

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1508

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As of February 17, 2022

**Title:** An act relating to the sanitary control of shellfish.

**Brief Description:** Concerning the sanitary control of shellfish.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Rural Development, Agriculture & Natural Resources  
(originally sponsored by Representatives Chapman and Pollet).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 1/14/22, 96-0.

**Committee Activity:** Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 3/16/21, 3/18/21  
[DP-WM]; 2/17/22.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Gives authority to the Department of Health to regulate health and safety of commercially harvested crab in relation to biotoxin contamination.
- Requires the State Board of Health to adopt rules regulating crab harvesting, tracking, and recalls by July 2023.

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

**Staff:** Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

**Background:** The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and the Department of Health (DOH) both have a role in managing the state's shellfish resources. DFW duties include season setting, administering and issuing shellfish licenses, and enforcement. Primary responsibilities of DOH include administering regulations governing the sanitary control of shellfish.

Commercial Shellfishing Licenses. A person must acquire a license from DFW to

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commercially fish for and harvest shellfish, including crab. DFW has authority to set fishing seasons by species, geography, and gear type by rule. Examples of commercial crab licenses include coastal Dungeness crab, Puget Sound crab ring net, and Puget Sound Dungeness crab licenses.

Sanitary Control of Shellfish. The State Board of Health (BOH) establishes, and DOH administers, regulations governing the sanitary control of shellfish. This includes minimum performance standards for growing, harvesting, processing, packing, storage, transport, and sale of shellfish for human consumption. Shellfish are defined as all varieties of fresh or frozen oysters, mussels, clams, and scallops, whether shucked or in the shell. Washington is a participant in the National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP), a cooperative program between states and the federal government for the sanitary control of shellfish. The stated purpose of NSSP is to promote and improve the sanitation of molluscan shellfish moving in interstate commerce through uniformity of state shellfish programs and regulations. Components of NSSP include program guidelines, growing area classification and dealer certification programs, and evaluation of state program elements by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The sanitary shellfish standards, as well as rules and regulations governing shellfish growing areas and shellfish plant facilities and operations to protect public health, are established in rule by BOH. In addition to requirements established by BOH, any person engaged in a shellfish operation or possessing a commercial quantity of shellfish or any quantity of shellfish for sale for human consumption must comply with the NSSP; and federal regulations adopted by the FDA requiring processors of fish and shellfish, to implement hazard analysis critical control point (HACCP) plans.

If a provision of either the NSSP model ordinance or regulations requiring HACCP plans are inconsistent with state law, the more stringent provision, as determined by DOH, must apply.

**Summary of Bill:** DOH has authority to regulate the health and safety of commercially harvested crab in relation to biotoxin contamination. BOH must develop rules regulating crab harvesting, tracking, and recalls by July 2023.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Regular Session 2022):** PRO: The commercial coastal crab fishery is the most valuable single-species fishery on the West Coast and is

important to coastal communities. If high levels of domoic acid persists, we need tools to manage in addition to delaying the coastal crab fishing season. Delays risk pushing the crab harvest season into the spring when gray and humpback whales arrive, increasing risk of entanglements. Domoic acid tends to only impact the viscera of crab and not the meat, so an evisceration requirement would allow the fishery to open safely. Evisceration is a necessary tool to have available to manage when necessary and ensure crab is safe to consume.

Currently, the Department of Health is limited in how they can regulate crab. The industry would like to see an expeditious timeline to implement the program. Washington can implement a program with transparent sampling and testing similar to Oregon, consistency with Oregon is very important.

OTHER: This is important new work for the Department of Health to expand sanitary control to commercial crab harvesting. The Board of Health would prefer to have until 2024 to allow enough time for proper rulemaking.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Larry Thevik, Washington Dungeness Crab Fishermen's Association; Tom McBride, WDFW; Jonathan Gonzalez, Pacific Seafood; Susan Chambers, West Coast Seafood Processors Association.

OTHER: Todd Phillips, Washington State Department of Health.

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