

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2621

As Reported by House Committee On:
Fisheries, Ecology & Parks

Title: An act relating to personal use licenses for shellfish harvest.

Brief Description: Providing for a razor clam license.

Sponsors: Representatives Blake, Orcutt, Hatfield and Flannigan.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Fisheries, Ecology & Parks: 1/29/04, 2/3/04 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes an annual and a three-day razor clam license to be administered by the Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- Eliminates the two-day personal use shellfish and seaweed license.
- Limits the ability of the Department of Fish and Wildlife to collect personal information from an applicant for a razor clam license.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Cooper, Chair; Upthegrove, Vice Chair; Sump, Ranking Minority Member; Hinkle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buck, Hatfield, O'Brien, Pearson and Simpson, D..

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) is primarily responsible for administering the state's commercial and recreational fishing permit system. In order to harvest shellfish recreationally, including razor clams, a person is required to first obtain a personal use shellfish and seaweed license.

The DFW is authorized to issue both an annual license and a license that is valid for two days. The annual personal use shellfish license costs \$7.00 for residents of Washington, \$20.00 for non-residents and \$5.00 for a person over the age of 70. A two-day shellfish license costs \$6.00 for residents, non-residents, and seniors. Applicants under the age of 15 may harvest shellfish without a license. In addition to the license fee, a purchaser of an annual shellfish license must pay a \$3.00 surcharge that is dedicated to the Department of Health to fund biotoxin testing and monitoring for shellfish.

The proceeds generated from the sale of annual personal use shellfish licenses are deposited into the state's general fund. The proceeds from the two-day personal use shellfish license are deposited into the State Wildlife Fund.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

An annual and a three-day razor clam license is created, to be administered by the DFW. The license allows for the non-commercial harvest of razor clams from state waters and national park beaches. The annual razor clam license costs \$5.50 for a Washington resident, including seniors, and \$11 for a non-resident. This money will be distributed to the general fund. The three-day razor clam license costs \$3.50 for both residents and non-residents, with all money generated being deposited into the State Wildlife Fund.

In addition, the razor clam licenses are assessed a surcharge for biotoxin testing and monitoring. The surcharge for the annual license is \$2.00, and the surcharge for the three-day license is \$1.00.

When issuing the annual and three-day razor clam licenses, the DFW may only require that an applicant show proof of residency. The DFW may not require additional personal information to be provided.

Razor clams may still be harvested using an annual personal use shellfish and seaweed license as well as a razor clam license. The two-day personal use shellfish and seaweed license is eliminated.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The original bill established a three-day razor clam license, with a cost of \$7 for residents and \$14 for non-residents. It did not provide any other of the details included in the substitute bill.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: When a razor clam season is initiated by the DFW, thousands of people descend onto the coastal communities on short notice to dig clams. Unfortunately, the computerized licensing system administered by the DFW is not capable of processing many licences in a short period of time. High demand of this sort causes the system to fail, and the independent dealers either have to turn potential clam diggers away, or issue paper licenses that may or may not satisfy the DFW. As a result, the dealer base is shrinking at the coastal communities, which only compounds the problem for the remaining dealers. A solution would be to return razor clam licensing back to how it was before it was computerized.

Creating a license only for razor clams solves a problem for people that buy a shellfish license, but fail to receive full value for the license because they only use it to harvest razor clams and not the other shellfish that it authorizes.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Blake, prime sponsor; Tom Downer; Ed Owens, Coalition of Coastal Fisheries; Frank Hawley, Department of Fish and Wildlife; and Cory Freeman, Northwest Sportsfishing Industry Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.