

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**ESHB 1012**

**AS OF MARCH 26, 1991**

**Brief Description:** Providing a mechanism to recover lost fishing nets.

**SPONSORS:** House Committee on Fisheries & Wildlife (originally sponsored by Representatives Haugen, Wilson, Spanel, Morris, Cole, Zellinsky, Basich, Miller, Orr and Wynne).

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES & WILDLIFE**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Staff:** Ross Antipa (786-7413)

**Hearing Dates:** April 1, 1991

**BACKGROUND:**

Washington's non-tribal commercial and tribal fishing industry uses an assortment of different fishing nets. Over the past several decades, the strength and durability of the nets have increased dramatically with the introduction of gear made of nylon and other types of plastic. In comparison to the previously used natural-fiber gear, plastic nets may be left in water for extended lengths of time and stored without deterioration.

When nets are abandoned or lost in the aquatic environment, the durability and effectiveness of plastic netting becomes a liability for marine organisms. These "ghost nets" can continue to catch fish, marine mammals, crabs, and marine birds for years, depending on the type of net lost and the net's configuration in the water column or on the sea floor. The nets also can become caught in vessel propellers, which can result in considerable time and expense for the vessel owner. In recent years, several abandoned nets were found in Puget Sound in which large numbers of marine organisms were found dead or dying. While there was agreement that the nets should be recovered, responsibility for recovering the nets was not clear.

**SUMMARY:**

Abandoning or discarding a net in state waters is prohibited, except in cases in which the net is caught and cannot be freed, or is inadvertently lost. If nets must be left in state waters, the owner must notify the Department of Fisheries of the net's location, date of abandonment, and reason for abandoning the net.

The Department of Fisheries is responsible for recovering, or coordinating the recovery of abandoned nets that pose a threat to aquatic organisms or seabirds. The department is instructed to conduct education programs, especially targeting divers, to reduce the number of nets lost. The department is encouraged to contract out net recovery whenever possible.

A 0.4 percent tax is placed on the manufacturing, wholesaling, and retailing of commercial fishing nets and net components, to be collected by the Department of Revenue and placed into the general fund. An appropriation of \$200,000 is made to support the net recovery program.

The program terminates on June 30, 1998, and relevant statutes are repealed.

**Appropriation:** \$200,000

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** requested February 20, 1991

**Effective Date:** January 1, 1992