

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SJM 8002

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Fisheries & Wildlife*

Brief Description: Requesting that the coast guard prohibit dumping of ballast water in United States waters.

Sponsor(s): Senators Metcalf, Conner and Roach.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Fisheries & Wildlife, March 21, 1991, DP.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FISHERIES & WILDLIFE**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 7 members:
Representatives R. King, Chair; Morris, Vice Chair; Wilson,
Ranking Minority Member; Hochstatter; Orr; Padden; and
Spanel.

Staff: Keitlyn Watson (786-7310).

Background: Ballast water is used to manipulate the trim and stability of a vessel. Tankers and freight vessels typically take on ballast water at ports of origin, either from the open sea, or, more frequently, from an estuary at the mouth of a river. The ballast water is discharged prior to loading cargo for the return journey. The quantity of water that is discharged can be up to 20,000 metric tons per vessel.

Ballast water contains flora and fauna from the port of origin, that can compete with native flora and fauna where the water is discharged. There have been specific instances where this has occurred. The best known case is in the Great Lakes, in which the zebra mussel was accidentally imported from the Caspian Sea. The mussel has fouled water systems, caused billions of dollars of damage, and is spreading throughout the Great Lakes.

One of the techniques that can be used to minimize the potential problems of exotic marine aquatic organisms is open ocean exchange of ballast water.

The Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990 passed Congress in October. The purpose of the

act is to prevent the unintentional introduction and dispersal of nonindigenous species into waters of the United States through ballast water exchange. The act requires that the Secretary of Transportation issue regulations and voluntary guidelines to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic nuisance species into the Great Lakes. The act also initiates a task force to study the need for controls on vessels entering U.S. waters and to recommend appropriate regulations. The task force is to develop and implement a program for U.S. waters to prevent introduction and dispersal of aquatic nuisance species.

The discharge of ballast water contaminated by oil is regulated by federal and international law and may not be discharged into U.S. territorial waters.

In Washington, ballast water exchange is not permitted in navigable state waters where the water is less than 20 fathoms (120 feet) deep, unless the city council of an incorporated city designates a harbor ballast ground in its harbor.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature petitions the President of the United States and Congress to require that the U.S. Coast Guard adopt regulations prohibiting the dumping of ballast water originating in foreign ports in all waters of the United States and in the water under their jurisdictions within the states. Any such ballast water should be dumped at sea and exchanged for open ocean water prior to entry into waters of the state.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: This bill is a first step for national focus on the ballast water dumping problem. Ballast water can be a threat to the ecosystem as well to aquaculture.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Janet Kelly, University of Washington Institute for Marine Studies (pro); Jim King, Washington State Sportsmen's Council (pro); Chris Hedrick, Puget Sound Water Quality Authority (pro); and Susan Markey, Washington Department of Wildlife (pro).