

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1476

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to charter licenses.

Brief Description: Modifying provisions with regard to nonsalmon charter licenses.

Sponsors: By Representatives Blake and Kretz.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/5/07, 2/7/07 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/28/07, 97-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/12/07, 48-0.

House Concurred.

Passed House: 4/17/07, 91-7.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires a charter boat operator to acquire a salmon charter license to fish for albacore tuna.
- Requires the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to conduct research and a stock assessment on rockfish populations in Washington's waters.
- Applies a surcharge on certain fishing licenses to fund rockfish research.
- Creates a new, unappropriated account.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Blake, Vice Chair; Kretz, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority

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Member; Dickerson, Eickmeyer, Grant, Hailey, Kagi, Lantz, McCoy, Newhouse, Orcutt and VanDeWege.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Strow.

Staff: Jaclyn Ford (786-7339).

Background:

Charter License

A charter license is required from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) in order to operate a vessel where paying customers fish for shellfish or food fish. A salmon charter license is required to fish for salmon and shellfish. No new salmon charter licenses have been authorized for issuance since May 28, 1977. A salmon charter license can be acquired if transferred from a current salmon charter license holder. In addition, the salmon charter license survives the death of the holder and may be transferred as personal property through inheritance. Current salmon charter license holders may either renew their license each year, or notify the WDFW to hold their license for renewal the following year. According to the WDFW, there were 141 salmon charter licenses in 2006. There is an annual fee of \$685 for nonresidents and \$380 for residents. Both residents and nonresidents are subject to a \$100 salmon enhancement surcharge as well. A charter boat licensed in Oregon may fish in designated Washington waters without a Washington license, but are subject to Oregon's own fishing quotas. Recreational fishers must have a recreational license to fish for albacore tuna.

Rockfish Research

The term rockfish generally includes a number of species of long-lived, bottom-dwelling fish. Like all fishery resources in Washington, the management of the rockfish resource and rockfish fisheries has been delegated to the WDFW. The WDFW has taken various actions, including the enactment of fishing limitations, to manage the rockfish fishery in response to concerns that many rockfish populations are currently at a level lower than what is generally considered healthy. A common tool provided to the WDFW for managing fisheries is the fishing license. The WDFW issues various licenses, and combinations of licenses, for both commercial and recreational fishing. Generally, there is a fee associated with the purchase or renewal of a fishing license. In most cases, the license fee is used to help fund the operations and management activities of the WDFW. In addition to license fees, which raise revenue for general WDFW programs, some licenses also require the payment of a surcharge upon purchase or renewal. A surcharge is an additional cost above the fee for the license that is usually earmarked for a specific purpose. For instance, certain shellfish licenses carry a surcharge that raises revenue specifically to fund testing and monitoring for biotoxins.

Summary of Bill:

Charter License

The operator of a charter boat wishing to fish for albacore tuna must acquire a salmon charter license.

Rockfish Research

Research Mandate

The WDFW is required to develop and implement a program that will research and conduct a stock assessment of the rockfish populations in the state. The required research includes surveys in both the Puget Sound and coastal waters using new and existing technologies. The surveys must estimate the current abundance and future recovery of species of rockfish and other groundfish.

Funding the Research

The required rockfish research is funded through a series of surcharges on licenses offered by the WDFW. The surcharges will be applied to the sales of the designated licenses until the end of 2010. Surcharges on commercial licenses are set at \$35. This surcharge applies to the annual fee established for both salmon and non-salmon charter licenses, and to the annual fee for non-limited entry delivery licenses. In addition, a series of licenses are assigned a surcharge of 50 cents. This surcharge applies to recreational saltwater and combination fishing licenses, as well as to temporary combination fishing licenses.

New Account

The revenue generated from the surcharges are to be deposited into the newly created Rockfish Research Account (Account). The Account is unappropriated and expenditures may only be authorized by the Director of the WDFW. The revenue in the Account may be used only for rockfish research, including assessment of stocks.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill follows up on the tuna measure from last year, and should be viewed as a technical matter to ensure consistency with recreational fishing of albacore tuna. Recreational albacore tuna has been a major fishery on the Washington coast for many decades. The North Pacific stock of albacore is being exploited by Pacific Rim nations. The international forum asked member nations to put a cap on albacore fishing efforts at current levels, and this bill implements that request. Non-salmon charter licenses have not been used for albacore tuna fishing in the past.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Blake, prime sponsor; Ed Owens, Coalition of Coastal Fisheries; Mark Cedargreen, Westport Charter Boat Association; and Michele Culver, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.