

**FINAL BILL REPORT**

**SSB 5332**

**C 267 L 93**

**SYNOPSIS AS ENACTED**

**Brief Description:** Permitting the establishment of an underwater parks system.

**SPONSORS:** Senate Committee on Ecology & Parks (originally sponsored by Senators West, Oke, Nelson, Owen, Pelz, Sutherland, Hargrove, Winsley, von Reichbauer, Erwin and Sheldon)

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**

**BACKGROUND:**

An underwater park refers to either the designation of natural areas or the creation of artificial reefs in order to enhance habitat for marine life and promote recreational diving opportunities. Artificial reefs are often created by sinking old vessels. The vessels are normally cleaned of any contaminants and modified to eliminate safety hazards before they are sunk. Underwater parks and artificial reefs have been established in at least 15 other states, including Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana, Texas, and California.

**SUMMARY:**

The State Parks and Recreation Commission may establish a system of underwater parks. In establishing and maintaining an underwater park system, the commission may acquire property and enter into management agreements with other state agencies; construct artificial reefs and other underwater features to enhance marine life and recreational uses; accept gifts and donations for the benefit of underwater parks; enter into interagency agreements to facilitate the receipt of permits from other state agencies and local governments; contract with other jurisdictions for management of underwater park units; and work with the federal government, local governments, and appropriate state agencies to carry out the purposes of the act.

The State Parks and Recreation Commission shall act as the lead agency in the establishment of underwater parks and for environmental reviews of projects necessary to establish underwater parks. The commission is protected from liability for certain activities with a recreational use immunity clause.

The commission may charge a fee for recreational use of an underwater park to offset administration costs. Before implementing a fee program for underwater parks, the commission shall submit to the Legislature an estimate of the proposed fees and a plan for collecting these fees. Fees shall be deposited into an underwater park account and shall be used for operation and creation of underwater parks.

**VOTES ON FINAL PASSAGE:**

Senate	48	0	
House	94	4	(House amended)
Senate	47	0	(Senate concurred)

**EFFECTIVE:** July 25, 1993