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AB-1228 Marine fisheries: experimental fishing permits. (2017-2018)

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Date Published: 09/16/2017 04:00 AM

ENROLLED SEPTEMBER 15, 2017

PASSED IN SENATE SEPTEMBER 14, 2017

PASSED IN ASSEMBLY SEPTEMBER 14, 2017

AMENDED IN SENATE JULY 17, 2017

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 18, 2017

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2017–2018 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

NO. 1228

Introduced by Assembly Member Bloom

February 17, 2017

An act to amend Section 90 of, and to add Section 1022 to, the Fish and Game Code, relating to fisheries.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1228, Bloom. Marine fisheries: experimental fishing permits.

Existing law, enacted as part of the Marine Life Management Act of 1998, generally establishes a comprehensive plan for the management of marine life resources. Existing law requires the Department of Fish and Wildlife to develop, and submit to the Fish and Game Commission for its approval, a fishery management master plan, and provides for the preparation and approval of fishery management plans, which form the primary basis for managing California's sport and commercial marine fisheries. Existing law declares various state policies with regard to the management of fishery resources.

Existing law authorizes the department to issue permits, subject to restrictions and regulations that the department determines are desirable, to take or possess, in any part of the state, for scientific, educational, or propagation purposes, mammals, birds and the nests and eggs thereof, fish, amphibians, reptiles, or any other form of plant or animal life.

Existing law requires the commission to encourage the development of new types of commercial fishing gear and new methods of using existing commercial fishing gear by approving permits, known as experimental gear permits, to be issued by the department, consistent with specified policies, for that development or use, subject to certain restrictions.

Under existing law, any violation of the Fish and Game Code, or of any rule, regulation, or order made or adopted under the code, is generally a misdemeanor.

This bill would authorize the commission to approve experimental fishing permits to be issued by the department for specified purposes that would authorize commercial or recreational marine fishing activity otherwise prohibited by the Fish and Game Code or regulations adopted pursuant to that code, subject to certain requirements, including a requirement that activities conducted under the permit be consistent with specified policies enacted as part of the Marine Life Management Act of 1998 and any applicable fishery management plan and a requirement that the permit be subject to certain commission conditions. The bill would require the commission to post, and annually update, information regarding approved experimental fishing permits, as specified, on its Internet Web site. The bill would require the commission, on or before January 1, 2023, and every 5 years thereafter, to report to the appropriate legislative committees summarizing the benefits of the experimental fishing permit program, as specified. Because a violation of the terms of a permit would be a crime, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: yes

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. This act shall be known, and may be cited, as the California Fisheries Innovation Act of 2017.

SEC. 2. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Californians value healthy, sustainable ocean fisheries and ecosystems. The Pacific Ocean and its rich marine resources provide valuable environmental, economic, aesthetic, recreational, educational, scientific, nutritional, social, and historic benefits to the people of the state.

(b) A large majority of the fisheries in California's waters have not been scientifically assessed or actively managed under approved fishery management plans. This threat to ocean health is exacerbated by climate-driven changes that are already impacting fisheries in dynamic and complex ways.

(c) Well supervised, strategic experimentation that tests hypotheses or new management approaches, or both, and that is aligned with overarching state management goals and research priorities, would likely accelerate the development of innovative scientific and technology tools for improving state fishing management.

(d) The federal Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) program, authorized by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, provides a useful model for advancing on-the-water strategic experimentation. The EFP program has a proven track record for leveraging millions of dollars from fishing industry associations, conservation organizations, and independent research entities toward addressing priority research questions and ultimately improving fishing management.

(e) A streamlined state Experimental Fishing Permit program would represent a significant step toward ensuring that California's ocean management can meet the challenges of rapidly changing and unpredictable ocean conditions, and would deliver effective outcomes that protect the state's natural resources, port communities, and coastal economies.

(f) A state Experimental Fishing Permit program would promote collaborative and cooperative fisheries research and would develop information that would be available for management of state fisheries and, in some cases, inform the development of fishery management plans adopted pursuant to Part 1.7 (commencing with Section 7050) of Division 6 of the Fish and Game Code.

(g) In establishing a state Experimental Fishing Permit program, California also can provide a replicable state model for encouraging valuable and productive collaborative fisheries research in coastal waters.

SEC. 3. Section 90 of the Fish and Game Code is amended to read:

90. The definitions in this chapter govern the construction of Section 1022, Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 1700) of Division 2, and Division 6 (commencing with Section 5500) and all regulations adopted pursuant to those provisions.

SEC. 4. Section 1022 is added to the Fish and Game Code, to read:

1022. (a) The commission may authorize, for scientific research, educational, limited testing, data collection, compensation fishing, conservation engineering, exploratory fishing, health and safety survey, environmental cleanup or hazard removal purposes, or any combination of these purposes, experimental fishing permits (EFP) to be issued by the department that authorize commercial or recreational marine fishing activity otherwise prohibited by this code or any regulation adopted pursuant to this code, subject, at a minimum, to all of the following:

(1) Activities conducted under the EFP shall be consistent with policies set forth in Section 7050 and any applicable fishery management plan.

(2) An EFP is subject to those conditions the commission deems necessary to ensure the protection of marine resources, and shall be revoked if the continued use would have an adverse impact on any resource, allocation of a resource, or other adverse impact to established fisheries.

(3) (A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B), activities conducted under the EFP shall not involve engaging in bottom trawling in ocean waters of the state.

(B) Activities conducted under the EFP may involve engaging in bottom trawling if the EFP is issued to a person who holds a permit issued pursuant to Section 8494 or 8842 and the activities conducted under the EFP are limited to locations where bottom trawling is authorized under the applicable permit.

(4) An EFP exempts a permittee only from the provisions of this code and regulations adopted pursuant to this code specified in the EFP. All other applicable laws and regulations shall remain in effect.

(5) Permits shall be issued pursuant to the process established in subdivision (b).

(b) The commission shall establish an expeditious process for department review, public notice and comment, commission approval, and prompt department issuance of EFPs, that is consistent with Section 7059.

(c) Upon completion of the activities authorized in an EFP, or periodically under terms specified by the commission, a person fishing under an EFP shall submit to the commission and the department a final report summarizing the EFP research and findings, and any scientific reports or other publications created as a result of the activity.

(d) Unless otherwise specified by the commission, an EFP issued pursuant to this section is valid for a period of one year. However, the department shall not issue an EFP for more than four consecutive years.

(e) The commission shall post, and annually update, information regarding approved EFP activities, including information on the fishery and region affected, the experimental intent, and other relevant information on its Internet Web site.

(f) On or before January 1, 2023, and every five years thereafter, the commission shall complete and provide to the appropriate legislative committees a report summarizing the approved EFPs and benefits of the EFP program to the sustainability of California fisheries, efficiency of fishing effort, and reduction of bycatch in California fisheries.

(g) For purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

(1) "Compensation fishing" means fishing conducted for the purpose of recovering costs associated with resource surveys and scientific studies that support the management of a fishery, or fishing that serves as an incentive for participation in those studies. Compensation fishing may include fishing before, during, or following those surveys or studies.

(2) "Conservation engineering" means the study of fish behavior and the development and testing of new gear technology and fishing techniques that promote efficient and sustainable harvest of target species or reduce collateral effects, such as bycatch and adverse effects on habitat, or both.

(3) "Exploratory fishing" means fishing to collect data or conduct other research, typically to provide information that could inform the potential opening of a new fishery or an area currently closed to fishing.

SEC. 5. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.