

RCW 1.20.220 State marine forest. Bull kelp (*Nereocystis luetkeana*) forests are hereby designated to be the official marine forest of the state of Washington. [2025 c 45 s 2.]

Findings—2025 c 45: "(1) As the foundational species of the evergreen state's underwater forests, bull kelp is vital to Washington's culture, commerce, and ecology. Together with understory kelp, other floating kelps, and eelgrass meadows, bull kelp forests provide a mosaic of habitats and food that support the state's marine species like orcas, salmon, rockfish, and pinto abalone, and serve to sustain commercially and culturally important marine fisheries. Bull kelp holds deep cultural significance for tribal nations, continuing to sustain and support tribal communities today as it has for generations. For tribes, access to healthy bull kelp ecosystems within their usual and accustomed grounds, stations, and traditional areas is essential not only as a source of food and traditional materials, but also for spiritual, cultural, and economic practices that have long depended on the kelp forest's vitality. Recognizing this, this act explicitly respects and upholds the treaty rights of Indian tribes. Nothing within this act is intended to alter or infringe upon these inherent rights.

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

(3) Conserving and recovering this vital species relies on awareness that our bull kelp forests are critical to Washington's identity, culture, economy, and ecology. In recognition of this important habitat, the state legislature hereby designates bull kelp (*Nereocystis luetkeana*) forests as the official state marine forest." [2025 c 45 s 1.]