

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 1476

C 442 L 07

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Regarding rockfish research and stock assessment.

Sponsors: By Representatives Blake and Kretz.

House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources

Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation

Background:

Charter License.

A charter license is required from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to operate a vessel where paying customers fish for shellfish or food fish. A salmon charter license is required to fish for salmon and shellfish. No new salmon charter licenses have been authorized for issuance since May 28, 1977. A salmon charter license may be acquired if transferred from a current salmon charter license holder. In addition, the salmon charter license survives the death of the holder and may be transferred as personal property through inheritance. Salmon charter license holders may either renew their license each year, or notify the WDFW to hold their license for renewal the following year.

According to the WDFW, there were 141 salmon charter licenses in 2006. There is an annual fee of \$685 for nonresidents and \$380 for residents. Both residents and nonresidents are subject to a \$100 salmon enhancement surcharge as well. A charter boat licensed in Oregon may fish in designated Washington waters without a Washington license, but is subject to Oregon's own fishing quotas. Recreational fishers must have a recreational license to fish for albacore tuna.

Rockfish Research.

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 WDFW. The WDFW has taken various actions, including enacting fishing limitations, to manage the rockfish fishery in response to concerns that many rockfish populations are lower than the level that is generally considered healthy.

A common tool provided to the WDFW for managing fisheries is the fishing license. The WDFW 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 WDFW. In addition to license fees, which raise revenue for general WDFW 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 raises revenue specifically to fund testing and monitoring for biotoxins.

Summary:

Charter License.

The operator of a charter boat wishing to fish for albacore tuna must acquire a salmon charter license.

Rockfish Research.

Research Mandate.

The WDFW 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. Beginning in December 2008, the WDFW must report every two years on the program's status.

Funding the Research.

The required rockfish research is funded through a series of surcharges on licenses offered by the WDFW. The surcharges will be applied to the sales of the designated licenses until the end of 2010. Surcharges on commercial licenses 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 authorized by the Director of the WDFW. The revenue in the Account may be used only for rockfish research, including assessment of stocks.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	97	0	
Senate	48	0	(Senate amended)
House	91	7	(House concurred)

Effective: May 11, 2007