

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5124

AS PASSED SENATE, MARCH 4, 1993

Brief Description: Revising laws relating to commercial fishing licenses.

SPONSORS: Senators Owen, Snyder, Haugen, Spanel, Sellar, Oke, Amondson and Erwin; by request of Department of Fisheries

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Owen, Chairman; Hargrove, Vice Chairman; Franklin, Haugen, Oke, Sellar, L. Smith, Snyder, and Spanel.

Staff: Erika Lim (786-7488)

Hearing Dates: January 27, 1993; February 3, 1993

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

BACKGROUND:

The present system of commercial fishing licenses is cumbersome, confusing, and difficult to enforce and administer. The underlying complication is that licenses are assigned to vessels, not persons. This creates numerous problems with use and transfer.

Each license can have an unlimited number of additional operators. Additional operators receive a card allowing them to sell catch; their names are not listed on the vessel's fishing license. There is no control over how many additional operators are working or for whom. Any violations are noted against the vessel, not the individual who incurred them. The landing record is permanently attached to the vessel and, even after license sale or transfer, follows the vessel even if the vessel is subsequently sold or destroyed. Thus, it is vessels and not individuals who build priority in fisheries with moratoria and it is possible to buy a landing history rather than to earn it.

Under the current system persons must own vessels in order to maintain license ownership.

SUMMARY:

Commercial fishery licenses are held by persons, not vessels. Persons can be individuals, organizations, business organizations, or government agencies. Landing records remain with the fishery license holder and fishers retain earned histories.

There must be a vessel designated on the license for fisheries which require a vessel. People may hold fishery licenses if they do not own a vessel. The vessel designation may be changed but no more than four times a year and no more than once in a seven-day period. There is a fee for each change.

Additional operator licenses are discontinued. A fishery license holder may have up to two alternate operators. All three names are listed on the license. Alternate operators receive cards which allow them to participate in any fishery in the state where they have been listed as an alternate operator by a fishery license holder. The alternate operator card does not allow the holder to sell catch; a fishery license must be used to sell catch. Alternate operator cards allow the Department of Fisheries to keep track of all operators--employment records, violations--without affecting vessel owners.

Salmon license renewals are given if the applicant held the license the previous year. The one food fish landing requirement is eliminated.

The fee schedule is restructured so that it is revenue neutral with the new fees which will take effect in 1994 in any case.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR:

A very confusing and inequitable system of handling commercial fishing licenses will be replaced by a logical and more equitable one.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Fronda Woods, Attorney General's Office; Dayna Matthews, Department of Fisheries; Wayne Russell; Tim Smith, Washington Harvest Divers Association

HOUSE AMENDMENT(S):

Delivery licenses are required only of commercial fishing vessels.