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Senate Bill 615 (as introduced 9-7-11)
Sponsor: Senator Tonya Schuitmaker
Committee: Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

Date Completed: 2-15-12

CONTENT

The bill would amend Part 435 (Hunting and Fishing Licensing) of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to designate Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, and Labor Day as free fishing days.

Under Part 435, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) must designate a Saturday and the following Sunday during January or February of each year as free winter fishing days. In addition, the DNR may designate one other day or two other consecutive days each year as free fishing days. During these days, a resident or nonresident may fish for all species of fish designated by the Department without purchasing a license or permit. An individual who fishes during a free fishing day has the same privileges and is subject to the same rules and regulations as the holder of a 24-hour fishing license. (The fee for a 24-hour license is \$7, or \$3 for a senior citizen.)

Under the bill, Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, and Labor Day also would be free fishing days every year.

MCL 324.43534

Legislative Analyst: Julie Cassidy

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would likely have a minor negative effect on State finances. Currently, the DNR has two free fishing weekends per year when some amount of fishing license revenue is not collected. It is not clear how much revenue would be lost under the bill, since the intentions of people who bought fishing licenses on previous holidays are not known. For instance in 2011, the DNR sold approximately \$374,000 worth of fishing licenses on the holidays listed in the bill. Of this amount, \$22,000 came from the sale of 24- and 72-hour permits and approximately \$352,000 came from the sale of various annual fishing licenses. For all of this revenue to be lost, the individuals who otherwise would purchase annual licenses on those holidays would have to decide not to purchase the annual license because fishing was free on the day they would purchase their annual license. While some people might make that election, others would likely buy the annual license on a different date. Since it cannot be known what people would do, it is difficult to precisely predict exactly how much revenue would be lost under the bill. It is reasonable to assume, however, that the loss would be somewhere between the revenue from 24- and 72-hour permits, \$22,000, and the full amount of sales on those holidays of \$374,000.

Fiscal Analyst: Josh Sefton

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