

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5127

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As of February 1, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to rockfish research.

**Brief Description:** Creating a rockfish research program.

**Sponsors:** Senators Jacobsen, Swecker and Rockefeller.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 1/31/07.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

**Staff:** Kim Johnson (786-7346)

**Background:** 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 Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). DFW has taken various actions, including adopting fishing limitations, to manage the rockfish fishery in response to concerns that many rockfish populations are currently at a level lower than what is generally considered healthy.

DFW issues various licences, and combinations of licenses, for both commercial and recreational fishing. In addition to license fees, which raise revenue for general DFW programs and the general fund, 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 of Bill:** DFW is required to develop and implement a rockfish research and stock assessment program. 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.

The required rockfish research is funded through a series of surcharges on licenses offered by DFW beginning January 1, 2008, and ending on December 31, 2010. The surcharges will be applied to the sale of the following resident and nonresident licenses:

- nonsalmon and salmon charter licenses: \$35;
- nonlimited entry delivery license: \$35;
- combination fishing license: \$0.50;
- saltwater license: \$0.50; and

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- temporary combination fishing license: \$0.50.

The Rockfish Research Account is created in the state treasury and all receipts from the license surcharges are to be deposited into the account. The account is non-appropriated and expenditures from the account may only be used for rockfish research and stock assessments.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on January 1, 2008.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: The purpose of this bill is to allow the department to conduct research on coastal rockfish populations that are considered data poor. Coastal rockfish are managed by the Pacific Fishery Management Council, who have declared seven rockfish species as over-fished. Yellow eye rockfish are of particular concern. Age and maturity data are essential to our continued management and recovery of this stock. Essential data may be collected with new technologies and existing surveys collected by other groups. Commercial and recreational fishers are unanimous in their support for this measure. We have been advocating for the need for more research for years. Extension of the surcharge would be a good idea as there will need to be research conducted over the long term. These fish are a significant part of the recreational fishery. Fishery scientists need to do the research to determine the health of rockfish. We would support making this effective this year.

OTHER: We basically support this legislation. Rockfish are an important part of biodiversity and the tribes are involved in the effort to restore them. Co-management of these fish must be respected. We question whether this provision should sunset.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Phil Anderson; DFW; Ed Owens, Coalition of Coastal Fisheries; Mark Cedergreen, Westport Charter Association.

OTHER: Steve Robinson, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission.