

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1226

As Passed House:

January 24, 2024

Title: An act relating to providing for recreational licensing of smelt, crawfish, and carp.

Brief Description: Providing for recreational licensing of smelt, crawfish, and carp.

Sponsors: Representatives Chapman and Fitzgibbon; by request of Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture and Natural Resources: 1/20/23, 1/27/23 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 1/24/24, 56-39.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides that a person must obtain a recreational fishing or shellfish license in order to fish for carp, smelt, and crawfish.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Chapman, Chair; Morgan, Vice Chair; Reeves, Vice Chair; Kloba, Lekanoff and Springer.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Kretz, Orcutt and Schmick.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Dent, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Background:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is responsible for managing the state's fish and wildlife resources and establishing basic rules and regulations governing the time, place, manner, and methods used to harvest or enjoy fish and wildlife. As a part of this responsibility, the WDFW issues licenses, endorsements, and catch record cards for fishing in Washington.

Types of recreational fishing licenses include annual or temporary freshwater, saltwater, shellfish and seaweed, and combination licenses. Generally, there are resident, nonresident, and youth fees established in statute. Youth fees for fishing licenses apply to youth age 15, and those under age 15 are not required to purchase a license.

Certain recreational fishing licenses are available at reduced rates to certain disabled veterans and individuals with disabilities. State residents who meet the criteria may receive a combination fishing license for \$5. Nonstate residents may purchase a license at the same prices as a nondisabled Washington resident. To qualify for these reduced rates, the individual must:

- be an honorably discharged veteran who is at least 65 years old and who has a service-related disability of any kind;
- be an honorably discharged veteran of any age who has a 30 percent or greater service-related disability;
- have a disability that results in the permanent use of a wheelchair, blindness, or another visual impairment; or
- have a developmental disability.

A recreational fishing or shellfish license is not required to fish for carp, freshwater smelt, and crawfish.

Summary of Bill:

A person must obtain a recreational fishing or shellfish license in order to fish for smelt, carp, and crawfish.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) There are three species that a fishing or shellfish license is not required to

harvest. An annual license would cover these species, otherwise the cheapest way would be to purchase a one-day combination license for under \$12 with dealer fees. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) held a five-hour opener for freshwater smelt where 16,000 people showed up and many were well over the 10-pound limit. Freshwater smelt are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has indicated that sustainable harvest limits may be established for smelt. Should that happen, having a smelt license requirement in place will help the WDFW manage sustainable harvest.

Enforcement officers with the WDFW sometimes encounter fishers illegally fishing for salmon while claiming to be fishing for carp. The type of gear those fishers are using can prove that they are fishing for salmon rather than carp. A licensing requirement for carp will make the job of enforcement officers easier.

There are three species of invasive crawfish in Washington. The pamphlet that the WDFW issues along with fishing licenses contains information that helps fishers identify the difference between native and nonnative or invasive species. Proper identification will help fishers to avoid inadvertently introducing invasive species into a new watershed.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Mike Chapman, prime sponsor; Laura Heironimus and Tom McBride, Department of Fish and Wildlife; and Alexei Calambokidis, Trout Unlimited.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.