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ALLOW IMPORT OF TRIPLOID WHITE AMUR

House Bill 5273 as introduced
First Analysis (11-13-89)

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DEC 19 1989

Sponsor: Rep. Margaret O'Connor
Committee: Tourism, Fisheries & Wildlife

Mich. State Law Library

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

A problem common to ponds and small inland lakes is the growth of aquatic plants that interfere with recreational use. Lakeowners in other states, looking for alternatives to herbicide use and expensive dredging, have found success in using an imported vegetarian fish to control weeds. However, that fish, *Ctenopharyngodon idellus* (grass carp, white amur), is barred from Michigan. The species is native to China where it reproduces in river systems, and there are concerns over the possible environmental consequences should the fish escape from the lakes where they were released and breed in Michigan waters. Some states, including Ohio and Illinois, have addressed such concerns by allow only the triploid form of the fish to be imported and planted. A triploid organism is incapable of reproducing because it has three sets of chromosomes instead of the usual two; with the white amur, triploidy generally is produced by heat-treating newly-fertilized eggs, thus interfering with normal cell division and causing the development of a triploid fish. Many believe that Michigan, too, should allow ponds and lakes to be stocked with triploid white amur.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would amend Public Act 196 of 1957, which regulates the propagation, possession, and sale of game fish, to allow triploid white amur to be imported and released to control weeds in inland lakes. Prior to importing and releasing the fish, a person would have to get a license or permit from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The fish or eggs could be purchased only from a source approved by the DNR, which would have a list of approved sources available within 60 days after the bill took effect. The person planting the fish would have to notify the department of the number of fish to be released and the name of the lake in which the fish are to be released. The DNR could construct barriers to prevent the fish from migrating.

The bill also would amend the title of the act to make it consistent with the content of the bill.

MCL 308.115b

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

Fiscal information is not available.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

The bill would allow the use of a safe biological control, the triploid white amur, in lakes where aquatic vegetation interferes with recreational use and threatens property values. A triploid fish is genetically incapable of reproducing, and therefore presents little danger to the environment. Even so, the bill provides additional safeguards by requiring DNR-issued permits, restricting allowable sources to those approved by the DNR, and

authorizing the DNR to construct barriers to contain the fish where they are planted. The white amur already has been illegally imported into Michigan and released; the bill would provide the legal means to safely import and plant triploid fish.

Against:

The release of a non-native species into the environment can have unforeseen adverse consequences. The white amur is a heavy-feeding, fast-growing, prolific fish. Before the bill is enacted, it should be confirmed that sources of triploid fish have adequate quality control (that is, that a shipment of triploid fish does not contain normal diploids), that native herbivorous species do not suffer from competition with white amur, and that the waste products of the fast-growing white amur do not create water quality problems. Rather than risking environmental harm through the release of a non-native species of fish, lakeowners should address the cause of heavy plant growth in their lakes: nutrients coming from septic systems and lawn and garden fertilizers.

POSITIONS:

The Michigan Recreation and Parks Association supports the concept of the bill. (11-9-89)

The Michigan United Conservation Clubs opposes the bill. (11-13-89)

H.B. 5273 (11-13-89)