

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 2049

C 344 L 07

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Authorizing the creation of marine resource committees.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Select Committee on Puget Sound (originally sponsored by Representatives Rolfes, Strow, Appleton, Hunt, Springer, McDermott, VanDeWege, Seaquist, McCoy, Eickmeyer and Lantz).

House Select Committee on Puget Sound

Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation

Background:

Congress created the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative (Conservation Initiative) in 1998 as a conservation and restoration program serving the northwest portion of the Puget Sound. The Conservation Initiative is charged with establishing community-based marine stewardship, conducting citizen-driven scientific studies on marine species and their habitat, and restoring marine habitat.

The Conservation Initiative has established seven Marine Resources Committees (MRCs), one for each of the following counties: Clallam, Island, Jefferson, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom. Each of these MRCs is citizen-based, with representatives from local government, tribal government, and the scientific, economic, recreational, and conservation communities. Each MRC has specific preservation and protection actions that are pertinent to their area. Current MRC projects include surveys of marine habitats, mapping eelgrass beds, outreach and education to local communities, compiling scientific data, and protecting rocky-reef fish.

Summary:

Certain counties bordering Puget Sound, and all coastal counties, are authorized to establish an MRC to address the needs of the marine ecosystem local to that county. An MRC may only be created by a county legislative authority, in cooperation with tribes, cities, and local special districts. A county may delegate management and oversight of an MRC to a coastal city within its boundaries. Residents may petition their county legislative authority for the establishment of an MRC, and the county must respond to that petition within 60 days of receipt.

The membership of the MRC is established by the initiating local government and must include balanced representation from the local government, the scientific community, and economic, recreational, scientific, and conservation interests.

Once created, an MRC is directed to review existing data and conservation programs in order to make prioritized recommendations as to what else could be done in the area local to the MRC. In addition to making conservation recommendations, the MRC may work to help implement any accepted recommendations, promote public outreach, and engage in other activities deemed appropriate by the initiating local government.

The Puget Sound Action Team (PSAT), or its successor organization, is designated as the coordinating entity for the various MRCs created by counties located within the Puget Sound basin. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is designated to serve that role for MRCs created by a coastal county. As such, the PSAT and the WDFW are to help coordinate communication, pool grant funding, and assist local projects that fit within regional goals.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	97	0	
Senate	48	0	(Senate amended)
House	94	0	(House concurred)

Effective: July 22, 2007