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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 59TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage
Public Hearing, AB 336
Wednesday, October 14, 2015

Good morning Committee members. AB 336 deals with trolling, or trailing a lure or bait from a boat powered by a motor. Wisconsin statute 29.193 addresses trolling permits for disabled individuals, defining “disabled” as those with amputations or loss of an arm above the wrist, or permanent substantial loss of function in one or both arms or one or both hands.

Earlier this year, the DNR implemented a trolling rule to allow anglers in Wisconsin the ability to troll for fish on inland waters statewide. However, this rule contains a 2018 sunset date. If this rule is allowed to sunset, the ability to troll on Wisconsin lakes would revert to back to only those covered under the disabled definition in our statute.

This bill would codify blindness as a disability under chapter 29, allowing the visually impaired and an assistant to troll.

The Disability and Advisory Council met on July 23 and made a recommendation to accept this legislation. DNR biologists have also confirmed that no harmful biological effects to fisheries in lakes have occurred where trolling is legal. Per the DNR, trolling is broadly allowed in surrounding states and Canadian territories.

Thank you for the time to testify.



Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage
Trolling Permits for Sight Impaired Individuals
2015 Assembly Bill 336

Good morning Chairman Ott and committee members. My name is Linda Olver, Policy Advisor in the Bureau of Customer and Outreach Services of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Thank you for the opportunity to testify for informational purposes on Assembly Bill 336, which allows sight-impaired individuals to qualify for a trolling permit.

Current administrative code, in effect until May 4, 2018, allows all anglers to troll on all inland waters with 1 hook, bait or lure per angler (and 2 hooks, baits or lures maximum per boat), unless more hooks, baits or lures are specifically authorized statewide. Despite the expanded trolling opportunity available to all anglers, trolling *permits* provide opportunities not afforded all anglers under current administrative code.

Under current law, an angler holding a trolling permit and either a current fishing license or fishing license exemption may fish or troll in the waters of this state using an electric motor. Further, a person assisting a disabled angler (Class A permit, Class B permit, or a trolling permit) in the same boat may also fish or troll if he or she also holds a current fishing license or a license exemption. Statute specifies an angler with a trolling permit may use an electric motor notwithstanding any local ordinances that prohibit the use of motor boats on navigable waters. Note an individual holding a valid trolling permit is not subject to the line restriction specified in NR 20.06 and so they may troll in any manner that does not exceed 3 hooks, baits or lures.

The following types of disabled permits allow motorized trolling on all inland waters, regardless of local regulations otherwise:

- Trolling permits – currently 152 issued in 2015
- Some Class B permits – currently 827 issued in 2015
- All Class A permits – currently 6,572 issued in 2015
- In total: 7,551 issued in 2015

Current law requires the department to issue a trolling permit to any person meeting the following requirements:

1. Has an amputation or other loss of one or more arms above the wrist; or
2. Has a permanent substantial loss of function in one or both arms or one or both hands and fails to meet the minimum standards of any one of the following standard tests, administered under the direction of a licensed physician or a licensed chiropractor:
 - a. Upper extremity pinch.
 - b. Grip.
 - c. Nine-hole peg.

AB 336 proposes to expand the eligibility for a trolling permit to people who produce a certificate from a licensed physician or optometrist stating that sight is impaired to the degree they cannot read ordinary newspaper print with or without corrective glasses. This mirrors one of four qualifying criteria for the resident disabled fishing license discount.

In total, about 7,500 permits allow trolling are currently held by people with disabilities. The department cannot determine the number of sight impaired individuals that would either qualify or apply for a trolling permit under the expanded qualifying criteria.

AB 336 would increase angling opportunity to sight impaired people previously ineligible for a trolling permit.

Thank you for your time. I hope you find this information helpful. I am happy to try answering questions you may have regarding AB 336.