

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1212

As Reported by House Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks

Title: An act relating to wildlife harvest reports.

Brief Description: Decriminalizing certain hunter reporting requirements.

Sponsors: Representative Upthegrove; by request of Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks: 2/3/05, 2/8/05 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Decriminalizes a hunter's failure to submit wildlife harvest information and replaces the penalty with a \$50 fee.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Upthegrove, Vice Chair; Buck, Ranking Minority Member; Kretz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Blake, DeBolt, Dickerson, Eickmeyer, Hunt, Orcutt and Williams.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

All individuals that hunt deer, elk, turkey, or bear are required to report their hunting successes or failures to the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) during the calendar year in which their hunting license applied. Activity reports can be submitted to the Department either by way of a toll free automated phone system or through the Department's internet website. If a hunter fails to submit his or her hunting activity report, then the Department may deny that hunter's application for a hunting license the following year until the report is completed.

In addition to having subsequent license applications denied, a hunter that fails to complete his or her harvest report may be prosecuted for a misdemeanor.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

It is no longer a misdemeanor to not submit harvest information required by the Department. Instead, the Fish and Wildlife Commission may levy an administrative penalty of up to \$50 per person against hunters that fail to submit a harvest effort report. The administrative penalty must be paid before the individual can be issued a hunting license in subsequent years.

The Department must prepare a report for the Legislature that details the effectiveness of the penalty in increasing compliance with reporting requirements.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill clarifies the administrative penalty is to be deposited into the State Wildlife Account, specifies that the \$50 penalty is the maximum that can be assessed to any one person, and requires the Department to submit a report to the Legislature that details the effectiveness of the penalty in increasing compliance with reporting requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Decriminalizing the failure to submit reports of hunting efforts makes sense because it provides a more efficient, effective, enforceable, and responsible approach. The requirement to submit harvest effort reports has been on the books for a number of years, but compliance rates have been dropping. Other measures to increase compliance have failed, including incentives, postcard reminders, and news releases.

The information provided in the reports is critical for the management of the state's wildlife. The data is used to assess populations and establish hunting seasons and levels. The penalty is not intended to generate revenue and will be set at the lowest value necessary to achieve the desired increased compliance.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Upthegrove, prime sponsor; and Dave Ware and Steve Pozzaghera, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.