

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILL ANALYSIS

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BILL #: [HB 673](#)

TITLE: Recreational Fishing Vessel Licenses

SPONSOR(S): Cobb

COMPANION BILL: [SB 834](#) (Truenow)

LINKED BILLS: None

RELATED BILLS: None

Committee References

[Natural Resources & Disasters](#)

13 Y, 0 N

[Agriculture & Natural Resources](#)

[Budget](#)

[State Affairs](#)

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:

The bill requires individuals operating freshwater charter vessels to obtain a license from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The bill exempts individuals who are freshwater fishing from obtaining a freshwater fishing license or permit when fishing from a vessel that is licensed or when the vessel operator is licensed as required by the bill. Additionally, the bill specifies that when an operator of a freshwater charter vessel that carries scuba divers has the appropriate licensure and permits, the individual scuba divers who are engaging in taking or attempting to take freshwater products are not required to obtain individual fishing licenses or applicable permits.

The bill imposes a sales and use tax on boats where a freshwater fishing license is required to be obtained.

Additionally, the bill authorizes a person to obtain a vessel license for a freshwater recreational vessel not for hire and for which no fee is paid by guests for the purpose of taking or attempting to take freshwater fish noncommercially.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:

The bill may have an indeterminate positive fiscal impact on the state associated with the licensure fee requirements and imposition of a sales and use tax on certain vessels. The bill may have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on private sector individuals who will be required to pay licensure fees and sales and use tax as required by the bill.

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ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill requires a person operating a vessel where a fee is paid for the purpose of taking, attempting to take, or possessing any freshwater fish for noncommercial purposes to obtain a license for each vessel for that purpose. Such licenses are commonly referred to as [charter vessel licenses](#). The bill requires persons operating freshwater charter vessels to abide by the following fee schedule and regulations:

- \$800 annually for a license for a person who operates any vessel licensed to carry more than 10 customers. Such license must be kept aboard the vessel at all times.
- \$400 annually for a license for a person who operates any vessel licensed to carry no more than 10 customers, or for any person licensed to operate any vessel carrying six or fewer customers.
- \$200 for a license for a person who operates any vessel licensed to carry six or fewer customers but who operates a vessel carrying four or fewer customers. The license must be kept aboard the vessel at all times. (Section [1](#))

For boats where a freshwater fishing license fee is required as detailed above, the bill imposes a six percent [sales and use tax](#). (Section [2](#))

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The bill exempts persons who are freshwater fishing from obtaining a freshwater fishing license or permit when fishing from a vessel that has obtained the appropriate charter license or when the vessel operator is appropriately licensed. (Section [3](#))

The bill specifies that when an operator of a freshwater charter vessel that carries scuba divers has the appropriate licensure and permits, the individual scuba divers who are engaging in taking or attempting to take freshwater products are not required to obtain individual fishing licenses or applicable permits. (Section [1](#))

Additionally, the bill authorizes a person to obtain a vessel license for a recreational vessel not for hire and for which no fee is paid by guests for the purpose of taking or attempting to take freshwater fish noncommercially. The fee for such license is \$2,000 annually. The license must be kept aboard the vessel at all times. Additionally, a log of species taken and the date the species were taken must be maintained, and a copy of the log must be filed with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) at the time of renewal of the license. (Section [1](#))

The effective date of this bill is July 1, 2025. (Section [4](#))

FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:

STATE GOVERNMENT:

The bill may have an indeterminate positive fiscal impact on FWC associated with the new licensure and fee requirements of the bill for freshwater charter vessels. The bill may also have a positive fiscal impact on state government through the collection of a sales and use tax on freshwater charter vessels.

PRIVATE SECTOR:

The bill may have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on private sector individuals associated with the licensure fees for freshwater charter vessels and the imposition of a sales and use tax on such vessels.

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

FWC was created by Article IV, section 9, of the Florida Constitution and is responsible for regulating, managing, protecting, and conserving the state's fish and wildlife resources. FWC is governed by a board of seven members who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate.¹ Pursuant to its constitutional authority, FWC exercises the regulatory and executive powers of the state with respect to wild animal life, fresh water aquatic life, and marine life. FWC is also the agency responsible for regulating boating in the state, including licensing boats and boat operators.

Charter Vessel Licenses

A person is prohibited from operating a saltwater fishing charter vessel for noncommercial purposes unless he or she has obtained a license for each vessel for that purpose and has paid the appropriate corresponding fee for such vessel.² Owners, operators, or custodians of such vessels are required to maintain and report statistical data required by FWC.³ The corresponding license fees and regulations for saltwater fishing charters are as follows:

- \$800 annually for a license for any person who operates a vessel licensed to carry more than 10 customers. The license must be kept aboard the vessel at all times.⁴ Anyone who operates such a vessel may obtain a license in their own name that is transferrable to, and applies to, any vessel operated by the purchaser, so long as the purchaser has paid the appropriate license fee.⁵

¹ Article IV, s. 9, FLA. CONST.

² Section [379.354\(7\)\(a\)](#), F.S.

³ Section [379.354\(7\)\(d\)](#), F.S.

⁴ Section [379.354\(7\)\(b\)](#), F.S.

⁵ Section [379.354\(7\)\(c\)3.](#), F.S.

- \$400 annually for a license for any person licensed to operate a vessel licensed to carry no more than 10 customers, or for any person licensed to operate any vessel carrying six or fewer customers.⁶
- \$200 annually for a license for a vessel licensed to carry six or fewer customers but who operates a vessel carrying four or fewer customers. The license must be kept aboard the vessel at all times.⁷

FWC regulates these vessels and vessel operators through saltwater charter licenses.⁸ A charter captain license allows a licensed captain to go from boat to boat to do business.⁹ To obtain an FWC charter captain license, a person must first obtain a captain's license from the United States Coast Guard.¹⁰ A charter boat license can only be used on the boat designated on the license.¹¹ Both the charter captain and charter boat licenses can be purchased exclusively at a tax collector's office.¹²

Recreational Fishing Licenses

FWC regulates hunting and fishing seasons, means of take, bag limits, and areas authorized for hunting or fishing. Florida residents and visitors are required to possess a Florida hunting, freshwater fishing, or saltwater fishing license when engaged in fishing and hunting activities.¹³ Fees for licenses and permits typically range from \$17 to \$151¹⁴ depending on the type and duration of the license, as well as if the individual is a Florida resident.¹⁵ Certain individuals are exempt from the permitting requirements.¹⁶ Charter, headboat, and saltwater fishing guide operations must have an FWC charter captain or boat license to cover their passengers, who are not required to hold a recreational saltwater fishing license.¹⁷ Customers authorized to fish under the vessel license are not required to hold a recreational saltwater fishing license.¹⁸ Such customers on these vessels are still required to abide by all saltwater fishing regulations.¹⁹

A license for non-charter vessels carrying guests for the purpose of taking or attempting to take saltwater fish noncommercially is \$2,000 per year.²⁰ The license may be purchased at the option of the vessel owner and must be kept aboard the vessel at all times.²¹ A log of species taken and the date the species were taken must be maintained, and a copy of the log must be filed with FWC at the time of renewal of the license.²²

⁶ Section [379.354\(7\)\(c\)1., F.S.](#)

⁷ Section [379.354\(7\)\(c\)2., F.S.](#)

⁸ FWC, *What the FWC Saltwater Charter License Authorizes*, <https://myfwc.com/license/commercial/saltwater/charter/> (last visited Mar. 7, 2025).

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.* See U.S. Coast Guard, *National Maritime Center*, https://www.dco.uscg.mil/nmc/charter_boat_captain/ (last visited Mar. 7, 2025).

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ This includes individuals who are aiding in the take. FWC, *What Exemptions May Apply?* <https://myfwc.com/license/recreational/do-i-need-one/> (last visited Mar. 7, 2025).

¹⁴ Outside of this range, FWC offers a five-year resident gold sportsman's license that includes freshwater fishing, hunting, and saltwater fishing licenses and wildlife management area, archery, muzzleloading gun, crossbow, deer, turkey, Florida waterfowl, snook, and lobster permits for \$494.

¹⁵ See, FWC, *Recreational Freshwater Licenses & Permits*, <https://myfwc.com/license/recreational/freshwater-fishing/> (last visited Mar. 7, 2025); FWC, *Recreational Saltwater Licenses & Permits*, <https://myfwc.com/license/recreational/saltwater-fishing/> (last visited Mar. 7, 2025); FWC, *Recreational Hunting Licenses & Permits*. Available at <https://myfwc.com/license/recreational/hunting/> (last visited Mar. 7, 2025).

¹⁶ See section [379.353, F.S.](#), for a list of individuals who are exempt from permitting requirements. See also, FWC, *Exemptions*, <https://myfwc.com/license/recreational/do-i-need-one/> (last visited January 8, 2024).

¹⁷ FWC, *What the FWC Saltwater Charter License Authorizes*, <https://myfwc.com/license/commercial/saltwater/charter/> (last visited Mar. 7, 2025).

¹⁸ *Id.* Section [379.354\(7\)\(f\), F.S.](#)

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ Section [379.354\(7\)\(d\), F.S.](#)

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.*

Sales and Use Tax

Florida's sales and use tax is a six percent levy on retail sales of tangible personal property, admissions, transient lodgings, and commercial real estate rentals.²³ Use tax is applied and due on tangible personal property imported for use, consumption, distribution, or storage to be used or consumed in the state.²⁴ However, there is a presumption that tangible personal property used in another state, territory of the United States, or the District of Columbia for six months or longer before being imported into the state was not purchased for use in the state, and as such, the six percent tax is not applied to that property.²⁵

This presumption does not apply to any boat for which a saltwater fishing charter license fee is required.²⁶ The tax will be applied and due on a boat and proof of payment of such tax is required to be presented prior to the first licensure of the boat, registration of the boat, and titling of the boat.²⁷ The tax is assessed based on the timeline in which a boat gets licensed.²⁸ For example, a boat licensed in its first year after purchase is taxed for the full amount of the purchase price, whereas a boat first licensed in the sixth year after purchase or later is taxed 50 percent of the purchase price.²⁹ If the purchaser fails to provide the purchase invoice of such boat, the fair market value of the boat at the time of importation into the state is used to compute the tax.³⁰

BILL HISTORY

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
Natural Resources & Disasters Subcommittee	13 Y, 0 N	3/18/2025	Moore	Gawin
Agriculture & Natural Resources Budget Subcommittee				
State Affairs Committee				

²³ Section [212.06\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

²⁴ Section [212.06\(8\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ Section [212.06\(8\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*