

FINAL BILL REPORT

2SHB 1887

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Creating the commercial fisheries permit buyback account.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Linville, Sump, Cooper, Buck and Hatfield).

House Committee on Fisheries, Ecology & Parks

House Committee on Appropriations

Senate Committee on Parks, Fish & Wildlife

Background:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) manages most commercial fisheries in Washington and issues commercial fishing licenses. Many fisheries are closed fisheries, meaning that the number of licenses issued for that fishery is capped at a set number. These fisheries include the coastal Dungeness crab fishery and the ocean pink shrimp fishery.

To receive a crab-coastal or ocean pink shrimp fishery license, a fisher must demonstrate that he or she met certain criteria relating to historic harvest levels. The license is, however, transferrable to another fisher that does not meet the defined criteria for license issuance.

If less than 175 fishers are eligible for a crab-coastal license, the DFW may issue new licenses until a total of 175 licenses have been issued. The DFW must adopt rules for the notification, selection, and issuance of any new licenses.

Occasionally the federal government undertakes efforts to reduce the size of the fleets operating in certain fisheries by purchasing individual fishing licenses. In 2003 the United States Congress decided to do this for the groundfish, Dungeness crab, and pink shrimp fisheries in Washington, Oregon, and California. Interested fishers will have the opportunity to offer a bid to have their licenses purchased by the federal government. The buyback program was funded with a 30-year loan that is designed to be repaid by the remaining fishers in the fleet.

Summary:

If the federal government creates a groundfish fleet reduction buyback program, the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) is authorized to collect a fee from commercial

fishers holding an ocean pink shrimp license or a coastal Dungeness crab license. The Commission may establish the fee amount through administrative rule, and all fees collected must be used to reimburse the federal government for the permit buyback program. The set fee may not be more than is necessary for federal reimbursement and may not be greater than 2 percent of annual landings for crab fishers or more than 5 percent of annual landings for all other fleets. If any crab fisher participates in the federal buyback program, he or she may not be issued a new commercial crab license for 10 years, as long as Oregon and California institute a similar prohibition. The fee established by the Commission expires in 2033, unless the federal buyback program is completed sooner.

The statutory provision that requires the DFW to maintain a maximum of 175 coastal crab licenses is repealed.

The non-appropriated Commercial Fisheries Buyback Account is created to hold any fees until they are distributed to the federal government. Once the federal government has been reimbursed, the Account may be used for other fleet reduction efforts.

Votes on Final Passage:

House 96 0
Senate 49 0

Effective: July 27, 2003