

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1604

As Reported by House Committee On:
Puget Sound, Select

Title: An act relating to creating a pilot project to study the effects of oxygenation in Hood Canal.

Brief Description: Introducing oxygen into Hood Canal.

Sponsors: Representatives Eickmeyer, Sump, Morris, Chase, O'Brien and Haigh.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Select Committee on Puget Sound: 1/31/07, 2/27/07 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates a pilot project to study the effects of introducing oxygen into the waters at Sund Rock on Hood Canal.
- Determines the feasibility and cost of designing and constructing a system to inject oxygen into Hood Canal.

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON PUGET SOUND

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Upthegrove, Chair; Eickmeyer, Vice Chair; Rolfes, Vice Chair; Sump, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; O'Brien, Pearson and Springer.

Staff: Karen Rogers (786-7388).

Background:

Hood Canal is a glacier-carved fjord approximately 60 miles in length with approximately 180 miles of shoreline. Portions of Hood Canal have experienced low dissolved oxygen concentrations for many years, the lowest reported concentrations occurring in 2004. Recent low-concentration events have resulted in significant fish kills.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Sund Rock is located on the southwest side of Hood Canal, north of Hoodspout, and at the mouth of Sund Creek.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Legislature tasks the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to implement a pilot project that tests the viability and efficiency of introducing oxygen into the waters of Hood Canal. The Legislature further tasks the WDFW to evaluate whether such oxygen infusion preserves and enhances aquatic life.

The pilot project entails the design, construction, operation, and evaluation of a pilot facility near Sund Rock on Hood Canal. During the first year, the WDFW will determine the best location, depth, size, design, and cost of an oxygen-injecting device. The device will be constructed and deployed during the second year, and the WDFW will evaluate the impact of the injected dissolved oxygen on aquatic life.

After the evaluation, the WDFW will report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature. Recommendations will state whether to proceed with a larger-scale project to inject oxygen into Hood Canal.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

House Bill 1604 states that, following the evaluation of the pilot project, the WDFW must report its results to the Legislature. The substitute bill requires that the WDFW report immediately upon completion of the evaluation.

Appropriation: The sum of \$135,000 as appropriated for the biennium ending June 30, 2008, from the General Fund to the WDFW. The sum of \$646,500 as appropriated for the biennium ending June 30, 2009, from the General Fund to the WDFW.

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) The aquatic life of Hood Canal, including indigenous species, is valuable and must be protected from extinction. Currently, the aquatic life is vulnerable due to the anoxic conditions of Hood Canal. These anoxic conditions must be remedied, and this bill addresses them.

A technology to oxygenate the water currently exists, and it is proving successful. The technology is the density current generator, and it is being used in Hazamura, Japan, where it is rejuvenating clam populations in the area.

(In support with concerns) We should be cautious by carefully operating the pilot project on a small scale before moving to larger-scale projects. The process of introducing oxygen may cause an upwelling of deeper waters that have lower dissolved oxygen levels; so the project must be carefully monitored for this.

Funding for the proposed pilot project is \$70,000 short of what it will actually cost. The scope of the pilot project should be decreased to accommodate the funding shortfall.

Along with introducing oxygen into Hood Canal, other environmental contributors to water decline must be addressed. These contributors include untreated sewage going into the waters; livestock in Mason County, which should be fenced to keep at a distance; toxics and other nutrients, which should be prevented from entering Hood Canal; and contaminated sediments, which can be cleaned via bioremediation.

This pilot project appears to be a short-term approach that does not address the underlying problems of nitrogen loading.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Eickmeyer, prime sponsor.

(In support with concerns) Morris Barker, Department of Fish and Wildlife; Chris Stearns; and Bill Dewey, Taylor Shellfish Company.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.