

HB 2990 - DIGEST

Finds that Puget Sound and the other waters of Washington state contain an abundance of varied and unique marine life and other natural attractions that are of interest to divers and other recreationalists from all over the world.

Finds that in addition to the usual benefits from tourism, the promotion of underwater viewing tourism in the waters of Washington state will enhance efforts to protect Puget Sound by assisting in educating residents and nonresidents as to the value of the marine environment.

Finds that Washington state's efforts to promote nature-based tourism should include the natural wonder of underwater Washington.

Directs the department of community, trade, and economic development; the department of fish and wildlife; the department of natural resources; the state parks and recreation commission; and the interagency committee for outdoor recreation to host a working conference on promoting underwater viewing tourism.

Declares that the objective of the conference shall be to adopt a strategic plan and specific implementing actions to promote underwater viewing tourism in Washington in a manner that provides sustainable economic development in the state's rural and urban areas, enhances underwater recreational opportunity, and supports maintaining the state's underwater diversity and health of the natural marine environment.

Finds that, in several locations throughout the world, the use of ships as artificial reefs has helped promote underwater viewing tourism. The department of community, trade, and economic development; the department of fish and wildlife; the department of natural resources; the state parks and recreation commission; and the department of ecology shall establish a work group on the use of ships as artificial reefs. To the extent funds are made available, the department of community, trade, and economic development may commission an independent study to assist the agencies' work group in its deliberations.

Requires the agencies to prepare a summary of the work group findings to be submitted to the appropriate committees of the legislature no later than December 15, 2007.