

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1235

As of March 20, 2023

Title: An act relating to modifying miscellaneous provisions impacting department of fish and wildlife licensing requirements.

Brief Description: Modifying miscellaneous provisions impacting department of fish and wildlife licensing requirements.

Sponsors: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Chapman, Kretz, Tharinger and Lekanoff).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/8/23, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 3/20/23.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Changes the age at which a person qualifies as a youth for fishing licenses from age 15 to under age 16 and eliminates the \$5 youth fishing license fee.
- Allows the use of temporary freshwater fishing licenses for the lowland lakes fishing season opener.
- Makes various changes to hunter education and residency requirements for hunting and fishing licenses.
- Authorizes the creation and sale of a multi-year combination license at a fee lower than the combined cost of the licenses.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Background: Authority of the Fish and Wildlife Commission and Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) operates under a statutory mandate to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage Washington's wildlife, food fish, game fish, and shellfish. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) has been delegated the responsibility to carry out this mandate at the direction of the Commission, which includes establishing basic rules and regulations governing the time, place, manner, and methods used to harvest or enjoy fish and wildlife. As a part of this responsibility, DFW issues various licensing documents, including licenses, tags, endorsements, and permits for hunting and fishing in Washington. Certain hunting and fishing licenses and permits come with a vehicle access pass that allow the license or permit holder to access DFW lands.

Fishing Licenses. To fish in Washington, individuals age 15 and older must purchase a fishing license. Categories of fishing licenses include freshwater licenses, saltwater licenses, catch record cards, and annual and temporary combination licenses. There are several endorsements, stamps, permits, or other surcharges required for particular activities in addition to a fishing license. Fee amounts for fishing licenses, stamps, permits, and endorsements are set in statute with separate rates for state residents, nonresidents, and youth. A Family Fishing Weekend license allows up to six anglers, a combination of one or two residents plus four or five youth, to fish during specified times. Temporary combination fishing licenses are not valid for the opening day of the lowland lake fishing season, unless the license holder is an active-duty resident military personnel.

Hunter Education. There are separate hunting licenses and endorsements for big game, small game, and certain other species for both general season hunting and special hunts. There are separate rates for state residents, nonresidents, and youth under age 16, and those amounts are set in statute.

All individuals born after January 1, 1972, must show proof of completion of a hunter education course before purchasing a hunting license for the first time. The course must include at least ten hours of instruction covering firearms and outdoor safety, hunter responsibility, and wildlife management. Members of the United States military and certain current or retired law enforcement officers who complete the online hunter education course are exempt from the field firearms skills portion.

Reduced Rate Licenses. Certain hunting and fishing licenses are available at reduced rates to certain disabled veterans and individuals with disabilities. State residents who meet the criteria may receive a fishing license for \$5, or a state hunting license for the price of a youth participant of that license. Nonstate residents may purchase a license at the same prices as a nondisabled Washington resident. To qualify for these reduced rates, the individual must:

- be an honorably discharged veteran who is at least 65 years old and who has a service-related disability of any kind;
- be an honorably discharged veteran of any age who has a 30 percent or greater service-related disability;

- have a disability that results in the permanent use of a wheelchair, blindness or another visual impairment; or
- have a developmental disability.

Electronic Licensing Documents. In 2022, the Legislature authorized the Commission to develop rules allowing the issuance and use of electronic hunting and recreational fishing license documents.

Summary of Bill: Combination Licenses and Promotions. The Commission may create and sell combination licenses spanning one or more license years for all hunting and fishing activities at or below the total cost of individual licenses included in the package, and the director of DFW (director) may offer temporary discounted promotional pricing to increase fishing, hunting, or wildlife viewing participation.

Fishing Licenses. The youth age for the purposes of acquiring a fishing license is changed from age 15 to under age 16. Youth fishing license fees and the family fishing weekend license are eliminated. A temporary combination fishing license may be used for the opening day of the lowland lake fishing season. Vehicle access passes may be issued to a person who purchases a current valid personal use shellfish and seaweed license.

Hunter Education. Current or retired members of the United States military and current or retired peace officers are exempt from the firearms skills portion of online hunter education courses. The requirement to complete ten hours of hunter safety instruction is modified to apply to any person who completes a course of instruction that is offered in-person.

The ability for the director to authorize a once in a lifetime, one license-year deferral of hunter education training for individuals who are accompanied by a nondeferred Washington-licensed hunter is modified so:

- the requirement that the licensed hunter has held a license for the prior three years is removed; and
- the license holder must be at least, rather than over, 18 years of age.

The Commission may offer a one-time hunting license discount up to \$20 for first-time resident hunters who have completed the Washington hunter education program.

Reduced Rate Licenses. Certain residency and reduced-rate license provisions are modified so the following additional individuals qualify for nondisabled state resident rates for hunting licenses and combination fishing licenses:

- active-duty members of the United States military, their spouses, and their children age 18 or under;
- nonstate residents who are full-time post-secondary students enrolled at a college or university in Washington, their spouses, and their children age 18 or under;
- the spouses and children age 18 or under of nonstate residents who qualify for resident rates due to a military service connected disability or developmental

- disability; and
- members of federally recognized Indian tribes who are state residents must be issued a fishing license for \$5 and hunting licenses for the reduced youth rates upon written application to DFW.

Electronic Licensing Documents. A person is responsible for any damage caused to their portable electronic device when they use it to present electronic licensing documents authorized by the Commission.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on March 17, 2023.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill streamlines processes and provides incentives for getting a hunting and fishing license. Participation rates for hunting and fishing are down, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife supports efforts to recruit hunters and fishers. Hunting and fishing generate a significant amount of economic activity while providing opportunities for recreation and sources of food. While the bill contains a number of license fee reductions, don't forget the tribes. Tribes have a long history of hunting, fishing, and gathering, and the cost of license fees impact tribal members ability to participate in those activities.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Robin Torner, Cowlitz Indian Tribe; Amy Brackenbury; Rachel Blomker, WDFW.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.