

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6073

As Reported by House Committee On:
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to authorizing the increase of shellfish license fees to fund shellfish biotoxin testing and monitoring.

Brief Description: Authorizing the increase of shellfish license fees.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Hargrove, Rossi and Doumit).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 4/22/03, 4/23/03 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Instructs the Department of Fish and Wildlife to collect: 1) a \$2.00 surcharge from the sale of each resident and non-resident adult combination license; and 2) a \$3.00 surcharge on resident and non-resident shellfish licenses.
- Requires that surcharges will fund: 1) biotoxin testing and monitoring by the Department of Health; and 2) monitoring by the Olympic Region Harmful Algal Bloom monitoring program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 24 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Sehlin, Ranking Minority Member; Pearson, Asst Ranking Minority Member; Alexander; Boldt; Buck; Clements; Cody; Conway; Dunshee; Grant; Hunter; Kagi; Kenney; Kessler; Linville; McDonald; McIntire; Miloscia; Ruderman; Schual-Berke; Sump and Talcott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Cox and DeBolt.

Staff: Amy Hanson (786-7118).

Background:

The Department of Health (DOH) operates various environmental health programs, including the Recreational Shellfish Program and the Biotoxin Program. The Biotoxin Program performs monitoring of paralytic and amnesic poisons in shellfish. The DOH tests for these biotoxins in both the recreational and commercial shellfish fisheries, and it closes harvest levels when the toxins are detected at dangerous levels. The Recreational Shellfish Program provides information about where shellfish can be safely harvested.

The Olympic Region Harmful Algal Bloom (ORHAB) monitoring program is a collaboration of government, academia, business, and tribes established to study harmful algal blooms on the Washington coast. The program is based in the Olympic Natural Resources Center at the University of Washington.

To fish for shellfish in Washington, a person over the age of 15 must have a personal use shellfish and seaweed license issued by the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). The fee for an annual license is \$7 for residents, \$20 for non-residents, and \$5 for seniors. The DFW also offers a two-day shellfish and seaweed license that costs \$6 for both residents and non-residents.

As an alternative to the shellfish and seaweed license, a person can purchase a personal use combination fishing license. This license authorizes the holder to not only collect shellfish and seaweed, but to also fish for finfish. The combination license costs \$36 for residents, and \$72 for non-residents.

Revenues collected from the sale of shellfish licenses are deposited into the state general fund.

Summary of Bill:

The DFW is required to include: 1) a \$3.00 surcharge on resident and non-resident shellfish licenses; and 2) a \$2.00 surcharge on resident and non-resident adult combination licenses.

Surcharges will fund: 1) biotoxin testing and monitoring by the DOH of beaches for recreational shellfishing; and 2) monitoring by the ORHAB monitoring program of the Olympic Natural Resources Center at the University of Washington.

Amounts collected from the surcharge are deposited into the General Fund-Local Account managed by the DOH, with the exception of \$150,000 per year to be deposited into the General Fund-Local Account managed by the University of Washington.

The fee increase takes effect in the DFW's license fee structure beginning July 1, 2003.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect July 1, 2003.

Testimony For: The DOH supports this bill and appreciates the Senate change to the bill to move up the implementation date, but has one possible future concern with the bill. As problems get worse for biotoxins, paralytic shellfish poisoning, or as domoic acid levels rise in the environment, the DOH does more testing and closes beaches down, resulting in fewer people purchasing licenses. An inverse relationship may play out in the future with respect to findings.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Jennifer Tebaldi, Department of Health.