

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
1993 SESSION

CHAPTER 576
HOUSE BILL 1540

AN ACT TO CREATE A SEPARATE CRAB LICENSE IN CHAPTER 113 OF THE
GENERAL STATUTES AND TO ESTABLISH A TWO-YEAR MORATORIUM
ON SPECIFIED FISHING LICENSES.

Whereas, it is the long-established policy of this State to preserve and protect its marine and estuarine resources for the use and benefit of all North Carolina citizens; and

Whereas, North Carolina's coastal fisheries resources have become stressed by factors which include: (i) overfishing; (ii) environmental impacts, such as water pollution; (iii) loss of wetlands and other fisheries habitat; and (iv) disease; and

Whereas, fishing has been a source of livelihood for many of the State's coastal citizens during the past four centuries, and that North Carolina has a significant interest in preserving and protecting that historical and cultural heritage; and

Whereas, North Carolina's traditional commercial fishermen have been adversely impacted by a number of factors, which include: (i) the decline of fishery populations; (ii) the use of more gear due to that decline; (iii) increasing conflicts between resource users in different fisheries; and (iv) the economic impact of increased State and federal fisheries regulation; and

Whereas, it is in the best interest of the citizens of this State that North Carolina develop, protect, and manage its own fishery resources in lieu of federal regulation of those resources; and

Whereas, the historical method by which the State has established fisheries regulations has resulted in a largely piecemeal approach to proper fisheries management; and

Whereas, these factors make it necessary to establish a two-year moratorium on vessel licenses, endorsements to sell fish, shellfish licenses, and crab licenses in order to conduct a comprehensive study of the fishery industry including: reviewing available measures to control fishing effort, gathering vital fisheries information, conducting necessary scientific research, studying fisheries management measures taken by other states or resource management organizations (including national and international), and obtaining public comments; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. Article 14 of Chapter 113 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 113-153.1. Crab license.

(a) Except as provided in subsection (d) of this section, it is unlawful for an individual to take crabs from the coastal fishing waters of North Carolina for commercial use by any means without having first procured an individual crab license.

(b) It is unlawful for any individual to take crabs for commercial use from the coastal fishing waters of North Carolina without having ready at hand for inspection a current and valid crab license issued to him personally and bearing his correct name and address. It is unlawful for any such individual taking or possessing freshly taken crabs to refuse to exhibit his license upon the request of an officer authorized to enforce the fishing laws.

(c) Individual crab licenses shall be issued annually on a fiscal year basis upon payment of a fee of seven dollars and fifty cents (\$7.50) for residents and one hundred dollars (\$100.00) for nonresidents. Vessel crab licenses shall be issued annually on a fiscal year basis upon payment of a fee of twenty-two dollars and fifty cents (\$22.50) and shall be issued in the name of the owner.

(d) The owner of a vessel licensed under G.S. 113-152 shall be eligible to purchase a vessel crab license for crabs under this section. A vessel crab license authorizes the owner of the vessel and up to two unlicensed persons serving as crew to fish for crabs from that vessel. It is unlawful for the owner of a vessel to take crabs from the coastal fishing waters of North Carolina for commercial use by any means, when unlicensed persons not authorized by the vessel crab license are on the vessel. The vessel crab license issued under this subsection shall be revoked when the owner or any other person using the owner's vessel is convicted of a violation under this section, except for subsection (b).

(e) In the event an individual possessing a crab license changes his name or address or receives one erroneous in this respect, he must within 30 days surrender the license for one bearing the correct name and address. Upon a showing by the individual that the name or address change occurred within the past 30 days, the trial court or prosecutor shall dismiss any charges brought pursuant to this subsection.

(f) It is unlawful for an individual issued a crab license to transfer or offer to transfer his license, either temporarily or permanently, to another. It is unlawful for an individual to secure or attempt to secure a crab license from a source not authorized by the Marine Fisheries Commission."

Sec. 2. G.S. 113-154 reads as rewritten:

"§ 113-154. Shellfish and crab licenses. license.

(a) It is unlawful for an individual to take shellfish ~~or crabs~~ from the public or private grounds of North Carolina by mechanical means or for commercial use by any means without having first procured an individual shellfish ~~and crab~~ license.

(b) It is unlawful for any individual to take shellfish ~~or crabs~~ for commercial use from the public or private grounds of North Carolina without having ready at hand for inspection a current and valid shellfish ~~and crab~~ license issued to him personally and bearing his correct name and address. It is unlawful for any such individual taking or possessing freshly taken shellfish ~~or crabs~~ to refuse to exhibit his license upon the request of an officer authorized to enforce the fishing laws.

(c) Shellfish ~~and crab~~ licenses are issued annually on a fiscal year basis upon payment of a fee of ~~fifteen dollars (\$15.00)~~ seven dollars and fifty cents (\$7.50) upon proof that the license applicant is a resident of North Carolina: Provided, that persons under 16 years of age are exempt from the license requirements of this section if they are accompanied by their parent or guardian who is in compliance with the requirements of this section or if they have in their possession their parent's or guardian's shellfish ~~and crab~~ license. ~~Notwithstanding G.S. 113-130, for purposes of this subsection, a North Carolina resident means a person that has resided in North Carolina for six months immediately preceding the application for the shellfish and crab license.~~

(d) In the event an individual possessing a shellfish ~~and crab~~ license changes his name or address or receives one erroneous in this respect, he must within 30 days surrender the license for one bearing the correct name and address. ~~An individual prosecuted for failure to possess a valid license is exonerated if he can show that the invalidity consisted solely of an incorrect name or address appearing in a license to which he was lawfully entitled and that the erroneous condition had not existed for longer than 30 days. Upon a showing by the individual that the name or address change occurred within the past 30 days, the trial court or prosecutor shall dismiss any charges brought pursuant to this subsection.~~

(e) It is unlawful for an individual issued a shellfish ~~and crab~~ license to transfer or offer to transfer his license, either temporarily or permanently, to another. It is unlawful for an individual to secure or attempt to secure a shellfish ~~and crab~~ license from a source not authorized by the Marine Fisheries Commission."

Sec. 3. (a) Except as provided in subsections (b) or (c) of this section, the Department shall not issue any new licenses for a two-year period beginning July 1, 1994, and ending June 30, 1996, under the following statutes:

- (1) G.S. 113-152. Vessel licenses.
- (2) G.S. 113-153.1. Crab license.
- (3) G.S. 113-154. Shellfish license.
- (4) G.S. 113-154.1. Nonvessel endorsements to sell fish.

(b) Any resident who possesses a shellfish and crab license or nonresident who possesses a crab license on June 30, 1994, may apply for a crab license issued in accordance with G.S. 113-153.1.

(c) The Department may renew any license issued on or after July 1, 1993, under the following statutes:

- (1) G.S. 113-152. Vessel licenses.
- (2) G.S. 113-154. Oyster, scallop, and clam license (amended, effective January 1, 1994).
- (3) G.S. 113-154. Shellfish and crab license.
- (4) G.S. 113-154.1. Endorsement to sell fish.

(d) During the moratorium, there shall be an Appeals Panel to consider license applications for new licenses.

- (1) The Appeals Panel shall consist of the Fisheries Director, the Chairman of the Marine Fisheries Commission, and one other person selected by the Cochairs of the Joint Legislative Commission on

Seafood and Aquaculture to review hardship or emergency license cases.

- (2) The Marine Fisheries Commission shall adopt temporary rules to govern the operation of the Appeals Panel. The Appeals Panel is exempt from the provisions of Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. Decisions of the Appeals Panel shall be subject to judicial review under the provisions of Article 4 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes.
- (3) The Appeals Panel may grant a license if it finds that the denial of the license application would create an emergency or hardship on the individual or the State. In no event shall the Appeals Panel grant a license when the total number of licenses in the specific category would exceed the number of licenses in effect on June 30, 1994.
- (4) The Appeals Panel may grant an emergency temporary license due to death, illness, or incapacity, for a period not to exceed 30 days. Emergency temporary licenses shall be limited to vessel crab licenses authorized under G.S. 113-153.1(d).

(e) During the moratorium, the North Carolina Sea Grant College Program shall conduct an extensive study of the fishery industry including: gathering available information, conducting necessary scientific research, studying other states or resource management organizations (including national and international organizations), and obtaining public comments on recommendations. The North Carolina Sea Grant College Program shall study all issues relating to the fishery resource including, but not limited to:

- (1) Analysis of licensing limitations including the biological, social, and economic impact of seasonal, specific areas, or gear restrictions.
- (2) Comparison of licensing programs.
- (3) Classification and enumeration of user groups.
- (4) Development of management policies and plans for crabs, shellfish, and all other fishery resources.
- (5) Evaluation and development of an effective enforcement mechanism for the licensing program recommended by this study.
- (6) Any other issue relating to the fishery industry.

The North Carolina Sea Grant College Program shall work with the Steering Committee and shall report quarterly to the Joint Legislative Commission on Seafood and Aquaculture and the Marine Fisheries Commission beginning October 1, 1994.

(f) The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall appoint individuals to a 19-member Steering Committee to oversee the study of the fishery resource comprised as follows:

- (1) Chair, Marine Fisheries Commission.
- (2) Director of the Marine Fisheries Division of the Department of Environment, Health, and Natural Resources (or designee).
- (3) Director of the North Carolina Sea Grant College Program (or designee).

- (4) The Cochairs of the Joint Legislative Commission on Seafood and Aquaculture (or designees).
- (5) Two representatives from the commercial fishing industry, one appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the other appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- (6) One representative from the North Carolina Fisheries Association Auxiliary, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- (7) Three representatives from the recreational fishing industry, one appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and two persons appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
- (8) One seafood processor, appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
- (9) Two academic fisheries scientists, one appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the other appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
- (10) One ecologist, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- (11) One social scientist, appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
- (12) One economist, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- (13) One environmentalist, appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
- (14) One representative from aquaculture, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The Chair of the Steering Committee shall be the Chair of the Marine Fisheries Commission.

Sec. 4. During the moratorium, the Marine Fisheries Commission shall be limited in the exercise of its existing authority to regulate and control the commercial and recreational harvest of marine fisheries resources to measures: (i) that prevent further endangerment of the resources; (ii) that involve user conflicts; or (iii) that are necessary to maintain State control of its own fishery resources in order to avoid the exercise of federal fishery management authority over those resources.

Sec. 5. The Joint Legislative Commission on Seafood and Aquaculture may report to the 1995 General Assembly, and shall report on the first day the 1996 Regular Session commences on its findings, together with any recommended legislation.

Sec. 6. Nothing herein contained shall be construed to obligate the General Assembly to appropriate funds to implement the provisions of this act. If funds are not appropriated for the 1994-95 fiscal year to implement the provisions of Sections 3, 4, or 5 of this act, Sections 3, 4, or 5 shall not become effective.

Sec. 7. This act becomes effective July 1, 1994.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 27th day of June, 1994.

Dennis A. Wicker
President of the Senate

Daniel Blue, Jr.
Speaker of the House of Representatives