

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2823

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to the Willapa harbor oyster reserve.

Brief Description: Regarding the Willapa harbor oyster reserve.

Sponsors: Representatives Blake and Kretz.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/28/08, 2/4/08 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to transfer funds from the Oyster Reserve Land Account to the local governments to manage their On-Site Sewage Grant Program.
- Directs the WDFW to transfer up to 50 percent of the annual revenues from the Willapa Harbor Oyster Reserve to the On-Site Sewage Grant Program as necessary to achieve a fund balance of \$100,000.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Van De Wege, Vice Chair; Kretz, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Eickmeyer, Grant, Kristiansen, Lantz, Loomis, Nelson, Newhouse and Orcutt.

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

Staff: Jaclyn Ford (786-7339).

Background:

Revenues from the lease of land or sale of shellfish from oyster reserve lands are deposited into the Oyster Reserve Land Account. Forty percent of the funds are used for the

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management expenses of the oyster reserve lands incurred by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the expenses associated with new research and development on the control of aquatic nuisance species and burrowing shrimp. Up to 10 percent of the funds from the Oyster Reserve Land Account are deposited into the General Fund. The remainder is deposited into the On-Site Sewage Grant Program.

Each year, the WDFW transfers \$100,000 from the revenues from the Willapa Harbor Oyster Reserve to the On-Site Sewage Grant Program. All remaining revenues are used for WDFW management of oyster reserve lands and new research and development on the control of aquatic nuisance species and burrowing shrimp.

The Department of Health (DOH) manages the On-Site Sewage Grant program in Puget Sound, as well as in Pacific and Grays Harbor counties. The DOH provides funds to the local health jurisdictions to use as grants or loans to individuals to improve their on-site sewage systems. The funds are provided only in areas that have the potential to adversely affect water quality in commercial and recreational shellfish growing areas.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The WDFW will transfer funds from the Oyster Reserve Land Account to the local governments in Pacific and Grays Harbor counties and Puget Sound to manage their On-Site Sewage Grant Program. Local governments, in consultation with the DOH, will use the funds as grants or loans to individuals for repairing or improving their on-site sewage systems.

The WDFW will transfer up to 50 percent of the annual revenues generated in the previous year from the Willapa Harbor Oyster Reserve to the On-Site Sewage Grant Program, as necessary, to achieve a fund balance of \$100,000.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

This bill requires a recipient of a grant or loan to enter into agreement with the appropriate local government, not health jurisdiction. This bill also specifies the research and development done by the WDFW will be focused on bivalve shellfish.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This legislation will continue to improve water quality and meet the needs of the shellfish aquaculture industry. This will provide flexibility in providing funds and research,

and fixes some of the concerns from the Puget Sound bill. The term "Puget Sound" may have to be removed. This is a win-win for Willapa. Most septic systems have been fixed as a result of this Grant Program. There are some excess funds left in the Oyster Reserve Land Account. This bill solves problems for industry and recreation. There is quite a bit of interest in research on nuisance species.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Blake, prime sponsor; Maryanne Guschard, Washington Department of Health; Morris Barker, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; Jim Jesernig, Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers; and Dick Sheldon, Northern Oyster Company.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.