

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 6313

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### As Reported by House Committee On:

Natural Resources

**Title:** An act relating to derelict fishing gear.

**Brief Description:** Providing for the retrieval of derelict fishing gear.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Parks & Shorelines (originally sponsored by Senator Oke).

### Brief History:

#### Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 2/20/02 [DP].

#### Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Fish and Wildlife to work with various groups to develop guidelines for the safe removal of derelict fishing gear and to maintain a database of the location of known derelict gear.
- Encourages anybody that loses gear to report the loss to the Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- Exempts derelict gear removal from the hydraulic permit requirements.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Doumit, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Sump, Ranking Minority Member; Eickmeyer, Jackley, McDermott, Orcutt, Pearson and Upthegrove.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Ericksen.

**Staff:** Jason Callahan (786-7117).

### Background:

Derelict gear is the term used for fishing nets, traps, or lines that are lost or abandoned in state waters. Some derelict gear may continue to catch fish and other marine

organisms after it is lost. There is currently no incentive to report the loss of gear, and no common procedures for gear removal.

The Northwest Straits Commission (commission), which was authorized by an act of Congress in 1998, received a federal grant to develop protocols for the safe removal of derelict gear, and to inventory and remove derelict gear in the Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The commission is composed of various state, tribal, and local government representatives.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (department) must work with the Northwest Straits Commission and the Department of Natural Resources to publish guidelines for the safe removal and disposal of derelict fishing gear by August 31, 2002 and maintain a database of the location and type of known derelict gear. The removal of any gear in accordance with the guidelines does not require a hydraulic project permit from the department.

Any person who loses or abandons commercial fishing gear is encouraged to report the location and type of the loss to the department within 48 hours.

The department must consult with fishing industry groups and tribal co-managers to evaluate methods to reduce future losses of fishing gear and report the results to the Legislature by January 1, 2003.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** Derelict nets and other fishing gear are hazardous to both humans in the water and to sealife. Although most derelict nets are attached to a stationary object, they can still catch fish, and unpredictable currents can ensnarl divers. The lack of clear guidelines as to how these nets should be removed has caused safety issues in the past, including the death of a diver in Tacoma. Protocols set under this bill will help alleviate this problem.

This bill is the result of seven years of discussion. These discussions have included many of the stakeholders, including tribal governments and the United States Navy. The bill

allows for the gear removal process to be streamlined and coordinated, and the tracking will allow identification of the areas where efforts should be concentrated.

The Northwest Straits Commission has a \$150,000 grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and from community matches, to remove derelict gear. This bill will provide the vehicle and guidelines necessary to complete their task.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Senator Oke, prime sponsor; Nina Carter, Audubon Society; Duane Fagergren, Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team; Frank Urabeck, Northwest Marine Trade Association; and Morris Barker, Department of Fish and Wildlife.