

Committee on Environmental Preservation And Conservation

CS/CS/CS/HB 333 — Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

by State Affairs Committee; Veteran and Military Affairs Subcommittee; Agriculture and Natural Resources Subcommittee; and Rep. Steube and others (CS/CS/SB 448 by Appropriations Committee; Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee; and Senators Dean and Simpson)

The bill amends various statutes relating to certain programs under the authority of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). The bill:

- Amends the definition of “navigation rules” by removing an outdated reference to the U.S. Code and replacing it with the updated reference to the Code of Federal Regulations;
- Provides an exemption for certain military veterans and one other person to accompany each veteran to outdoor hunting and fishing events permitted by the FWC for the purpose of rehabilitation or enjoyment of the veterans attending;
- Authorizes the FWC to increase the total number of license-free recreational saltwater and freshwater fishing days from two to four annually; and
- Deletes a requirement to automatically adjust vessel registration and recreational hunting and fishing license fees every five years in line with changes to the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers.

The bill changes the residency requirement for a commercial hunting or fishing license so that someone applying for an in-state license must reside in Florida for one year. The bill removes a requirement that a person must reside in a Florida county for six months. The bill also changes the residency requirement for recreational hunting and fishing licenses so that someone applying for an in-state license must reside in Florida for six months. The bill also changes the definition of “resident alien.” Currently, for someone to apply as a resident alien and thus be treated as a resident for the purposes of getting an in-state license, the person has to reside in a particular Florida county for six months and in Florida for one year. The bill removes the six month requirement.

In order for someone to fish commercially, they must have a saltwater products license. The license allows someone to fish commercially for any commercially harvestable sea life. The FWC maintains an extensive list of aquatic species that may only be harvested with a restricted species endorsement on the saltwater products license. The restricted species endorsement requires the applicant to document a certain level of income from commercial fishing during the previous year. The bill waives that income requirement for one year.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2013.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 116-0