



**House
Legislative
Analysis
Section**

Washington Square Building, Suite 1025
Lansing, Michigan 48909
Phone: 517/373-6466

REGULATE TURTLE TRAPPING

House Bill 4171 as enrolled
Second Analysis (1-4-89)

RECEIVED

FEB 08 1989

Sponsor: Rep. Jerry C. Bartnik
House Committee: Tourism and Recreation
Senate Committee: Natural Resources and
Environmental Affairs

Mich. State Law Library

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Many people consider snapping turtle meat to be a great delicacy. In fact, it is in such great demand that restaurants are reported to have paid \$5 a pound for turtles. As a result, the commercial taking of turtles has increased to the point where snapping turtles are in danger of being over-harvested. Many believe that to protect turtles and other reptiles and amphibians, the legislature should authorize the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to regulate how and when these animals may be taken.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would amend the Michigan Sportsmen Fishing Law to allow the director of the Department of Natural Resources to decide how and when reptiles (turtles, snakes, and lizards), amphibians (frogs, toads, and salamanders), mollusks (clams and snails), and crustaceans (crayfish) could be taken. A person taking turtles and frogs for personal use would have to have a valid fishing license (currently required with respect to turtles, but not frogs). Someone taking reptiles and amphibians for commercial purposes would be required to have a commercial reptile and amphibian license, which would cost \$150 annually.

In addition, the bill would change the name of the act from the "Michigan Sportsmen Fishing Law" to the "Michigan Sports Fishing Law."

MCL 301.1 et al.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Senate Fiscal Agency says that the bill would have an undetermined fiscal impact on state government. The agency notes that according to the DNR, some increased administrative costs could be incurred in issuing more licenses. These costs could be offset, however, by additional revenue generated by increased sales of fishing licenses and the proposed \$150 commercial license fee. (11-22-88)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

The high prices being paid by restaurants for snapping turtle meat have resulted in increased commercial taking of turtles, which are being killed faster than they can reproduce. This threatens not only existing turtle populations but future populations as well. At present, the director of the DNR can specify how and when frogs may be taken, but lacks such authority with regard to other amphibians and reptiles. The only restrictions on the taking of turtles is that the turtle traps must not interfere with or take fish and the person using the traps must have a fishing license. The bill would retain the fishing license requirement for those who would take turtles for personal use, extend it to the taking of frogs, authorize the DNR to restrict the

manner of taking reptiles and amphibians, and institute a \$150 license for the commercial taking of reptiles and amphibians. These measures would help to protect the dwindling populations of these animals.

For:

The bill is needed to protect reptiles, amphibians, mollusks, and crustaceans, which currently are largely unprotected. The only protection for these groups of species reportedly comes from state or federal endangered species laws. Several species, such as the snapping turtle, wood turtle, spotted turtle, black rat snake, cricket frog, and tiger and spotted salamanders have undergone a population decline in recent years. This decline is attributed largely to a growing demand for these species for commercial harvest and by private collectors. Many of these species already have been reduced to seriously low levels in Michigan's neighboring states, and are listed as threatened or endangered species in many of those states. Since these species are unprotected in Michigan, out-of-state collectors reportedly are now coming to Michigan and removing them for export. The bill would put a damper on such illicit activity.

Against:

The \$150 commercial license fee would be too low. The price that a commercial trapper could get for five or six good-sized snapping turtles easily could make up for that expense. Either the fee should be made high enough to discourage commercial trapping or commercial trapping itself should be prohibited.

H.B. 4171 (1-4-89)

H.B. 4171 (1-4-89)