

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5443

As Reported by House Committee On:

Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to commercial salmon licenses.

Brief Description: Changing required renewal dates in order to validly renew certain commercial fishing licenses.

Sponsors: By Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Parks & Shorelines (originally sponsored by Senators Spanel, Jacobsen and Kohl-Welles; by request of Department of Fish and Wildlife).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 3/23/01, 3/28/01 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by House Committee)

- The annual deadline for commercial salmon net fishers to renew or suspend their license is extended from August 1 to the third Monday in September.
- The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) must provide a reasonable opportunity for a surviving spouse, estate, or estate beneficiary to renew a commercial license or permit held by a license or permit holder who died.
- A person who is at least 75 years old, who holds a resident commercial salmon fishery license and has fished with this license for at least 20 years, and who also owns a fishing vessel, may renew the license at a cost of \$100 if the license is for a geographic area other than the Puget Sound. No alternate operator may be designated under such license.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Doumit, Democratic Co-Chair; Sump, Republican Co-Chair; Pearson, Republican Vice Chair; Rockefeller, Democratic Vice Chair; Buck, G. Chandler, Edwards, Eickmeyer, Ericksen, Jackley, Murray and Pennington.

Staff: Bill Lynch (786-7092).

Background:

Commercial salmon net fishing is a limited entry fishery which requires licensees to renew their license annually in order to retain its validity. If a licensee opts not to fish in a particular year, the licensee may have the license suspended for one year after payment of a \$115 enhancement surcharge plus a handling fee. The suspended license would be eligible for renewal the following year.

Existing law requires the salmon net fisher to elect whether to renew or suspend the license by August 1 of each year. If the deadline were extended, fishers could make their decision to fish based upon more complete salmon run size estimates and other considerations.

The deadline for the DFW to accept a license or permit application is December 31. No flexibility is provided in statute to the department to accept applications after this date to allow for renewals of licenses or permits by a surviving spouse or an estate if the license or permit holder dies shortly before the December 31 deadline.

Some senior citizens in the state who have fished commercially for salmon most of their lives, and who want to continue fishing, feel that the annual renewal fees are burdensome. The annual renewal fee for most resident commercial salmon fishery licenses is \$380 plus a \$100 surcharge.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The annual deadline for commercial salmon net fishers to renew or suspend their license is extended from August 1 to the third Monday in September.

DFW must provide a reasonable opportunity for a surviving spouse, estate, or estate beneficiary to renew a commercial license or permit held by a license or permit holder who died.

A person who is at least 75 years old, who holds a resident commercial salmon fishery license and has fished with this license for at least 20 years, and who also owns a fishing vessel, may renew the license at a cost of \$100 if the license is for a geographic area other than the Puget Sound. No alternate operator may be designated under such license.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:

Language is added to allow the surviving spouse, estate, or estate beneficiary a

reasonable opportunity to renew a license or permit because of a deceased license or permit holder. A person who holds a resident commercial salmon fishery license and is at least 75 years old, has fished under the license for at least 20 years, owns a fishing vessel, and uses the license for an area other than the Puget Sound, may renew the license for a \$100 annual fee. An alternate operator may not be designated for a license renewed at the \$100 annual fee level.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For (Original bill): By moving the date for renewing licenses further back, people will have a better idea if there will be a fishable run when determining whether to renew their license for that year. There will also be some administrative convenience to the department in processing the licenses because the license renewals will come in over a longer stretch of time. The bill should be amended to address situations where license holders have died shortly before the December 31 renewal deadline, and the estate or surviving spouse was unable to renew the license before this deadline because DFW indicated that they had no discretion to deviate from the December 31 renewal deadline.

Testimony Against (Original bill): None.

Testified: Bruce Crawford, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; and Steve Kuchin, Puget Sound Gillnetters Association.