

Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation

CS/CS/HB 955 — Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

by State Affairs Committee; Agriculture and Natural Resources Subcommittee; and Rep. Goodson (CS/SB 1126 by Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee; and Senator Dean)

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

- Requires boating law violators to complete a mandatory boating safety course in person or online;
- Requires boating violators to take an approved boater safety education course following conviction for a criminal boating violation or a reportable boating accident. The repealed subsection provided an exemption to taking the boater safety education course following a violation if the violator had previously taken an approved boater safety education course;
- Extends the FWC's anchoring and mooring pilot program until July 1, 2017, and requires an updated report by January 1, 2017;
- Expands the allowable uses of local government boating registration fees deposited into the Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund to include maintaining or operating recreational channel markings and other uniform water way markers, boat piers, docks, and mooring buoys. It also allows for the removal of derelict vessels and debris that specifically impede boat access, but does not include the dredging of channels;
- Repeals the FWC's authorization to charge fees related to hunting on areas subject to cooperative agreements between the FWC and the U.S. Forest Service;
- Repeals licenses and fees for freshwater trawl seine gear and statewide freshwater haul seine gear;
- Repeals haul seine and trawl permits and fees in Lake Okeechobee;
- Repeals a provision permitting trawling for shrimp for personal use in the St. Johns River, north of the Acosta Bridge, in Jacksonville, Florida;
- Specifies that the annual military gold sportsman's license authorizes the same activities as the annual gold sportsman's license;
- Eliminates the Special Recreational Spiny Lobster license; and
- Makes technical and conforming changes.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2014.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 111-3