

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2043

As Reported By House Committee On:
Fisheries & Wildlife

Title: An act relating to the Puget Sound bottomfish fishery.

Brief Description: Requiring a license to fish for bottomfish in Puget Sound.

Sponsors: Representative Kremen.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Fisheries & Wildlife, March 2, 1993, DPS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives King, Chair; Orr, Vice Chair; Fuhrman, Ranking Minority Member; Sehlin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Foreman; Lemmon; and Scott.

Staff: Keitlyn Watson (786-7310).

Background: RCW 75.12.309 prohibits commercial bottom trawling for food fish and shellfish in all areas of Hood Canal south of a line projected from Tala Point to Foulweather Bluff and in Puget Sound south of a line projected from Foulweather Bluff to Double Bluff and including all marine waters east of Whidbey and Camano Islands. Bottom trawling is not prohibited north of these lines.

Currently, the Department of Fisheries issues Puget Sound and other-than-Puget Sound trawl licenses. Puget Sound commercial trawl licenses are used to take primarily flatfish, truecod, rockfish, and dogfish. Licenses cost \$100 for residents and \$200 for nonresidents. The Puget Sound trawl fishery is not a limited entry fishery. Ninety-five licenses were issued in 1992, and about one-third of the licensed vessels made landings.

Summary of Substitute Bill: A new Puget Sound trawl bottomfish license is created. It is unlawful to commercially trawl for bottomfish in Puget Sound without

such a license. In order to qualify for such a license, a vessel must meet the following criteria:

- (1) landed 5,000 pounds of bottomfish with a Puget Sound trawl license in any single year between 1987 and 1993; and
- (2) possessed a commercial Puget Sound trawl license and all gear necessary to fish for bottomfish on December 31, 1993.

The initial license fee and renewal fee is \$100 for residents and \$200 for nonresidents, and is transferable. In order to keep the license, it must be renewed annually.

The director of the Department of Fisheries is directed to appoint a three member advisory review board to hear cases involving license denials. The board is to be made up of members of the commercial Puget Sound trawl industry. The director may reduce landing requirements if the board so recommends. The board may recommend such reduction if extenuating circumstances exist or if the individual was significantly involved in the bottomfish fishery in Puget Sound before 1987, whether or not the individual held a trawl license.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill clarifies that the new license is required for commercial bottomfish fishers. The effective date is changed from January 1, 1994, to 90 days after adjournment. The authority of the director of the Department of Fisheries to waive landing requirements is removed.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: (on original bill) The bottom trawling fishery is of stable size, but the fishing grounds have been reduced by 50 percent since recent closure of some areas. Currently there are too many vessels bottom trawling in the permitted areas. Overcapitalization is a concern. The resource needs to be protected. It is time to close the door to further entry.

Testimony Against: (on original bill) None.

Witnesses: (on original bill) Robert J. Briscoe, Jr., commercial fisherman (pro); Keith Johnson, fisherman (pro); Jim Briscoe, fisherman (pro); and Cyreis Schmitt, Department of Fisheries (neutral with concerns: bill as written

eliminates all bottom fishing except trawling; also the criteria as written for qualifying might actually increase the size of the fishery; director should not have authority to waive license requirements).