

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6179

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation, January 16, 2006

Title: An act relating to commercial geoduck harvesting.

Brief Description: Modifying provisions related to the commercial harvest of geoduck clams.

Sponsors: Senator Jacobsen; by request of Department of Natural Resources.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 1/11/06, 1/16/06 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair; Oke, Ranking Minority Member; Fraser, Morton, Spanel and Stevens.

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages state-owned aquatic lands and is responsible for designating the areas of such lands that are available for geoduck harvest. Geoducks are sold as valuable materials by DNR and, after sale, DNR may enter into a geoduck harvesting agreement with the purchaser.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) is responsible for managing the state's fishery resources, including the time, place, and manner in which shellfish are harvested. Once a purchaser has entered into a geoduck harvesting agreement with DNR, the purchaser may receive a geoduck fishery license from DFW. DFW also calculates the total allowable catch for commercial geoduck harvest each year, which is roughly 2.7 percent of the geoduck biomass on a tract. The calculation of the total allowable catch includes geoduck in waters between 18 feet below mean lower low water and 70 feet deep. The allowable catch is allocated equally between the commercial tribal and state harvests.

Current law prohibits the commercial harvest of geoduck from waters shallower than 18 feet below mean lower low water and that lie shoreward of a line 200 yards seaward from and parallel to the line of ordinary high tide. Also, by rule, geoduck may not be harvested in areas deeper than 70 feet. Tribal harvests are not subject to the 200 yard restriction.

Summary of Bill: Commercial geoduck harvest would remain prohibited from areas shallower than 18 feet below mean lower low water. Although vessels conducting harvest operations would be required to remain seaward of a line 200 yards seaward from and parallel to the line of ordinary high tide, harvest shoreward of that line would not be prohibited.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: Harvest within the 200 yard zone, but in waters deeper than 18 feet, will allow the state commercial geoduck harvest to more efficiently use tracts, will keep harvest vessels at least 200 yards from shore, and will help avoid increased risks to divers and increased harvest costs.

Other: Commercial geoduck harvests may distribute sediments and disturb eelgrass.

Who Testified: PRO: Gordon Baxter, Harvest Divers' Union of the Pacific; Morris Barker, DFW; Lisa Veneroso, DFW; Fran McNair, DNR.

OTHER: Christopher Sterns, citizen.