

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SJM 8030

As Reported by House Committee On:

Natural Resources

Brief Description: Requesting recognition of the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project.

Sponsors: Senators Jacobsen, Poulsen, Kline and Spanel.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 2/27/02 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requests Congress to provide sufficient funding to complete the assessment phase of the Puget Sound Nearshore and Ecosystem Restoration Project, and to begin the construction phases of the project.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Doumit, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Buck, Eickmeyer, Ericksen, Jackley, McDermott, Pearson and Upthegrove.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Sump, Ranking Minority Member; and Orcutt.

Staff: Bill Lynch (786-7092).

Background:

The nearshore of Puget Sound is the area of shallow water from the top of coastal bluffs to a depth of about 10 meters. The nearshore provides critical habitat for juvenile salmon, shellfish, groundfish, seabirds and marine mammals. This area is also the site of a range of commercial, residential and recreational activities.

In 2000, Congress approved the Puget Sound and Adjacent Waters Restoration Program, with an authorization of \$40 million in federal funding for the U.S. Army Corps of

Engineers (corps). The program authorized the corps to work with state and local agencies to identify, prioritize and construct environmental restoration projects. In 2001 the corps signed an agreement with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to initiate the assessment phase of the Puget Sound Nearshore and Ecosystem Restoration Project. The project is dependent on annual congressional appropriations to the corps.

Summary of Bill:

The President and Congress are requested to recognize the importance of the Puget Sound Nearshore Restoration Project and the broad level of public support and involvement. Congress is requested to provide sufficient funding to complete the assessment phase of the project and begin the construction phases.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Testimony For: The state entered into a 50-50 cost-share agreement with the corps to undertake a nearshore evaluation and restoration effort for the Puget Sound. The study portion of this effort will look to fill in the gaps of the limiting factors analysis for the nearshore. Much of the state and local match is in-kind, such as the Puget Sound ambient monitoring program. Projects would include eelgrass restoration, beach enhancement, and replacing hard bulkheads with soft bulkheads. All projects would be with a willing sponsor. There are no regulatory elements to this program. The Salmon Recovery Funding Board contributed \$375,000 to this work because they were concerned that few projects involving the nearshore are submitted for funding because of the lack of limiting factors information. The nearshore is an important area for fish to feed and avoid predators before heading out to sea. This project gets all the various activities under one umbrella and allows it to leverage federal money. It will also benefit the shellfish industry because it will help address water quality issues. An increase in the corps' funding is needed to help them meet the federal match to address the problems. This memorial is a message that the state values this effort.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Tim Smith, Department of Fish and Wildlife; Jim Fox, Interagency Commission for Outdoor Recreation and Salmon Recovery Funding Board; Dwayne Fagergren, Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team; Bennie Hargrave, United States Army Corps of Engineers; and Willy O'Neil, Associated General Contractors.