Legislative Analysis

Phone: (517) 373-8080
http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa

Analysis available at
http://www.legislature.mi.gov

FISHING LICENSE OPTIONS AND FEES FOR INDIVIDUALS UNDER 17 YEARS OF AGE

House Bill 5002 as reported from committee
Sponsor: Rep. Gary Howell

House Bill 5003 as reported from committee
Sponsor: Rep. Julie Brixie

1st Committee: Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation
2nd Committee: Ways and Means
Complete to 1-21-20

BRIEF SUMMARY: House Bills 5002 and 5003 would amend Part 435 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA) to exempt children under 17 from the requirement to purchase an all-species fishing license to take and possess aquatic species in Michigan and also to allow them to obtain an all-species license for $2.

FISCAL IMPACT: House Bills 5002 and 5003 provide for a potential revenue increase for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) by creating an optional youth fishing license for anglers under 17 years of age. The extent of this potential revenue increase depends on the number of youth anglers who choose to purchase this optional license in a given fiscal year. The sale of hunting and fishing licenses generated a combined $60.5 million in revenue in FY 2018-19. This revenue is deposited to the Game and Fish Protection Fund, which primarily supports wildlife and fisheries programs as well as DNR law enforcement. The bills are unlikely to affect local government costs or revenues.

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Hunting and fishing in Michigan contribute billions of dollars to Michigan's economy and millions of dollars to the DNR for fish and wildlife management. Hunting and fishing license fees are part of those numbers. According to committee testimony, a voluntary youth license was previously available in Michigan, but was mistakenly removed in 2016 when a bill was passed to allow licenses to be stored and used electronically.[1] Legislation has been proposed to restore the voluntary program to encourage and retain youth interest in fishing so that Michigan's economy, and the enjoyment of its natural resources, will continue to grow for years to come.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILLS:

Section 43532 of NREPA currently requires individuals who are 17 years of age or older to purchase an all-species fishing license to take or possess aquatic species in Michigan waters. The fees are $25 for Michigan residents and $75 for nonresidents. Additionally, section 43532a requires the DNR to charge an additional $1 for certain licenses, including all-species fishing licenses, for the Michigan Wildlife Council created in section 43532b.

[1] 2016 PA 463: http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2016-SB-1075.

House Bill 5003 would amend section 43532 to allow individuals younger than 17 years old to take and possess aquatic species in Michigan waters without an all-species fishing license. However, individuals younger than 17 could still purchase an all-species fishing license for $2.

House Bill 5002 would amend section 43532a to update the additional fee requirement to reflect the proposed exemption of individuals younger than 17.

The bills are tie-barred to one another, which means that neither can take effect unless both are enacted.

MCL 324.43532 (HB 5003) and MCL 324.43532a (HB 5002)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Supporters of the bills argued that restoring the voluntary youth fishing license will spark enthusiasm in youth anglers as well as foster an investment in conservation activities; allowing youth to participate in in the licensing process will convey a sense of pride and ownership that will help foster the next generation of conservationists. Supporters also argued that the funds generated from the voluntary program will go back to helping the DNR in its conservation efforts. The funds from the previous program are dwindling, and restoring the program will help to replenish them.

Against:

No arguments against the bills were presented in committee.

POSITIONS:

Representatives of the following organizations testified in support of the bills (12-3-19):

- Fishin' Michigan
- Michigan United Conservation Clubs

The following organizations indicated support for the bills:

- Michigan Charter Boat Association (12-3-19)
- Michigan Trout Unlimited (12-3-19)
- Michigan Environmental Council (12-3-19)
- Michigan League of Conservation Voters (12-3-19)
- Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fisherman's Association (12-3-19)
- Michigan Sierra Club (1-14-20)

A representative of the Department of Natural Resources testified with a neutral position on the bills. (12-3-19)

Legislative Analyst: Emily S. Smith
Fiscal Analyst: Austin Scott

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.