

Department of Fiscal Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 318 (Senator Stoltzfus)
Economic and Environmental Affairs

Referred to Environmental Matters

Fishing - Croakers - Size and Creel Limits

This amended bill decreases the minimum size limit of croakers caught for commercial purposes from ten inches to nine inches. It provides that the creel limit for recreation purposes can be up to 25 fish per day.

The bill is effective June 1, 1997.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill would not directly affect State finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful impact on small businesses as discussed below.

Fiscal Analysis

Background: Currently, there is a ten-inch minimum size limit for commercially caught croaker and a nine-inch minimum size limit for recreationally caught croaker. There is a 20-fish catch limit for recreationally caught croaker.

Small Business Effect: Commercial fish harvesters should benefit from the reduction of the size limit for croaker. More fish would be available to legally harvest; therefore, they should harvest and sell more poundage of croaker. The price of croaker in 1995 averaged \$.52 per pound. In 1995 approximately 500,000 pounds of croaker were harvested in Maryland by 45 commercial harvesters, resulting in sales of approximately \$260,000.

The increased harvest would depend upon the number of fish entering the nine to ten inch

size range each year. DNR estimates that the increase could be between 5% and 20% for the 1997 season. This could translate into 25,000 to 100,000 additional pounds of croaker harvested, with an approximate value of \$13,000 to \$52,000, assuming that the price remained at \$.52 per pound. However, the increase in poundage harvested could affect the price received. In addition, other external factors could influence the price.

Charter boat captains would benefit from the creel limit change from the current statute limit of 20 to 25 fish per day. This increase could cause additional people to take charter boat trips since more croaker would be able to be harvested. In addition, services that cater to recreational fishers, such as bait and tackle shops, may see increased sales due to this change.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources, Department of Fiscal Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 7, 1997

brd Revised - Senate Third Reader - March 17, 1997

Analysis by: Kim E. Wells-McDonnell

Reviewed by: John Rixey

Direct Inquiries to:

John Rixey, Coordinating Analyst

(410) 841-3710

(301) 858-3710