
HOUSE BILL 1631

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Representatives Nance, Mena, Griffey, Salahuddin, Low, Parshley, Hunt, Walsh, Ramel, Paul, Duerr, Bernbaum, Chase, Peterson, Shavers, Ryu, McEntire, Richards, Reed, Kloba, Simmons, Tharinger, Zahn, Thomas, and Timmons

Read first time 01/27/25. Referred to Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing bull kelp forests as the official
2 state marine forest; adding a new section to chapter 1.20 RCW; and
3 creating a new section.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) As the foundational species of the
6 evergreen state's underwater forests, bull kelp is vital to
7 Washington's culture, commerce, and ecology. Together with understory
8 kelp, other floating kelps, and eelgrass meadows, bull kelp forests
9 provide a mosaic of habitats and food that support the state's marine
10 species like orcas, salmon, rockfish, and pinto abalone, and serve to
11 sustain commercially and culturally important marine fisheries. Bull
12 kelp holds deep cultural significance for tribal nations, continuing
13 to sustain and support tribal communities today as it has for
14 generations. For tribes, access to healthy bull kelp ecosystems
15 within their usual and accustomed grounds, stations, and traditional
16 areas is essential not only as a source of food and traditional
17 materials, but also for spiritual, cultural, and economic practices
18 that have long depended on the kelp forest's vitality. Recognizing
19 this, this act explicitly respects and upholds the treaty rights of
20 Indian tribes. Nothing within this act is intended to alter or
21 infringe upon these inherent rights.

1 (2) Bull kelp has declined dramatically throughout south and
2 central Puget Sound in recent years, endangering its crucial role in
3 our marine and coastal ecosystems. The Washington state legislature
4 provided initial funding to implement priority actions identified in
5 the Puget Sound kelp conservation and recovery plan during the 2021
6 and 2023 legislative sessions. Continuing this work, the department
7 of natural resources established the statewide kelp and eelgrass
8 health and conservation plan in 2023 to conserve and recover at least
9 10,000 acres of kelp forests and eelgrass meadows by 2040, driving
10 collaborative efforts to preserve and restore our bull kelp forests
11 on Washington's coast and in Puget Sound.

12 (3) Conserving and recovering this vital species relies on
13 awareness that our bull kelp forests are critical to Washington's
14 identity, culture, economy, and ecology. In recognition of this
15 important habitat, the state legislature hereby designates bull kelp
16 (*Nereocystis luetkeana*) forests as the official state marine forest.

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 1.20 RCW
18 to read as follows:

19 Bull kelp (*Nereocystis luetkeana*) forests are hereby designated
20 to be the official marine forest of the state of Washington.

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