

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 6343

C 83 L 08

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Creating a pilot program to examine the impacts of small scale mineral prospecting on coastal areas.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation (originally sponsored by Senators Morton, Carrell and Roach).

Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation
House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources

Background: In 1967 the Legislature established the Seashore Conservation Area (Seashore) dedicating the public beaches on the Pacific Ocean to public recreation. The State Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) is authorized to oversee the Seashore under principles established in statute.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) manages fish and wildlife populations to preserve species and provide recreational and commercial fishing and hunting opportunities. Within the Seashore, WDFW is specifically authorized to regulate the conservation or taking of fish and shellfish.

Under the current statute, small scale prospecting and mining does not require a hydraulic project approval (HPA) if the prospecting is conducted in accordance with rules adopted by WDFW. Small scale prospecting and mining means the use of pans, nonmotorized sluice boxes, concentrators, and minirocker boxes for the discovery and recovery of minerals. The rules are published in the Gold and Fish Pamphlet, which serves as the HPA.

In addition, under current law, anyone removing natural objects from State Park land, without rules allowing otherwise, would be guilty of a misdemeanor.

Summary: The Commission and WDFW must establish a pilot program to allow small scale prospecting and mining on at least three demonstration areas within the Seashore. The pilot program must be conducted from July 1, 2008 through July 1, 2010.

WDFW must issue individual HPAs that require small scale prospecting and mining activities to occur to the greatest extent possible on the beach.

WDFW must report its findings and recommendations regarding small scale prospecting and mining to the Commission by October 1, 2010. The Commission and WDFW must report their findings and recommendations on the potential impacts and the activity of small scale prospecting and mining on ocean beaches to the Legislature by December 1, 2010.

The act expires on December 1, 2010.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate 45 3
House 96 0

Effective: June 12, 2008