

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5599

As of February 10, 2025

Title: An act relating to commercial fishery licenses.

Brief Description: Concerning commercial fishery licenses.

Sponsors: Senator MacEwen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/10/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a Hood Canal beach seine salmon license for \$380 for a resident and \$765 for a nonresident.
- Allows only current holders of a Hood Canal experimental beach seine permit to apply for the new license by December 1, 2025.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

Background: The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) acts to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage Washington's wildlife, food fish, game fish, and shellfish. WDFW must conserve fish and wildlife resources in a manner seeking to maintain the economic well-being and stability of the state's fishery resources. In managing state fisheries, WDFW establishes the time, place, manner, and methods used to harvest or enjoy fish and wildlife.

Commercial fishers must obtain applicable licenses from WDFW. An annual resident commercial salmon gill net license is \$380, a nonresident license is \$765, with a \$100 surcharge and \$105 application fee. In 1974, the Legislature enacted legislation restricting

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the issuance of new commercial salmon fishery licenses.

WDFW is authorized to conduct experimental or trial emerging commercial fisheries. An emerging commercial fishery allows for the commercial taking of a newly classified fish, a formally classified fish with a new gear type, or a formally classified fish in a new geographic area. Experimental emerging fisheries allow WDFW to limit the number of authorized participants.

In 2016, the WDFW implemented a new, experimental beach seine fishery, targeting a summer Chinook run in Hood Canal. Under existing Emerging Commercial Fisheries Act regulations, WDFW was able to issue experimental fisheries permits for this new fishery to selected permit holders. In a 2023 report to the Legislature, WDFW recommended maintaining the Hoodsport Chinook beach seine fishery in its experimental fisheries status.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute): A Hood Canal beach seine salmon license is established, with a license fee of \$380 for a resident and \$765 for a nonresident, with a \$100 surcharge and \$105 application fee. Only current holders of a Hood Canal experimental beach seine permit may apply for the new license by December 1, 2025. A person applying for the new license must also convert a current Puget Sound commercial salmon license when obtaining a Hood Canal beach seine salmon license. No more than five Hood Canal beach seine licenses may be issued, and the total number of commercial salmon licenses that are eligible to participate in the Puget Sound fishery may not increase.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 8, 2025.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony On Proposed Substitute: PRO: There has been an experimental fishery for Hood Canal beach seines for several years, and now there are five experimental fishery licenses still in operation. This change allows a license holder to pass along their license to a family member. This is a limited entry fishery, and an existing license will be converted, and no new licenses will be created. Current experimental fishery permit holders were selected from a lottery. This fishery mirrors tribal fisheries, and is very selective. The experimental fishery has been closely monitored and doesn't undermine other gear types.

CON: Gill nets and purse seine nets were not studied as an option for this fishery. The experimental fishery had six licenses, and went down to five. There should be another

license issued to get the total back to six licenses. This bill would create a very valuable license. License holders will be able to purchase an existing salmon license and continue to fish with both licenses. This approach creates a financial hurdle for younger fishers trying to enter the fishery. This is a gift of public funds.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Drew MacEwen, Prime Sponsor; Steve Thatcher; Terry Steben, Hood Canal Beach Seine Fleet.

CON: Shannon Moore, Puget Sound Gillnet Fishermen; Fred Marinkovich, President/Puget Sound Harvesters Association; Robert Sudar.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.