

Joint Committee on Agriculture

Bill Summary

Bill Number: H.115

Title: An Act to create the department of marine fisheries resources

Sponsors: Representative Cabral of New Bedford

Hearing Date: Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:30 AM - 01:00 PM, B-2

Reporting Date: Saturday, July 12, 2025

Similar Matters: None

Prior History:

2023-2024: Filed as H.759; Referred to the Joint Committee on Natural Resources ; Discharged to the Joint Committee on Agriculture; Accompanied a Study Order H.4522

2021-2022: Filed as H.863; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture; Accompanied a Study Order H.5041

2019-2020: Filed as H.737; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture; Accompanied a Study Order H.5012

2017-2018: Filed as H.2109; Referred to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture; Accompanied a Study Order H.4513

CURRENT LAW:

Chapter 130 of the Massachusetts General Laws concerns marine fisheries. Section 1 of this chapter establishes definitions of otherwise uncommon or ambiguous terms used throughout the chapter. Section 1A of the chapter establishes the Division of Marine Fisheries under the Department of Fish and Game, creates the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission and the Shellfish Advisory Panel to advise the Division, and details the duties of the Division, which include: the licensing of fishers, the enforcement of safe harvesting and transportation guidelines for shellfish and other products, the management of marine fisheries, and the oversight of coastal streams, waterways and weirs.

SUMMARY:

This bill amends Chapter 130 by renaming the Division of Marine Fisheries to the Division of Marine Fishery Resources. The existing placement and structure of the Division would not fundamentally change, as it would remain under the Department of Fish and Game in the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (the bill language and current law only reference this as the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs). The renamed division would continue to be charged with its existing duties of licensing, oversight, safety inspections, and the maintenance of marine fisheries. The only responsibility which the Division of Marine Fisheries currently holds which is removed by this bill is for the biological development of marine fish and fisheries. It would add to the existing duties a charge to promote and develop the fishing industry, investigate ways to market, pack, and distribute fish products, and collect and release data about the health of the industry and ecosystem. It would also allow for the establishment of protected areas for fish to grow.

Every reference to “the Division of Marine Fisheries” in Chapter 130 is changed by this bill to “the Division of Marine Fisheries Resources”. There is no change to other references to this Division elsewhere in the General Laws.