Pole fishermen to buy licenses, Senate decides

By ALLAN PURSNELL
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The Senate signaled the end of an era Sunday when it decided that even cane pole fishermen should have to pay a $2.50 license fee.

Violators would be subject to a $5 fine. The bill now goes back to the House for concurrence in Senate changes.

The bill, HB2009 by Rep. Harry Benoit, D-Breaux Bridge, was one of a package designed to raise more than $9 million for the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries which has fallen on hard times due to the depression in the oil and gas industry.

The department relies on fees and income from production of oil and gas on public lands managed by the agency.

The Benoit bill alone is intended to raise a $6.6 million for the department. It will increase the amount of federal money by $500,000 that the department can collect based on the number of licensed fishermen in the state, Sen. Joe McPherson, D-Alexandria, said.

The Benoit bill raises the charge for a regular fishing license to $5.50 from the present $2.50. It also raises all the various commercial fishing licenses in addition to imposing a $2.50 fee for the first time on cane pole fishing.

Sen. Allen Bares, D-Lafayette, sponsored an amendment to remove the cane pole fishing fee, but it was rejected 21-12.

“I can’t help but believe that there has got to be something free left in this world,” Bares said.

“I think it is ludicrous to say that this is a tremendous burden on our people to pay $2.50,” said McPherson, who was handling the bill on the Senate floor.

Sen. Lawson Swearingen, D-Monroe, said he isn’t a callous person, but if fees are not raised to help conserve the state’s fisheries, there eventually may not be any fish left for cane pole fisherman to catch.

“I believe that those who occasionally go out and get a meal to feed their families — that ought to be free,” said Sen. Richard Turnley, D-Baton Rouge.

Those who voted against the Bares amendment which would have eliminated the $2.50 cane pole fee from the bill were:


Those voting for the amendment were:

Sens. Atkins, Bagneris, Bares, Barham, Ginn, Hudson, Johnson, McLeod, Poston, Rayburn, Tarver and Turnley.

Not voting were: Sens. Campbell, Cross, Jumonville, Picard, Saunders and Sevario.