
Select Committee on Puget Sound

HB 2049

Brief Description: Authorizing the creation of marine resource committees.

Sponsors: Representatives Rolfes, Strow, Appleton, Hunt, Springer, McDermott, VanDeWege, Seaquist, McCoy, Eickmeyer and Lantz.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a mechanism for each city and county bordering Puget Sound to establish a Marine Resource Committee to address the needs of the marine ecosystem local to that city or county.

Hearing Date: 2/16/07

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

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 Resource 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 of Bill:

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.

Each city and county bordering Puget Sound is authorized to establish an MRC to address the needs of the marine ecosystem local to that city or county. An MRC may only be created by a local legislative authority, in cooperation with local special districts. Residents may petition their local legislative authority for the establishment of an MRC, and the local government 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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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