

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2250

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks, February 28, 2020

Title: An act relating to coastal crab derelict gear recovery.

Brief Description: Concerning coastal crab derelict gear recovery.

Sponsors: House Committee on Rural Development, Agriculture, & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Blake, Fitzgibbon, Lekanoff and Tharinger).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/12/20, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 2/25/20, 2/28/20 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the Department of Fish and Wildlife to expand the Coastal Commercial Dungeness Crab Pot Removal Program during the fishery that occurs from May 1st through September 15th.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Van De Wege, Chair; Salomon, Vice Chair; Warnick, Ranking Member; Honeyford, McCoy, Rolfes and Short.

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

Background: An individual must acquire the appropriate commercial fishing license or permit from the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) to engage in commercial fishing in Washington. Fishing seasons are set by DFW through rulemaking, and the coastal commercial Dungeness crab season typically begins in December or January.

DFW administers the Coastal Commercial Dungeness Crab Pot Removal Program (Program). Under the Program, DFW issues a crab pot removal permit (permit) that allows participants in the coastal commercial Dungeness crab fishery to remove crab pots from

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coastal marine waters beginning 15 days after the close of the primary harvest season, regardless of whether the crab pot was originally set by the participant or not. In cooperation with individuals holding a current commercial Dungeness crab-coastal license, DFW may expand the Program to areas closed to commercial Dungeness crab harvest prior to the end of the primary harvest season.

DFW may exempt certain crab pots from the Program, restrict crab pot removal activities to specific geographic areas, and adopt rules related to the Program. Unlawful use of a crab pot removal permit is a misdemeanor. Individuals participating in the Program are exempt from applicable lost and found property laws.

Summary of Bill: DFW, in cooperation with current commercial coastal Dungeness crab license holders, may expand the Program during the fishery that occurs from May 1st through September 15th.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The Dungeness crab fishery is this most valuable single species fishery on the west coast, and preserving access to this fishery is key to the economic viability of our coastal communities. This bill is a significant and long needed improvement of crab fishery management and expands existing authority to remove abandoned crab gear in the coastal crab fishery by providing for removal during the season. Additionally, there is a new sense of urgency for this retrieval because it will mitigate the potential for whale entanglements. The bill allows DFW to reduce the number of pots in the water on the coast during the period that whales are migrating to avoid entanglements.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Tom McBride, DFW; Tom Echols, Coalition of Coastal Fisheries, Washington Dungeness Crab Fishermen's Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.