

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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1 FIRST REGULAR SESSION
2

3 ONE HUNDRED AND TWELFTH LEGISLATURE
4

5 Legislative Document

No. 1043

6
7 H.P. 734

House of Representatives, March 13, 1985

8 Submitted by the Department of Marine Resources pursuant to Joint
9 Rule 24.

10 On motion of Representative Crowley of Stockton Springs, referred to
the Committee on Marine Resources. Sent up for concurrence and ordered
printed.

EDWIN H. PERT, Clerk

Presented by Representative Ruhlin of Brewer.

11 Cosponsored by Representative Scarpino of St. George, Representative
Crowley of Stockton Springs and Representative Rice of Stonington.

12 STATE OF MAINE
13

14 IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
15 NINETEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FIVE
16

17 AN ACT Concerning the Taking of Smelts.
18

19 Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as
20 follows:

21 12 MRSA §6552, sub-§1, as enacted by PL 1977, c.
22 661, §5, is amended to read:

23 1. Method and amount. From March 15th to June
24 15th, both days inclusive, it shall be unlawful to
25 fish for or take smelts from the coastal waters by
26 any means other than a hand dip net operated by one
27 man or by angling with a hook and line or to take or
28 possess more than 4 2 quarts of smelts in one day.

29 STATEMENT OF FACT

30 During the past decade, commercial landings of
31 rainbow smelt have declined by over 50% in comparison
32 to the previous decade. Average annual landings for

1 the 10-year period from 1974-83 were 57,913 pounds
2 whereas, annual landings for the period 1964-73 aver-
3 aged 132,466 pounds. In addition, recreational
4 catches in the spring dip net fishery have declined
5 substantially over the past several years.
6 Overharvest of rainbow smelt on the spawning grounds
7 is believed to be one of the causes of this decline.
8 Many smaller coastal streams have become almost
9 devoid of smelt runs. Larger rivers where spring dip
10 netting is more inefficient due to the size of the
11 river, have maintained fishable smelt populations,
12 although the trend in catch is down since 1977.

13 This bill reduces the allowable catch in the
14 spring fishery to 1/2 of the present daily limit,
15 thereby allowing increased escapement of fish to the
16 spawning grounds. A 2-quart daily limit would also
17 be consistent with the limit on landlocked smelts
18 taken from inland waters. Since landlocked and sea
19 run smelts cannot be distinguished from one another,
20 a consistent daily limit between the 2 jurisdictions
21 would allow better enforcement of a creel limit.

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