Trudeau and Wilson, J..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Affairs & Elections: 2/18/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Designates the Pacific razor clam as the official clam of the state of Washington.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL AFFAIRS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Danielle Creech (786-7412)

Background: *Siliqua patula*, more commonly known as the Pacific razor clam, is a meaty shellfish with a narrow, oblong shell. In Washington, these clams can grow to a length of three to six inches. They are found primarily on the intertidal coastal beaches. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife divides the harvest areas into five major management zones:

- Long Beach, from the Columbia River north to the mouth of the Willapa Bay;
- Twin Harbors, from Willapa Bay north to the south jetty at the mouth of Grays Harbor;
- Copalis Beach, from the north jetty at the mouth of Grays Harbor to the Copalis River;
- Mocrocks, from the Copalis River to the south boundary of the Quinalt Indian Reservation; and

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.

- Kalaloch, from the South Beach Campground north to Olympic National Park Beach Trail 3.

During one season, Washington's recreational razor clam fishery sees more than 280,000 digging trips with individuals harvesting as many as 4 million Pacific razor clams for the season. A shellfish/seaweed license, combination license, or razor clam license is required for harvesting razor clams.

Summary of Bill: The *Siliqua patula*, or Pacific razor clam, is designated as the official clam of the state of Washington.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The razor clam is truly an iconic resource in the state of Washington. Almost 90 miles of beaches in Washington have razor clams. No other state even comes close. Oregon has about 18 miles. Washington State sometimes has nine million razor clams and they're almost all consumed by people.

I actually think the razor clamming phenomenon is truly unique, and Washington State is the epicenter of the razor clamming phenomenon. From the perspective of the native peoples, the tribal peoples, it was a staple. I sometimes call it the other salmon. When the settlers first came to this territory, they lived on razor clams. There was a cannery industry as was alluded to earlier, and it made a lot of people wealthy. It was a big deal. During the depression, it was survival food. After World War II, it became primarily a recreational fishery, which is where it is now, with hundreds of thousands of digger trips every year.

In designating it as a state symbol, it deserves that on the merits. In addition to designating it as the state clam, I think you are also stewarding a living tradition. Every season, the allure of the razor clam draws up to 480,000 eager harvesters to our states, 54 miles of wonderful sandy beaches. Sometimes as many as 30,000 in a single day, they travel from across the Pacific Northwest, injecting tens of millions of dollars into local economies through lodging, food, gas and entertainment. But the impact goes far beyond economics. Razor clamming is woven into the fabric of Washington's families and culture. Harvesting, cooking, eating, and preserving these clams are time-honored traditions, strengthening the bonds across generations.

After razor clamming for 30 years, it is still extraordinary. It's really hard work, but it is exhilarating. One of the things that has impressed me most, aside from the fact that the

clams are delicious, is seeing the hundreds of families down the beach. Grandparents, their kids, their grandkids, digging in harmony. It is especially magical when clamming at twilight to look down the beach and see the hundreds of twinkling lights on headlamps as the people dig. There's a shared sense of purpose and community among the diggers. The razor clam has always been a significant creature here on the North Beach Peninsula, which is now known as the Long Beach Peninsula, acting as an important resource for the Chinook Indian Nation and other regional tribes. The razor clam has this held a significant place in our culture, our heritage, and our local traditions, and it deserves to be recognized as a state clam.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Jamie Garner; David Berger; Rich OConnell; Dan Ayres; Karen DeWinter; Madeline Matson.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.