

Smelt, carp, and crawfish licensing



In 2022, over 16,000 people participated in the five-hour freshwater smelt fishery that was open on the Cowlitz River. The average catch was over the 10-pound daily limit and more than 70% of all persons cited by WDFW Enforcement did not have a fishing license.

Licenses are a gateway to knowing the rules and regulations for fisheries in Washington state. Part of the licensing process requires participants to read the annual fishing pamphlet and abide by the rules when fishing which helps maintain more orderly fisheries

The pamphlet provides educational resources on regulations and identifying species that impact fisheries and user experience. For example, the correct identification of native and non-native crawfish can affect harvest. There is no daily limit on non-native crawfish and they cannot be returned to the water, however, there is a daily limit on native crawfish.

Common carp do not currently require a recreational fishing license. Common carp may be taken when other fishery seasons are open. Enforcement officers have had trouble monitoring illegal salmon and steelhead fishing in certain locations – as the individual claims they were fishing for ‘carp’. Requiring a license will make that person aware of the rules for taking both carp and other fish.

This legislation would remove the current exemption from a fishing license for freshwater smelt, carp, and crawfish, in order to allow for regulation and monitoring of those species. Requiring a fishing license for these species would also further the Department’s goal of education and voluntary compliance with resource protection restrictions.

For more information, contact:

Tom McBride
Legislative Director
(360) 480-1472
Tom.McBride@dfw.wa.gov

Individuals who need to receive this information in an alternative format, language, or who need reasonable accommodations to participate in WDFW-sponsored public meetings or other activities may contact the Title VI/ADA Compliance Coordinator by phone at 360-902-2349, TTY (711), or email (Title6@dfw.wa.gov). For more information, see <https://wdfw.wa.gov/accessibility/requests-accommodation>.

27 July 2022