

HB 5801 and HB 5802 Summary Overview As Of 5/25/2026

(Prepared by D. Boileau)

BACKGROUND:

The subject Bills have been introduced into the MI State House Of Representatives as a first step in addressing multiple issues. Not the least of which is the strain currently being experienced by Michigan's commercial fishing businesses and their supporting industries (processing, distribution etc.). It is perceived by many that the 60+ year old laws and statutes that currently govern this industry in our State have constrained it to the point that it appears destined to disappear. Especially given the current serious declines in white fish populations in the Michigan waters of the Great Lakes.

These Bills address many topics but essentially propose to expand commercial fishing in the Great Lakes to include other sport fishing species like walleye, yellow perch and lake trout, as well as expanding the approved waters to a larger portion of the Great Lakes. It also includes extensive language concerning methods, gear and commercial licensing.

The proposed legislation (primarily HB 5801) also stipulates that these expansions would be managed by the MDNR using science based TAC (Total Allowable Catch) and Quota systems modeled largely after the processes used by other States and Ontario. It also appears to leave the development of these methods and quota setting entirely to the MDNR but there is currently some conflicting language on this topic within the Bills.

The opposition to these Bills is rooted in concern over the impact to Michigan's multi billion dollar sportfishing industry. Whereas we may all agree that a well run, "science based" process for determining TAC could lead to the well balanced coexistence of both sport and commercial fishing interests, it is in short, much easier said than done. Our MDNR Fisheries Division in particular have expressed grave concerns over their ability to effectively manage these requirements much less enforce them in practice. The research requirements alone would potentially have an enormous impact on their operating budget. And that is viewed as just the first step.

So, it would appear we are at the beginning of what could be a lengthy process of negotiation that will hopefully lead to some acceptable legislation that will update our antiquated governance of commercial fishing without threatening the viability of our sportfishing legacy.

CURRENT STATUS:

Michigan House Bills 5801 and 5802 were both officially introduced into the Michigan State Legislature on **April 16, 2026**.

Here is a quick overview of their introduction:

- **House Bill 5801** was introduced by Representative Dave Prestin (R).
- **House Bill 5802** was introduced by Representative Jason Morgan (D).

Both bills are tie-barred to one another and focus on state natural resources and commercial fishing regulations, specifically addressing allowable catch limits and commercial species quotas. Upon introduction, they were both read for the first time and referred to the **House Committee on Natural Resources and Tourism**.

HB 5801 was reviewed in a Committee Meeting of the **House Committee on Natural Resources and Tourism** on **May 20th, 2026**. Testimony was given by a number of parties including Rep's Prestin and Morgan, DNR Fisheries Chief Randy Caramunt, multiple representatives from the Commercial Fishing Industry in Michigan and Ontario, and Ed Blissick from the Michigan Anglers Consortium/SGLI. There were multiple other people there to provide testimony but time ran out before they could be provided an opportunity to speak. No votes were taken.

In summary, all parties present appeared to be in agreement that the laws and statutes governing commercial fishing in the State Of Michigan are woefully obsolete, inadequate and need to be revised/updated. However, the opposition voices maintained that the Bills (5801 and 5802), as written, present many legal and functional issues and may in fact threaten the sustainability of the Great Lakes Fishery in the State of Michigan. They also emphasized the apparent universal opposition to these Bills by the State's Sportfishing population. On the other hand, Representatives Prestin and Morgan made compelling arguments that Michigan's relatively small but important commercial fishing operations are faced with extinction if regulatory constraints are not eased. Representative Prestin further emphasized that these Bills are "a starting point" and he and other supporters of the Bills are open to discussion of any amendments that lead to an acceptable compromise in the final legislation. Especially in light of the fact that these Bills were drafted without input from MDNR or Michigan's large contingent of sportfishing organizations or individual anglers.

At present, it is unclear when the next formal review will take place within the **House Committee on Natural Resources and Tourism**. Also, it is expected that a video recording of these 5/19 proceedings will be available on MI House TV in the near future.

D. Boileau

LELSCCFAC Chair

5/25/2026

Some Links To Additional Resources And Information

[HB 5801](#) The Draft Bill

[Video Recording Of The 5/20 Committee Hearing](#)

["Whitefish Waning. Should Michigan Have Commercial Trout, Walleye Catches"](#) Bridge Michigan Article