WSR 26-17-029
EXPEDITED RULES
DEPARTMENT OF
FISH AND WILDLIFE

[Order 26-17—Filed August 10, 2026, 9:24 a.m.]

Title of Rule and Other Identifying Information: Clarify rule language and correct references in chapter 220-412 WAC.

Purpose of the Proposal and Its Anticipated Effects, Including Any Changes in Existing Rules: The purpose of this rule project is to clarify rule language in WAC 220-412-020 Hunter education deferral, and correct legal references in WAC 220-412-020 and 220-412-030 Master hunter permit program.

Reasons Supporting Proposal: The department of fish and wildlife (department) needs to clarify rule language in WAC 220-412-020 concerning the terms "licensed hunter or accompanying, nondeferred licensed hunter." In addition, the department seeks to correct RCW references in WAC 220-412-020 and 220-412-030.

Statutory Authority for Adoption: RCW 77.04.012, 77.04.055, 77.04.020, and 77.12.047.

Statute Being Implemented: RCW 77.04.012, 77.04.055, 77.04.020, and 77.12.047.

Rule is not necessitated by federal law, federal or state court decision.

Name of Proponent: Department of fish and wildlife, governmental.

Name of Agency Personnel Responsible for Drafting and Implementation: David Whipple, 1111 Washington Street S.E., Olympia, WA 98501, 564-200-4595; Enforcement: Chief Michael Jewell, 1111 Washington Street S.E., Olympia, WA 98501, 360-902-2502.

This notice meets the following criteria to use the expedited adoption process for these rules:

Corrects typographical errors, makes address or name changes, or clarifies language of a rule without changing its effect.

Explanation of the Reason the Agency Believes the Expedited Rule-Making Process is Appropriate: The department needs to correct rules in chapter 220-412 WAC, as allowed under RCW 34.05.353.

NOTICE

THIS RULE IS BEING PROPOSED UNDER AN EXPEDITED RULE-MAKING PROCESS THAT WILL ELIMINATE THE NEED FOR THE AGENCY TO HOLD PUBLIC HEARINGS, PREPARE A SMALL BUSINESS ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT, OR PROVIDE RESPONSES TO THE CRITERIA FOR A SIGNIFICANT LEGISLATIVE RULE. IF YOU OBJECT TO THIS USE OF THE EXPEDITED RULE-MAKING PROCESS, YOU MUST EXPRESS YOUR OBJECTIONS IN WRITING AND THEY MUST BE SENT TO Scott Bird, Department of Fish and Wildlife, P.O. Box 43200, Olympia, WA 98501, phone 360-902-2403, email rules.coordinator@dfw.wa.gov, web https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/regulations/development, BEGINNING August 7, 2026, at 5 p.m. AND RECEIVED BY October 19, 2026, at 5 p.m.

August 7, 2026
Scott Bird
Rules Coordinator

RDS-7296.2

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 25-20-035, filed 9/23/25, effective 10/24/25)

WAC 220-412-020 Hunter education deferral. (1) Pursuant to RCW 77.32.155, individuals may apply for a director-authorized, once in a lifetime, one-license-year deferral of hunter education training. To qualify, the applicant for deferral and his or her accompanying, licensed hunter must comply with the following requirements:

(a) The applicant for deferral must:

(i) Be at least 10 years of age when applying for the deferral; and

(ii) Not have failed the hunter education training course within the previous 12 months, if he or she took the course.

(b) The accompanying, nondeferred licensed hunter, as defined in RCW 77.32.155, must be at least 18 years of age.

(c) To provide maximum supervision and to enhance safety afield, an accompanying, licensed hunter must supervise only one deferred hunter while afield.

(d) An accompanying hunter must remain close enough to the deferred hunter to have uninterrupted, unaided visual and auditory communication with the deferred hunter.

(2) Application procedures.

(a) Applicants for deferral must submit their applications to the department's hunter education division office in Olympia, Washington. Applications submitted without the required information will not be processed and will be returned to the applicant.

(b) Applicants for deferral must submit a nonrefundable application fee in the amount set forth in RCW ((~~77.32.570 and 77.12.810~~)) 77.32.610.

(c) Deferral applications will be on forms prescribed by the department and may be made available to the public in both printed and electronic formats.

(3) License purchases.

(a) Individuals granted a deferral under this section will be authorized to purchase hunting licenses and tags for the license year during which the applicant requested a deferral. An applicant will not be authorized for future hunting license purchases in Washington state without first successfully completing a hunter education training course.

(b) Individuals deferred under this administrative regulation:

(i) Must purchase hunting licenses and tags in accordance with current licensing procedures;

(ii) Must pay all hunting license and tag fees established under current law; and

(iii) Are only eligible to participate in general hunting seasons and/or youth opportunities.

(4) If either the deferred ((~~education licensee or the required nondeferred accompanying person~~)) licensed hunter or the accompanying, nondeferred licensed hunter, hunting under the authority of RCW 77.32.155(2), is convicted of a violation of this title, except for a violation of unlawful hunting of wild birds, RCW 77.15.400 (1) through (3), the department may revoke all hunting licenses and tags and order a suspension of one or both the deferred ((~~education licensee and the nondeferred accompanying person's~~)) licensed hunter and the accompanying, nondeferred licensed hunter, hunting privileges for one year.

RDS-7351.1

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 25-20-032, filed 9/23/25, effective 10/24/25)

WAC 220-412-030 Master hunter permit program. (1) In order to effectively manage wildlife in areas or at times when a higher proficiency and demonstrated skill level are needed for resource protection or public safety, the department establishes the master hunter permit program.

(2) The master hunter permit program emphasizes safe, ethical, responsible, and lawful hunting practices. Program goals include improving the public's perception of hunting and perpetuating the highest hunting standards. A master hunter permit is required to participate in controlled hunts to eliminate problem animals that damage property or threaten public safety.

(a) The cost of initially applying for a master hunter permit and the cost of renewing a master hunter permit is established in chapters 77.12 and 77.32 RCW.

(b) The department shall determine the program's requirements and curriculum. The director shall establish an advisory group to assist agency staff in developing and managing the program.

(3) Master hunters are held to the highest ethical standards because these hunters are ambassadors for the department and are role models and mentors for the hunting community and for the public at large. Initial master hunter permit applicants must submit to a criminal background check. The department shall deny entry into the master hunter permit program to those applicants who have:

(a) Paid the required fine or been convicted within the last 10 years of a chapter 77.15 RCW offense;

(b) Paid the required fine or been convicted within the last 10 years of criminal trespass, reckless endangerment, criminal conspiracy, or making a false statement to law enforcement, while hunting, fishing, or engaging in any activity regulated by the department;

(c) Prior felonies prohibiting the possession of firearms, unless firearm possession is reinstated; or

(d) A current hunting or fishing license revocation or a current suspension of hunting or fishing license privileges in Washington or in another state.

(4) Master hunter permit applicants will be required to sign and abide by a hunter code of ethics and pass a comprehensive examination based upon study materials provided by the department. An initial master hunter permit applicant found to have submitted fraudulent information to the department or to have cheated on the master hunter examination will be excluded from the master hunter permit program for life.

(5) Initial master hunter permit applicants who successfully complete the master hunter permit program will receive a master hunter patch and a master hunter permit. The initial master hunter permit is valid for five consecutive years from the date of issuance. The permit may be renewed for additional five-year increments if, during each five-year period of validity, the master hunter fulfills the renewal requirements established by the department.

(6) Master hunters renewing their permit shall authorize the department to conduct a criminal background check each time they renew. The criminal background check will go back five years from the master

hunter's anniversary date or back to the date this rule amendment was adopted, whichever period of time is shorter. The department's approval will be determined by compliance with this section.

(7) Persons who successfully complete the master hunter permit program and maintain the requirements developed by the department may participate in special hunts. These master hunters must possess a valid master hunter permit while participating in the hunts.

(8) The department shall suspend a master hunter's permit for life if the master hunter:

(a) Pays the required fine or is convicted of a chapter 77.15 RCW misdemeanor, gross misdemeanor, or felony;

(b) Pays the required fine or is convicted of criminal trespass, reckless endangerment, criminal conspiracy, or making a false statement to law enforcement, while hunting, fishing, or engaging in any activity regulated by the department;

(c) Pays the required fine or is convicted of a felony prohibiting the possession of firearms, unless firearm possession is reinstated;

(d) Has their hunting or fishing license revoked, or hunting or fishing license privileges suspended in Washington or in another state; or

(e) Submitted fraudulent information to the department.

(9) A master hunter who pays the required fine or is found to have committed an infraction under chapter 77.15 RCW or the department's rules shall have their master hunter permit suspended for a period of two years.

(10) If a master hunter is cited, or charged by complaint, for a chapter 77.15 RCW offense; or for trespass, reckless endangerment, criminal conspiracy, or making a false statement to law enforcement, while hunting, fishing, or engaging in any activity regulated by the department, the department may immediately suspend the person's master hunter permit until the offense has been adjudicated.

(11) The department's master hunter coordinator will maintain open communications with landowners and the community. The department will investigate written accusations about master hunters and determine whether such complaints have merit and warrant enforcement action.

(12) Except under subsection (10) of this section, if a master hunter has their initial or renewal master hunter permit suspended for less than life, and the person wants to become a master hunter again, the person must repeat the entire master hunter permit application process once the suspension period is over.

(13) Any person who has been denied initial admission into the master hunter permit program, renewal of a master hunter permit, or has had a master hunter permit suspended, has the right to an administrative hearing to contest the agency action. Such hearing will be held pursuant to chapter 34.05 RCW, the Administrative Procedure Act. Initial master hunter permit applicants who fail to submit the application fee or who submit an incomplete application will have their application returned. Denial of admission on these grounds does not trigger the right to an administrative hearing.

(14) "Conviction," as used in this section, is defined in RCW 77.15.050.

(15) It is unlawful for any person to hunt in a hunt restricted to master hunters if such person has not successfully been admitted into the master hunter permit program and maintained the requirements set forth in this section, or if the person's master hunter permit has

been suspended. Master hunters need a valid master hunter permit and a valid hunting license and tag to hunt in master hunter restricted hunts. "To hunt," as used in this section, is defined as "an effort to kill, injure, capture, or harass a wild animal or wild bird," pursuant to RCW 77.08.010((~~(53)~~)) (73). Master hunters who have been issued a disabled hunter permit by the department may only hunt with a designated hunter companion who has been admitted into the master hunter permit program and maintained the requirements under this section.

(16) Only Washington residents, as defined in RCW 77.08.010((~~(39)~~)) (55), may apply for an initial master hunter permit.