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**HOUSE BILL 1297**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2023 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Reeves, Lekanoff, Reed, and Chapman; by request of Department of Natural Resources

AN ACT Relating to establishing a task force of the geoduck comanagers to identify harvest opportunities to promote tribal treaty rights to geoduck and enhance state geoduck harvest opportunities; creating a new section; and providing an expiration date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The department of natural resources administrator shall convene a geoduck comanagement task force to investigate opportunities to reduce negative impacts to tribal treaty and state geoduck harvest in Washington state and promote long-term opportunities to expand or sustain geoduck harvest.

(2) The task force shall investigate the feasibility of intervention to enhance the wildstock of geoduck, including reseeding projects to improve native stocks of geoduck. An evaluation of opportunities, challenges, and financial feasibility as well as joint recommendations must be submitted as a report to the legislature and the administrator of the department of natural resources by December 1, 2024.

(3) The task force shall identify and investigate the important factors preventing classification of areas for commercial harvest of wildstock geoduck or leading to existing wildstock geoduck commercial tract downgrade in classification and develop recommendations to sustainably increase the number and area of harvestable tracts. An evaluation of drivers and recommendations for most cost-effective improvements must be submitted as a report to the legislature and administrator of the department of natural resources by December 1, 2024. This report must include:

(a) A consideration of opportunities identified and recommendations presented in previous studies and reports;

(b) An inventory of wastewater treatment plant and surface water runoff point sources impacting state and tribal geoduck harvesting opportunities within the classified commercial shellfish growing areas in Puget Sound;

(c) A ranking of these outfalls and point sources prioritized for future correction to mitigate downgraded classification of areas with commercial geoduck harvest opportunity;

(d) An inventory of wildstock geoduck tracts that are most impacted by poor water quality or other factors impacting classification;

(e) Consideration of the role of sediment load and urban runoff, and pathways to mitigate these impacts; and

(f) Recommendations for future actions to improve the harvest quantity of wildstock geoduck and to prioritize areas that can attain improved classification most readily, while considering the influence of outfalls as identified in (c) of this subsection.

(4) The task force shall convene at least quarterly and may consult any necessary experts in development of these reports.

(5)(a) The department of natural resources administrator must invite the following representatives to participate in the task force:

(i) A representative of the department of natural resources who shall serve as the chair of the task force;

(ii) Representatives of tribes with treaty or reserved rights to geoduck harvest in Washington state;

(iii) A representative of the department of ecology;

(iv) A representative of the department of health;

(v) A representative of the department of fish and wildlife;

(vi) A representative of the Puget Sound partnership; and

(vii) A representative of the academic community.

(b) The department of natural resources administrator must appoint each representative.

(c) The department of natural resources administrator has the authority to invite other individuals to the task force; not to exceed the number of seats of tribal entities.

(d) Members of the task force may be reimbursed for travel expenses as authorized in RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

(e) Representatives serve at the pleasure of the department of natural resources administrator.

(f) The task force must be staffed by the department of natural resources.

(6) This act expires January 15, 2025.

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