



Oregon

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DATE: March 12, 2025

TO: House Committee on Climate Energy and Environment

FROM: Abby Boudouris, Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: HB 2981-2 of 2025 Session

HB 2981-2 seeks to minimize the risk of introducing aquatic invasive species, specifically freshwater invasive mussels to Oregon waters. The -2 amendment appropriates \$175,000 to the Department of Environmental Quality for the purpose of inspecting commercial shipping vessels to verify compliance with ballast water management rules that are in place. DEQ does not have a position on the bill and is providing this testimony to explain how this bill relates to current operation of the agency's Ballast Water program.

Ballast water has been recognized for decades as a significant vector for the global transport of aquatic invasive species. Vessels take up ballast water in ports around the world, during the unloading of cargo, to offset the weight imbalance created by cargo operations. That water is stored internally in massive tanks, and provides balance, trim, and stability to the vessel as it moves to the next port, or across an ocean. Then on arrival, the reverse happens: cargo is loaded, and ballast is discharged into waters of the new port, along with any aquatic creatures that may have been taken up at the previous port.

DEQ's 1.5 FTE Ballast water program was established in 2001 is funded by a 50/50 cost share of vessel arrival fees (currently \$88 per arrival) and allocation from the general fund. The half-time position is the program's dedicated vessel inspector. The program's inspection goal is 12% of the 1,500-1,600 annual arrivals to the state.

The daily work of the ballast water program is to track arrivals of commercial vessels to Oregon waters and evaluate their risk for introducing aquatic species to the state. For example, since the discovery of Golden mussels in Stockton, CA, vessels arriving to the Columbia River from Stockton are now in the highest-risk category, and a top priority for inspection. We consider information such as the volume of water the vessel intends to discharge, the environmental conditions of the most recent port, and the type of ballast management the vessel used during its voyage to make this risk calculation. The program carries out both targeted and random inspections and takes samples of a vessel's ballast to determine compliance.

The funding proposed in HB 2981-2 would make DEQ's halftime vessel inspector a full-time position. This proposed additional \$175,000 would be used to double the program's inspection efforts from the current goal of 12% of all Oregon arrivals to nearly 24% and will additionally allow for regular inspections in the Coos Bay, a port the program has not historically been able to inspect consistently. These additional inspections would strengthen Oregon's ability to prevent species introductions that have negative effects on the health of our salmon, drinking water, irrigation, and recreation.

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