



House Office Building, 9 South
Lansing, Michigan 48909
Phone: 517/373-6466

FREE WINTER FISHING WEEKEND

House Bill 5053 as introduced First Analysis (11-9-99)

Sponsor: Rep. Mike Kowall
Committee: Great Lakes and Tourism

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Michigan is among the most popular states for recreational fishing because of the abundant natural resources found in the Great Lakes and many inland lakes and streams. It has 3,000 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, 11,000 inland lakes, and 36,350 miles of rivers and streams, most of which contain trout. In order to generate more interest in the sport, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is permitted, under the provisions of Public Act 86 of 1986, to designate one or two consecutive days each year as free fishing days. On that weekend, which is usually in the middle of June, any state resident or nonresident may fish in the state's waters for any type of fish without purchasing a license or permit. Recreational fishing is important to the state's economy, and some people maintain that the state could generate more interest in the sport by conducting two additional free fishing days during winter months.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

Under the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA), the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) may designate two consecutive days each year as free fishing days, during which a resident or nonresident may fish for all species of fish, in waters designated by the DNR, without having to purchase a license or permit. House Bill 5053 would amend the act to have the DNR designate a Saturday and Sunday in January or February each year as a "free winter fishing weekend," and to specify that the department could also designate one other day, or two other consecutive days, as free fishing days.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

According to the House Fiscal Agency, the bill will result in an indeterminate loss of revenue. (11-8-99)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

License-free fishing days have been held successfully during summer months for thirteen years. The idea behind promoting a free *winter* fishing weekend is to get families out in winter months with the object of promoting winter fishing as an inexpensive family sport. Hopefully, the attraction of fishing without having to buy a license will entice more families to try the sport, many of whom could eventually get hooked on it and purchase fishing licenses. Also, having the free fishing day on a weekend will attract out-of-state tourists, as well as lure residents from the Lower Peninsula to travel to the Upper Peninsula. Other areas of the economy will benefit when tourists spend money on fishing and related activities.

Against:

The bill would permit the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to designate a Saturday and Sunday during January or February as free fishing days. The information would be published in the department's hunting and fishing guide. However, since ice conditions usually differ between the Upper and Lower Peninsulas, choosing a weekend in January or February could prove to be difficult.

POSITIONS:

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) supports the bill. (11-4-99)

The Michigan United Conservation Club (MUCC) supports the bill. (11-4-99)

Analyst: R. Young

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