

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1453

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources & Marine Waters, March 17, 2011

Title: An act relating to commercial shellfish enforcement.

Brief Description: Regarding commercial shellfish enforcement.

Sponsors: House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Rolfes, Chandler, Blake, Van De Wege, Upthegrove, Stanford, Jinkins and Kretz; by request of Department of Health).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/25/11, 96-2.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources & Marine Waters: 3/10/11, 3/17/11 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & MARINE WATERS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Ranker, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Fraser, Hargrove and Swecker.

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: The Legislature has directed the Department of Health (DOH) to protect public health by ensuring the sanitary control of shellfish. The existing statutory scheme provides DOH with broad authority to adopt requirements to ensure shellfish are harvested, processed, and distributed in a safe and sanitary manner.

Participation in the National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP). Washington participates in the NSSP, which is a cooperative program between states and the federal government for the sanitary control of shellfish. The stated purpose of the NSSP is to promote and improve the sanitation of shellfish moving in interstate commerce through uniformity of state shellfish programs and regulations.

Inspection and Certification of Commercial Shellfish Activities. In addition to DOH's broad rulemaking authority, statute provides several specific mechanisms for the regulation of commercial shellfish harvest and operations including:

- a certification requirement for shellfish to indicate that they meet DOH requirements, which is known as a certificate of compliance;

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- licensing and certification requirements for shellfish growing areas, and culling, shucking, and packing activities; and
- mandatory inspections, water quality monitoring, and biotoxin testing.

Penalties for Commercial Shellfish Violations. DOH may also deny, revoke, suspend, or modify commercial shellfish licenses or other approvals where it determines a violation has occurred. A person whose commercial shellfish privileges have been suspended may not participate in a shellfish operation or the harvesting, shucking, or packing of commercial shellfish.

Additionally, a person violating commercial shellfish requirements is subject to a gross misdemeanor and a civil penalty of up to \$500 per day.

Summary of Bill: Expands Prohibitions on Commercial Shellfish Activity When a Certificate of Approval is Under Suspension. In addition to existing prohibitions, a person or entity whose license or certificate of approval has been denied, revoked, or suspended as a result of a violation may not participate in commercial shellfish activities including the retail sale, brokering, or purchase for resale of shellfish; or engage in any activity associated with selling or offering to sell shellfish.

A person violating these prohibitions is subject to a class C felony, and suspension of privileges for a minimum of five years.

Prohibits Harassing or Threatening Employees of the Department of Health. DOH may deny, revoke, or suspend a person's license or certificate of approval for a DOH employee performing his or her duties.

Aligns Statutes with the NSSP. Language referencing a certificate of compliance demonstrating that shellfish meet state sanitary requirements is changed to approved shellfish tag, which is a term used in the NSSP and DOH rule. Also, DOH must consider the most recent version on the NSSP model ordinance when adopting rules relating to shellfish sanitation.

Makes Other Changes. The act makes other modifications, such as:

- specifying that shellfish tags or labels must be affixed to each container of shellfish, and recognizes bulk tagging as authorized under the NSSP;
- providing that DOH or a Fish and Wildlife Officer may immediately seize containers not affixed with a shellfish tag;
- removing language specifying that shellfish be seized immediately when a shellfish grower or processor does not display a certificate of approval; and
- making technical changes to and reorganizing language.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: DOH and the shellfish industry each take shellfish sanitation seriously. Safe shellfish are key to human health and the economics of the shellfish industry. DOH, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the shellfish industry have worked cooperatively on this language. A primary driver for this bill is to close a loophole that has made it difficult to stop those with suspended commercial shellfish licenses from being involved in retail sales.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Maryanne Guichard, DOH; Dan Brinson, Department of Fish and Wildlife; Jim Jesernig, Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers.