
**Rural Development, Agriculture &
Natural Resources Committee**

SB 5145

Brief Description: Concerning the prevention of seabed mining of hard minerals.

Sponsors: Senators Van De Wege and Rolfes.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Prohibits the seabed mining of hard minerals in designated waters of Washington.
- Prohibits the Department of Natural Resources from issuing permits or leases on aquatic lands for purposes of exploration, development, or seabed mining of hard minerals.

Hearing Date: 3/17/21

Staff: Robert Hatfield (786-7117).

Background:

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages nearly 3 million acres of uplands and over 2 million acres of aquatic lands. The DNR must manage those lands using a multiple use concept where it is in the best interests of the state and the general welfare of the citizens and is consistent with the management objectives of the land.

The DNR is authorized to issue permits and leases for prospecting, and contracts for the mining of valuable minerals and specified materials, except rock, gravel, sand, silt, coal, or hydrocarbons, upon and from any public lands belonging to or held in trust by the state, both uplands and aquatic lands, and upon lands which have been sold but upon which the state has

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reserved the mineral rights.

The Shoreline Management Act (SMA) requires all counties and most cities and towns with shorelines to develop and implement shoreline management plans. The SMA applies to the shorelines of all marine waters. Under the SMA, drilling for oil or gas is prohibited in the waters of Puget Sound north to the Canadian boundary and the Strait of Juan de Fuca seaward from the ordinary high water mark and on all lands within 1000 feet landward from the ordinary high water mark.

Summary of Bill:

Seabed mining for hard minerals is prohibited in the waters of Puget Sound north to the Canadian boundary and the Strait of Juan de Fuca seaward from the ordinary high water mark and on all lands within 1000 feet landward from the ordinary high water mark.

The Department of Natural Resources may not issue permits and leases on aquatic lands, both state-owned and privately-owned, along the Washington coast from Cape Flattery south to Washington's southern boundary, nor in Grays Harbor, Willapa Bay, and the Columbia River downstream from the Longview bridge, for purposes of exploration, development, or seabed mining of hard minerals.

Hard minerals are defined as natural deposits of valuable minerals other than rock, gravel, sand, silt, coal, or hydrocarbons. Hard minerals include, but are not limited to, metals and placer deposits of metals, nonmetallic minerals, gemstones, ores, gold, silver, copper, lead, iron, manganese, silica, chrome, platinum, tungsten, zirconium, titanium, garnet, and phosphorus.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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