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**Agriculture & Natural Resources  
Committee**

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**HB 1076**

**Brief Description:** Creating a rockfish research program.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Blake, Takko, B. Sullivan and Moeller.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires the 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.

**Hearing Date:** 1/15/07

**Staff:** Jason Callahan (786-7117).

**Background:**

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 Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department). The Department 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 Department for managing fisheries is the fishing license. The Department issues various licences, 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 Department.

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In addition to license fees, which raise revenue for general Department 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 raise revenue specifically to fund testing and monitoring for biotoxins [RCW 77.32.555].

### **Summary of Bill:**

#### Research mandate

The Department 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 Department. The surcharges will be applied to the sales of the designated licenses until the end of 2010.

Surcharges on commercial licences 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 authorised by the Director of the Department.

The revenue in the Account may be used only for rockfish research, including assessment of stocks.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on 1/10/07.

**Effective Date:** 1/1/08