HOUSE BILL REPORT
SSB 5076

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to establishing a Puget Sound nonspot shrimp pot fishery license.

Brief Description: Establishing a Puget Sound nonspot shrimp pot fishery license.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Senators Muzzall, Chapman, Cortes, Dozier, Lovelett, Shewmake and Trudeau).

Brief History:
Committee Activity:
Agriculture & Natural Resources: 3/19/25, 3/21/25 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes a limited-entry non-spot shrimp pot-Puget Sound commercial fishing license.
- Provides an avenue for current holders of shrimp trawl-Puget Sound licenses to voluntarily convert their license to a non-spot shrimp pot-Puget Sound license.
- Provides that a shrimp trawl-Puget Sound license must be converted to a non-spot shrimp pot-Puget Sound license upon the death of the license holder or upon transfer of the license.
- Allows Puget Sound shrimp commercial fishery licensees to designate the immediate family of a licensee's spouse as an alternate operator.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Reeves, Chair; Morgan, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; Engell, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bernbaum, McClintock, Nance, Orcutt, Richards, Schmick and Springer.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

Background:

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) manages the commercial harvest of fish and shellfish. Commercial fishers must obtain applicable licenses from the WDFW to participate in regulated fisheries. Commercial fishing license fees are structured by species and fishing technique, and there is a resident, nonresident, and application fee for each license type.

To fish commercially for shrimp in Puget Sound, a person must obtain a limited-entry shrimp pot-Puget Sound or shrimp trawl-Puget Sound commercial fishing license. Both license types are limited entry fisheries, with a resident annual fee of $335, a nonresident annual fee of $720, and an application fee of $105. A licensee may designate only an immediate family member as an alternate operator with some exceptions. A licensee may make a request to a WDFW-appointed fishery-specific advisory board to designate an alternate operator who is not an immediate family member.

"Non-spot shrimp" are defined in WDFW rule as a species complex composed of the following species of pandalid shrimp: dock shrimp, coonstripe shrimp, humpy shrimp, ocean pink shrimp, pink shrimp, and side stripe shrimp.

Summary of Bill:

A non-spot shrimp pot-Puget Sound commercial fishing license is created. A non-spot shrimp pot-Puget Sound fishery license may only be issued to a natural person who held a shrimp trawl-Puget Sound fishery license or a non-spot shrimp pot-Puget Sound fishery license issued during the previous licensing year. A licensee may hold no more than one shrimp trawl-Puget Sound license or non-spot shrimp pot-Puget Sound fishery license. The combined number of shrimp trawl licenses and non-spot shrimp pot licenses is limited to five licenses total. The annual license fees are $335 for state residents and $720 for nonresidents, with an application fee of $105.

A shrimp trawl-Puget Sound licensee may permanently convert their license to a non-spot shrimp pot-Puget Sound license, retiring the shrimp trawl-Puget Sound license. Upon the death of a shrimp trawl-Puget Sound license holder, the license is converted to a non-spot shrimp pot-Puget Sound license. After August 1, 2025, a shrimp trawl-Puget Sound license is only transferable if the license is converted to a non-spot shrimp pot-Puget Sound license.

A converted limited-entry non-spot shrimp pot-Puget Sound fishery license may only fish for non-spot shrimp resources previously allocated to shrimp trawl-Puget Sound fishery license holders. If all shrimp trawl-Puget Sound fishery licenses convert to non-spot shrimp pot-Puget Sound fishery licenses, the WDFW must work with stakeholders to review the

allocation of the commercial non-spot shrimp resources and develop recommendations for future allocations.

The holder of a Puget Sound non-spot shrimp pot, spot shrimp pot, or shrimp trawl license may designate either an immediate family member or an immediate family member of a licensee's spouse as an alternate operator for the license, with certain exceptions. A licensee may designate any natural person as an alternate operator by making a request to a WDFW-appointed fishery-specific advisory board to designate an alternate who is not an immediate family member.

Non-spot shrimp pot-Puget Sound fishery license holders reserve the right to cooperatively modify and design gear with the WDFW to efficiently and economically harvest pink shrimp, ocean pink shrimp, and side strip shrimp. The process to modify and design gear is intended to develop the fishery to ensure a means to harvest all non-spot shrimp species for these license holders.

"Non-spot shrimp" means a species complex composed of the following species of pandalid shrimp, including: dock shrimp, coonstripe shrimp, humpy shrimp, ocean pink shrimp, pink shrimp, and side stripe shrimp.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) In 2023 the Department of Fish and Wildlife and Puget Sound shrimp pot and trawl license holders cooperatively developed and evaluated proposals to accomplish the Fish and Wildlife Commission's (Commission) directive to work with stakeholders to develop a program to allow commercial shrimp trawl licensees to voluntarily convert to harvest shrimp with pot gear instead. A similar bill was introduced last year. The addition of the automatic retirement of licenses on the sale or transfer of the license on the death of the current license holder does go further than the original Commission directive for a voluntary program and is likely to negatively impact current trawling license holders. Trawling is an effective method of fishing for shrimp but is nonselective and disturbs the ecosystem. All marine life that is swept up into the trawl dies, so any bycatch is not released alive. Pot fishing is more effective, and any bycatch can be released back into its habitat. Currently, only two of the five licenses are being used. This bill does not change the license quota, but does make it so that a trawl license may not be transferred without converting it to a non-spot shrimp pot license and provides that licenses are converted upon

the death of a license holder. There has been some distraction with regard to the language. Two of the five trawl license holders are willing to switch to pot gear.

(Opposed) Everyone realizes that shrimp are an important species. It is important to take time to do the research and get it right. The bill language is deceptive and contains loopholes to continue trawling licenses. Why wait to end trawling? In reality the quotas for shrimp trawl and shrimp pot licenses are different. Trawl shrimp is a different quality product than pot shrimp, and creating a non-spot shrimp pot fishery will compete with the current shrimp pot fishery. The current impact would be minimal as only two trawlers are actively fishing.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Ron Muzzall, prime sponsor; Aaron Dufault, WDFW; and Joe Verdoes.

(Opposed) Kyle Crews; and Brian Allison.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.