**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 50-13-640 OF THE 1976 CODE, RELATING TO THE POSSESSION OF BLUE CATFISH, TO PROVIDE THAT IT IS UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS MORE THAN TWO BLUE CATFISH LONGER THAN THIRTY-TWO INCHES PER DAY IN LAKE MARION, LAKE MOULTRIE, OR THE UPPER REACH OF THE SANTEE RIVER, AND THE CONGAREE AND WATEREE RIVERS, AND TO PROVIDE FOR A DAILY CATCH LIMIT OF TWENTY-FIVE BLUE CATFISH A DAY IN LAKE MARION, LAKE MOULTRIE, AND THE UPPER REACH OF THE SANTEE RIVER; TO AMEND SECTION 50-9-1120(3) OF THE 1976 CODE, RELATING TO THE POINT SYSTEM FOR FISHING VIOLATIONS, TO PROVIDE THAT A VIOLATION OF BLUE CATFISH CATCH LIMITS IS FOURTEEN POINTS; AND TO REQUIRE THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES CONDUCT A STUDY OF THE BLUE CATFISH FISHERY IN THE SANTEE AND COOPER RIVER SYSTEMS.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Section 50-13-640 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 50-13-640. (A) It is unlawful to possess more than ~~one~~ two blue catfish (Ictalurus furcatus) greater than ~~thirty‑six~~ thirty-two inches in length in any one day in Lake Marion, Lake Moultrie, or the upper reach of the Santee River, and the Congaree and Wateree Rivers.

(B) It is unlawful to take more than twenty-five blue catfish (Ictalurus furcatus) a day in Lake Marion, Lake Moultrie, and the upper reach of the Santee River.

(C) A person violating the provisions of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than three hundred dollars or imprisoned not more than thirty days, or both.”

SECTION 2. Section 50-9-1120(3) of the 1976 Code is amended by adding an appropriately lettered new subitem to read:

“( ) taking or possessing more than the legal creel or size limit of blue catfish: 14.”

SECTION 3. The Department of Natural Resources shall conduct a study of the blue catfish fishery in the Santee and Cooper River systems and make recommendations to the General Assembly concerning the fishery on or before January 1, 2025.

SECTION 4. This act takes effect July 1, 2021.

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