

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4002

As Reported by House Committee On:
Puget Sound, Select

Brief Description: Requesting that Congress fund the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative.

Sponsors: Representatives B. Sullivan, Upthegrove, Rolfes, Sells, Chase, Kenney and Linville.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Select Committee on Puget Sound: 1/24/07 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requests that Congress fund the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Commission.

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON PUGET SOUND

Majority Report: 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:

Congress mandates and funds the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative (Conservation Initiative), a conservation and restoration program serving the Puget Sound in northwest Washington. Its charges are to establish community-based marine stewardship, conduct citizen-driven scientific studies on marine species and their habitat, and restore marine habitat.

The Conservation Initiative has 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, the tribal government co-managers, and the scientific, economic, recreational and conservation

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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:

The Legislature requests that Congress continue to mandate and fund the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The Northwest Straits Commission (Commission) is a valuable organization deserving of appreciation and support, including financial. Their local-level projects are useful, they spend their funds wisely, and they have low overheads. Their projects include habitat conservation and restoration, *Spartina* removal, and marine sediment removal, among others.

They often work with non-profit and volunteer groups, which feel very strongly that the Commission's volunteer recruitment and engagement are critical in Puget Sound. Non-profit groups support the provision of state funds for the Commission, money they feel will be well spent on projects that will educate the public and raise awareness.

The Commission also helps in other ways. The Commission serves as an advisory body, and provides a great deal of research, which the counties use for best available science when updating their Shoreline Management Program (under the Shoreline Management Act) and critical areas ordinances (under the Growth Management Act). Securing federal and state money for the Commission is a priority for some counties.

It is important that we let Congress know the value of the Northwest Straits Commission, and that we wish for their continued financial support.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Brian Sullivan, prime sponsor; Naki Stevens, People for Puget Sound; Joe Stohr, Department of Ecology; and Kevin Ranker, San Juan County.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.