

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5056

AS PASSED SENATE, FEBRUARY 18, 1993

Brief Description: Regulating seaweed harvesting.

SPONSORS: Senate Committee on Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Senator Haugen)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5056 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Owen, Chairman; Erwin, Franklin, Haugen, Oke, Sellar, Snyder, and Spanel.

Staff: Vic Moon (786-7469)

Hearing Dates: January 20, 1993; January 27, 1993

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

BACKGROUND:

Marine aquatic plants in Washington include seaweed, eelgrass, and 600 other species. Over 500 species of seaweed exist in Washington's waters. Most are attached to the substrate, but some are free-floating.

As an economic commodity, seaweed is a food used in Japan, Indonesia, and other Asian countries, and by native cultures in the Pacific Northwest. Liquid seaweed extracts are used as soil additives and plant foods. Pharmaceutical products such as agar and carrageenan are produced from seaweed extracts. Phycocolloids are derived from seaweeds. These substances are used in food and industrial products to make them smooth.

Marine aquatic plants attached to state-owned aquatic lands are the property of the state Department of Natural Resources or the State Parks and Recreation Commission, depending on tideland ownership. Marine aquatic plants attached to private tidelands are the property of the private landowner.

The Department of Natural Resources regulates the harvest of seaweed for personal use on state-owned aquatic lands. An individual may receive a permit from the Department of Natural Resources to take up to 50 pounds annually. The Department of Natural Resources currently has in place a moratorium on commercial harvest of seaweed. Enforcement of the taking of valuable materials from state-owned aquatic lands is the responsibility of law enforcement officers. Violations are a criminal offense.

The Department of Fisheries regulates marine aquatic plant harvest indirectly as a component of habitat through its permitting processes. Regulation of marine aquatic plant harvest is dependent on its direct impact on a fishery.

SUMMARY:

The maximum daily wet weight harvest or possession of seaweed for personal use from all private and state tidelands and state bedlands is 10 pounds per person. A lesser amount may be established for harvest and a seaweed management plan will be developed. A violation of this limit is a misdemeanor. All law enforcement officers, including fisheries patrol officers, may enforce this law.

The Department of Natural Resources will develop a management plan with input from the Department of Fisheries for any species which is harvested.

The act does not apply to commercial harvest of marine aquatic plants and any state agency can prevent harvest from its lands.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

Regulation is needed to protect the resources.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Cyreis Schmitt, Department of Fisheries; Ann Morgan, Department of Natural Resources

HOUSE AMENDMENT(S):

The House amendment applies the seaweed harvest limit to all public lands rather than to state lands only and removes the requirement that a seaweed management plan be development, and requires instead the development of a process and budget for an inventory and management plan and an identification of the respective state and tribal roles in managing the seaweed resource. The process and budget are to be developed with interested parties, and are to be submitted to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 31, 1993. The amendment reduces the penalty for violating the harvest limit from a misdemeanor to an infraction which is punishable by a maximum penalty of \$100.