

Legislative Analysis



PROHIBIT COLLECTION OF STATE PARK FEES ON FREE FISHING WEEKENDS

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House Bill 4983 as enacted

Public Act 1 of 2016

Sponsor: Rep. Bruce R. Rendon

House Committee: Tourism and Outdoor Recreation

Senate Committee: Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

Complete to 2-19-16

SUMMARY:

House Bill 4983 amended Section 74116 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA) by adding free fishing days to the list of instances when a visitor does not need to pay for entrance to a state park.

Specifically, under the bill, the entrance fee would not apply "at a state-operated public boating access site or a state park where there is an opportunity to fish on a day that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has designated as a free winter fishing day or a free fishing day under Section 43534 [of NREPA]."

That section requires that the department designate a Saturday and following Sunday in January or February of each year as free winter fishing days. The Section also permits the DNR to designate one other day, or two other consecutive days, each year as free fishing days.

During free fishing days, a resident or nonresident can fish for all species of fish in waters of this state designated by the DNR without purchasing a license or permit.

The bill took effect April 25, 2016.

MCL 324.74116

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Presently, there are four free fishing days each year, scheduled on one weekend in the summer and one in the winter. During these free fishing weekends, individuals wishing to fish are not required to possess a valid Michigan fishing license. Presently, individuals 17 years of age and older are required to possess a valid fishing license outside of these specially designated days.

The other situations in which an individual may enter a state park without a motor vehicle permit or recreation passport tab or sticker are as follows:

- While the motor vehicle is being driven or parked within an established federal, state, or county highway within a state park.
- If the motor vehicle is used in the operation or maintenance of a state park, is an emergency motor vehicle, is a state owned or law enforcement motor vehicle, or is a private motor vehicle being operated on official state business.
- If the motor vehicle is specially registered by certain veterans of the armed forces or individuals who have been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.
- If and to the extent the DNR waives the requirements for department-sponsored events or other circumstances as determined by the director or the director's designee.

FISCAL IMPACT:

House Bill 4983 would likely have a negative fiscal impact on the Department of Natural Resources (DNR); the extent of this impact is unknown. Revenue generated from Recreation Passport sales could be forgone if HB 4983 becomes law. For example, DNR collected in excess of \$57,000 in Recreation Passport revenue during the Free Fishing Weekend in June 2015.

Recreation Passport sales generated an estimated \$24.2 million in FY 2013-14, which was divided between DNR and the Department of Technology, Management, and Budget (Secretary of State) according to statutory formula. It is uncertain exactly what portion, if any, of this annual revenue would be lost during free fishing weekends due to HB 4983.

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.