

HJR 20 -- HANDFISHING

SPONSOR: Quinn

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Agri-Business by a vote of 10 to 0.

Upon voter approval, this proposed constitutional amendment allows for a regulated handfishing season for catfish from June 1 through July 31 of each year in the waters of the state.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2010, FY 2011, and FY 2012.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that fishing is fishing regardless of whether the person uses a rod and reel or his or her hand. Thirteen other states allow handfishing and have not seen a drop in the population of catfish. During the 2005-2006 test season, 83 handfishermen caught 27 catfish while an estimated 12,500 fishing licenses were sold to persons using a rod and reel. The Department of Conservation is playing one group of fishermen against another.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Quinn; Whitney O'Daniel, National Rifle Association; Karen and Howard Ramsey, Johnny and Ann Ragsdale, Gary Webb, and Claudia Wilkerson, Noodlers Anonymous; Jeff Cox; Missouri Farm Bureau; Missouri Federation of Animal Owners; and Randy Webb.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that handfishing was outlawed in 1919 to preserve the species. If catfish are disturbed on their nests, it causes the spawn to die. Handfishing takes the biggest catfish which lay the largest number of eggs and, therefore, has a greater impact on the catfish population.

Testifying against the bill were Department of Conservation; Glenn Chambers; Tom Russell; Norm Stucky; and Conservation Federation of Missouri.