

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE TO

[First Reprint]
ASSEMBLY, No. 2023

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

JULY 5, 1996

Assembly Bill No. 2023 (1R) of 1996 makes several changes to existing laws that affect the oyster industry in the Delaware Bay. The bill increases the membership and requirements of the Shell Fisheries Council; fixes license fees at not less than \$10, or not less than \$2 per gross ton of the boat or vessel, whichever is greater, for boats or vessels required to be licensed under R.S.50:3-1; and establishes the Oyster Resource Development Account within the Hunters' and Anglers' License Fund as a separate and dedicated account for the enhancement and management of the oyster resource in the Delaware Bay. The fees currently collected for oyster vessel licenses, oyster shucking or dealer licenses, and oyster landing charges are to be deposited in the Oyster Resource Development Account.

Finally, the bill repeals existing rules and regulations establishing the oyster cultch program and the Oyster Cultch Fund, which is supported by the aforementioned oyster landing charges. The bill directs the remaining monies in the Oyster Cultch Fund, upon the repeal of the fund, to be deposited in the Oyster Resource Development Account.

The Office of Legislative Services estimates that the bill will have no significant impact on the State Budget or the operations of the Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife in carrying out its responsibilities under the bill. The bill does not impose new fees, change the rates of existing fees, nor implement any new programs. It essentially codifies, redirects and consolidates the three existing fees currently charged for the harvesting, processing and regeneration of oysters into one account that will be dedicated to support various research and management activities for this industry.

At present, only one of these fees, the oyster landing charges, are dedicated for this purpose through the Oyster Cultch Fund. In FY 1995, this fee generated approximately \$4,000; in FY 1996, \$21,781 has been generated as of June, 1996. The Oyster Cultch Fund's current balance, including carryforward amounts, as of June, 1996 is \$63,856. In FY 1995, the other two fees to be dedicated under the bill generated revenues (for the General Fund) totaling \$5,200 from oyster vessel licenses and \$400 from oyster dealer licenses.

The legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67.