
**Natural Resources, Ecology &
Parks Committee**

HB 2961

Brief Description: Creating the Columbia river safety and coastal crab mitigation work group.

Sponsors: Representatives Blake, Buck and Takko.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the Columbia River Safety and Coastal Crab Mitigation Work Group and requires certain state agencies to revise state standards relating to crab resources and crab fisher safety.

Hearing Date: 1/31/06

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) has started the process for the Columbia River channel improvement project. This project proposes to deepen the Columbia River navigational channel by three feet from the mouth of the river to Vancouver.

Before beginning the dredging operation, the Army Corps was required to obtain certain permits from the State of Washington. These permits were granted by the Department of Ecology (DOE) in 2003.

The actual dredging of the Columbia River began in the summer of 2005, with work scheduled to continue over the next two summers.

Summary of Bill:

The Columbia River Safety and Coastal Crab Mitigation Work Group (Work Group) is created within the DOE to focus on three topics:

- The safety risks from wave amplification and the impacts on coastal crab resources resulting from the Columbia River channel improvement project.
- The responsibilities and sufficiency of the Army Corps for the monitoring and mitigation of the potential impacts of the Columbia River channel improvement project.

- Recommended practices or guidelines for monitoring, dredging, or disposal activities to minimize or mitigate the potential impacts of the Columbia River channel improvement project.

The Work Group features representation by various stakeholders. These participants include the DOE and the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), representatives of southwest Washington communities, representatives of Indian tribes with crab fishing rights, and port district representatives.

The Work Group is required to also invite the participation of the Army Corps. Army Corps engineers are requested to develop a mitigation and safety agreement with the Work Group that would address the topics that are the required items of Work Group discussion. In negotiating the agreement, the Work Group must seek enforceable measures and the inclusion of numeric standards for dredge deposition.

If the Work Group and the Army Corps fail to negotiate an agreement that addresses the concerns of the Work Group, then the DOE and DFW must review current state water quality and coastal zone management standards with the recommendations of the Work Group. If the current standards are less protective of crab resources or crab fisher safety, then the departments must revise the existing conditions and standards and ensure that the new standards are incorporated into the federal permits required for the Columbia River channel improvement project.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/25/06.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.