

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6145

As Reported by House Committee On: Government Operations & Elections

Title: An act relating to declaring the *Ostrea lurida* the official oyster of the state of Washington.

Brief Description: Declaring the *Ostrea lurida* the official oyster of the state of Washington.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Governmental Operations (originally sponsored by Senators Hatfield, Roach, Chase, Sheldon, Fraser and McAuliffe).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Operations & Elections: 2/25/14 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by Committee)

- Designates the *Ostrea lurida* as the official oyster of the State of Washington.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 11 members: Representatives S. Hunt, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Taylor, Ranking Minority Member; Young, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Carlyle, Christian, Kretz, Manweller, Orwall, Robinson and Van De Wege.

Staff: Amanda Ondrick (786-7296) and Jasmine Vasavada (786-7301).

Background:

The bivalve mollusc known as *Ostrea lurida*, or more commonly the Olympia Oyster, is a native species that inhabits the Pacific coast of North America. The bivalve measures 6 to 8 centimeters in length and lives in estuaries, streams, and small rivers. Like other bivalves, they are filter feeders and feed by filtering phytoplankton and bacteria from seawater. Large populations can reduce algae and control water quality. The Olympia Oyster is popular as a cocktail oyster and overharvesting and pollution have caused the species to experience a severe decline.

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.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The *Ostrea lurida* is designated the official oyster of the State of Washington.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:

"Common tribal names" is removed as a reference. The Shoalwater oyster is added to the list of historic and common names by which the oyster is known.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) To improve the future for children around the Puget Sound, this bill should be passed and the *Ostrea lurida*, and other oysters, should start flourishing in the Puget Sound as quickly as possible. These oysters filter the water and can help regulate harmful algal blooms by keeping algae down. In the large numbers that Puget Sound needs, these oysters can link together into reef-like structures and provide a habitat for young sea animals and sea plants, of which numbers are also declining. A thick oyster bed will trap pollution in sediment and also anchor the sediment, keeping the pollution from spreading. This helps the Puget Sound stay healthy and in balance. Oysters were once the most abundant bivalves, and bivalves must form the base for any recovery in Puget Sound. These oysters are pushed to extinction through harvesting and pollution. It is our responsibility to bring them back into abundance. Also, promoting the oyster industry is a good idea.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Hatfield, prime sponsor; Claire Thompson; and Jim Jesernig, Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.