

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6114

As Reported By House Committee On:
Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to prevention and control of nonindigenous aquatic species.

Brief Description: Preventing the spread of zebra mussel and European green crab.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Parks (originally sponsored by Senators Jacobsen, Oke, Spanel, Kline, Snyder and Haugen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 2/24/98, 2/27/98 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Buck, Chairman; Sump, Vice Chairman; Thompson, Vice Chairman; Regala, Ranking Minority Member; Butler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander; Anderson; Chandler; Eickmeyer; Hatfield and Pennington.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: Zebra mussels are small, freshwater mollusks not indigenous to Washington that can colonize in thick layers in water and sewer pipes and on docks, boats, native mollusks, and other surfaces exposed to the water. Originally introduced into North America in the Great Lakes region in the mid-1980's, zebra mussels have since spread to a number of other states.

The European green crab is another nonindigenous species, this one originating from the Atlantic coasts of Europe and northern Africa. The European green crab feeds on a number of different organisms, particularly clams, oysters, mussels, and small crustaceans. The crab was introduced to a portion of North America's Atlantic coast during the early nineteenth century. In the 1990's, the crab has been found in California and Oregon.

Summary of Bill: The unauthorized introduction of the zebra mussel and the European green crab into Washington state waters would pose a serious economic and environmental threat, with adverse impacts on fisheries, waterways, public and private

facilities, and the functioning of natural ecosystems. It is the intent of the Legislature to prevent adverse economic and environmental impacts caused by these species in cooperation and coordination with local governments, the public, other states, and federal agencies.

The state must develop a plan for controlling the introduction of zebra mussels and European green crabs. A task force is created, to be chaired by the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The task force must invite participation from representatives of aquaculture, recreational boating, seaplane operators, maritime cargo vessels, retail and wholesale aquariums, shellfish growers, marinas, and small boat harbors. The department must also seek participation from the University of Washington, the Washington State Patrol, and the departments of Ecology, Agriculture, Transportation, and Natural Resources, and appropriate federal interests must also be invited to participate.

The task force must develop recommendations for legislative consideration including control methods, inspection procedures, penalties, notification procedures, and eradication and control techniques. The task force must identify the primary pathways of introduction, options for regulating each pathway, and, if possible, a recommended method of pathway control. For each recommended method of pathway control, the task force must estimate the costs of implementing a state program and include ideas of funding sources. The task force must also provide recommendations for how to structure and fund a state program to monitor the detection and spread of these species. The task force must provide its recommendations to the Legislature by December 1, 1998.

The department must prepare, maintain, and publish a list of all lakes, ponds, or other waters of the state and other states infested with zebra mussels or European green crabs. The department must also develop draft rules for legislative consideration to prevent the introduction and dispersal of these species and to allow eradication of infestations that may occur. The department may participate in regional or national groups addressing these species. The department may also display and distribute material and literature informing boaters and float plane owners of the problem and may maintain and publicize a telephone number for the public to express concerns and report infestations.

Appropriation: The bill contains a \$5,000 general fund appropriation for this fiscal year, and a \$40,000 general fund appropriation for next fiscal year.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: We need to prevent the introduction and spread of these species in Washington. Control once they have arrived is very expensive. The bill takes a proactive approach to prevent introduction and to provide for detection and containment.

Had the Great Lakes known what was coming, they would have acted very quickly to contain the mussels. Washington can act with foresight to correct problems before they become so large. We need continued diligence in this effort to maintain a healthy oyster industry in Washington. The crabs can out-compete native species, which could hurt the Dungeness crab industry. The Puget Sound Action Team has put a high priority on the prevention and control of aquatic species like these. This is a wise way to go and will lead to measures everyone can live with.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Ken Jacobsen, prime sponsor; Sarah Reichard and Linda Chalker-Scott, University of Washington; Diane Cooper, Pacific Coast Oyster Growers Association; Bruce Crawford and Scott Smith, Department of Fish and Wildlife; Scott Redman, Puget Sound Action Team; Rick Wickman, Columbia River and Puget Sound Steamship Associations; and John Woodring, Northwest Marine Trade Association (all in favor).