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AB-274 Abandoned and derelict vessels: inventory. (2025-2026)

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CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

NO. 274

Introduced by Assembly Member Ransom

January 21, 2025

An act to add Section 6112 to the Public Resources Code, relating to vessels.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 274, as amended, Ransom. Abandoned and derelict vessels: inventory.

Existing law establishes within the Natural Resources Agency, the State Lands Commission consisting of the Controller, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Director of Finance. Existing law vests in the commission with exclusive jurisdiction over all ungranted tidelands and submerged lands owned by the state, and of the beds of navigable rivers, streams, lakes, bays, estuaries, inlets, and straits, including tidelands and submerged lands. Existing law authorizes the commission to take immediate action to remove from areas under its jurisdiction a vessel that is left unattended and is moored, docked, beached, or made fast to land in a position as to obstruct the normal movement of traffic or in a condition as to create a hazard to navigation, other vessels using a waterway, or the property of another. Existing law requires the commission, by July 1, 2019, and in consultation with other relevant state and local agencies directly involved in the removal of abandoned vessels, to develop a plan for the removal of abandoned commercial vessels.

This bill would require the commission, on or before January 1, 2027, to create an inventory of all abandoned and derelict commercial and recreational vessels on or in waters within the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, including commercially navigable waters, as specified. The bill would require the inventory to include specified information about each vessel, including, among other things, the ~~amount~~ *number* of commercial and recreational vessels located in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and the estimated size and weight of each commercial or recreational vessel. The bill would make these provisions contingent upon an appropriation by the Legislature.

This bill would make legislative findings and declarations as to the necessity of a special statute for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) California's coastline, ports, and other waterways are polluted with abandoned and derelict commercial vessels and marine debris, which contain high levels of hazardous materials from both their construction and use, including solvents, asbestos-containing materials, polychlorinated biphenyls or PCBs, lead paint, batteries, and petroleum products, such as fuel, oil, oily waste, hydraulic fluid, and grease.

(b) Abandoned and derelict commercial vessels create navigation, environmental, and public health and safety hazards.

(c) Abandoned and derelict commercial vessels usually consist of, but are not limited to, ferries, tugs, barges, cranes, dredges, ~~work boats~~ *workboats* and work platforms that were designed and used for commercial work, military craft, and other vessels, but at end of life are often sold at auction to any willing buyer. These vessels evolve into a dilapidated condition and eventually end up in an unusable state, leading the vessel to be sunk, partially sunk, or a sinking hazard.

(d) The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is California's most crucial water and ecologic resource. It is the largest freshwater tidal estuary of its kind on the West Coast, providing important bird and marine habitat, among other ecological and recreational benefits.

(e) The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is also home to the State Water Project and the Central Valley Project, which provide a portion of the drinking water for 29,000,000 Californians and irrigation water for much of the state's \$50 billion agricultural industry.

(f) While this is a statewide problem, the unique makeup of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, consisting of more than 700 miles of sloughs and waterways surrounding many leveed tracts and islands, makes it a magnet for abandoned and derelict commercial vessels.

(g) Other coastal states have similarly identified abandoned and derelict commercial vessels as a problem and have created statewide programs and provided necessary authorities to identify and remove these vessels.

SEC. 2. Section 6112 is added to the Public Resources Code, immediately following Section 6111, to read:

6112. (a) For purposes of this section, the following terms have the following definitions:

(1) "Commercial vessel" means a vessel designed or used for commercial work and includes, but is not limited to, a ferry, tug, barge, crane, dredge, workboat or work platform, fishing vessel used for commercial fishing, such as a fishing trawler, and military craft. "Commercial vessel" includes "marine debris," as defined in Section 550 of the Harbors and Navigation Code.

(2) "Commercially navigable waters" means surface water used, or historically or presently capable of being used, for navigation by commercial vessels within the boundaries of the state. Surface water that contains an abandoned or derelict commercial vessel is commercially navigable if the surface water is a tributary or is otherwise adjacent to commercially navigable waters.

(3) "Recreational vessel" has the same meaning as defined in Section 651 of the Harbors and Navigation Code. "Recreational vessel" includes, but is not limited to, passenger vehicles such as ferries, cruise ships, water taxis, and other vessels used for transport.

(b) (1) On or before January 1, 2027, upon appropriation by the Legislature, the commission shall create an inventory of all abandoned and derelict commercial and recreational vessels on or in waters within the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, including commercially navigable waters. The inventory may be conducted by means of an aerial survey, from currently available data from federal, state, and local agencies, or from other data available to the commission.

(2) The inventory shall include, but is not limited to, all of the following:

(A) The ~~amount~~ *number* of *abandoned and derelict* commercial and recreational vessels located in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

(B) The estimated size and weight of each commercial and recreational vessel.

(C) An estimate of the amount ~~of~~ *of*, and possible hazardous contents ~~of~~ *of*, each commercial and recreational vessel.

(D) Whether the commercial and recreational vessel is located near a commercial or community water source.

(E) The estimated amount it would cost to remove the commercial and recreational vessel.

(3) The information in the inventory shall be broken down by county, vessel type, and vessel size.

SEC. 3. The Legislature finds and declares that a special statute is necessary and that a general statute cannot be made applicable within the meaning of Section 16 of Article IV of the California Constitution because of the unique makeup of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and its waterways.