



2005 Market Street, Suite 2800 P 215.575.9050  
Philadelphia, PA 19103-7077 F 215.575.4939

901 E Street NW, 10th Floor P 202.552.2000  
Washington, DC 20004 F 202.552.2299  
[pewtrusts.org](http://pewtrusts.org)

## **DRAFT SB-5145 Hearing Testimony for March 17, 2021**

### **Washington House Committee on Rural Development, Agriculture and Natural Resources**

Good afternoon Representative Chapman and members of the committee. My name is Tom Rudolph, and I am speaking on behalf of The Pew Charitable Trusts. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today, and for taking up this important issue. We are in strong support of SB 5145, which will protect Washington's nearshore marine resources, coastal communities, and existing ocean-dependent industries like tourism and fishing from any future attempts to extract certain valuable minerals from the seafloor.

The Pew Charitable Trusts is an independent nonprofit, non-partisan, non-governmental organization dedicated to serving the public interest. Pew applies a rigorous, analytical approach to protect our shared environment, encourage responsive government, support scientific research, and improve civic life. Pew has been active in ocean conservation in the U.S. for over 20 years. We strive to help increase protections for valuable coastal waters, habitats and communities by identifying and advancing science-based conservation measures that will ensure all people can enjoy and benefit from nearshore resources now and into the future. Our approach, consistent with the best available science, is to develop and promote policies that recognize the interconnected nature of marine life through an ecosystem-based approach to resource management.

The ocean, especially the nearshore ocean, is facing a compounding array of stressors: industrialization, climate change, ocean acidification and other forces will increasingly challenge our ability to understand and co-exist with a healthy ocean. In this context, it is critical to identify and address emerging threats, especially those like seabed mining that would harm sensitive seafloor habitats. A growing body of evidence points to accelerating interest in seabed mining.

This includes nearshore areas along continental margins, and indeed there are potentially valuable mineral occurrences in and near Washington's state waters including precious metals, titanium-rich sands, and gemstones. These minerals have attracted attention in Washington before: WDNR issued mineral leases for exploration and mining of iron and titanium rich black sands in several areas around the mouth of the Columbia, including a project in the 1960s that got as far along as construction of a concentrating plant and another in the 1980s just over a mile off North Head on the Long Beach Peninsula.

At the same time, scientists are warning that the ecological impacts of seabed mining could be profound. They would include sediment plumes both local and dispersed, increased noise, light pollution, and physical disturbance of the seabed, up to and including the removal of plants,

animals, and substrate. Seabed mining could have severe impacts on jobs and whole communities dependent on existing ocean uses like fishing, tourism, and cultural resources. For these reasons, and because there are still knowledge gaps surrounding the ocean ecosystem which make it very difficult to accurately assess the true environmental impacts seabed mining would entail, this activity should be addressed in the near-term with strong, precautionary measures to safeguard marine habitat, coastal communities, and cultural resources.

Therefore, we are very much in favor of the proactive, ecosystem-based policy shift represented by SB 5145, and we want to thank you for all for the far-sightedness demonstrated by your consideration of this bill.