FINAL BILL REPORT
SSB 5583

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning recreational fishing and hunting licenses.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Liias, Robinson and Nobles).

Senate Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources
Senate Committee on Ways & Means
House Committee on Appropriations

Background: The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) is responsible for managing the state's fish and wildlife resources, and establishes basic rules and regulations governing the time, place, manner, and methods used to harvest fish and wildlife. As a part of this responsibility, DFW issues licenses, tags, endorsements, and permits for hunting and fishing in Washington. Most revenue from licenses, tags, and endorsements is directed either to the Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Account or one of several enhancement accounts.

Categories of fishing licenses include freshwater licenses, saltwater licenses, and 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. A catch record card is required to fish for salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, or Puget Sound Dungeness crab. There is no charge for the first catch record card, and subsequent catch record cards are $11 each. Individuals age 15 and older must purchase a fishing license. Youth under age 15 are not required to purchase fishing licenses; however, to fish for salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, or Puget Sound Dungeness crab, youth must hold a catch record card and, if applicable, a Puget Sound Dungeness crab endorsement. The catch record card and crab endorsement are free of charge for youth under age 15. A resident senior, a person 70 years old or older, may purchase certain fishing licenses at a reduced rate.

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

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state residents, nonresidents, and youth under age 16, and those amounts are set in statute.

A hunter or fisher that fails to report their harvest is subject to an administrative penalty of no more than $10. The penalty must be paid before a new hunting license, catch record card, or Dungeness Crab endorsement may be issued.

Summary: Recreational hunting and fishing license fees are increased by approximately 38 percent overall, with exceptions to limit the increase on senior residents and for certain packages of licenses. Senior rates are established for hunting licenses, offering an estimated 66 percent discount from the regular license fee.

Examples of modified fees for popular resident hunting and fishing licenses are as follows:

License	Current Fee	New Resident Fee	New Senior Resident Fee
big game deer/elk/bear/cougar	$85	$117.30	$39.88
big game deer/elk	$75	$103.50	$35.19
big game deer	$39	$53.82	$18.30
small game	$35	$48.30	$16.42
turkey tag	$14	$19.32	$6.57
combination fishing	$45.50	$62.79	$21.39
freshwater	$25	$34.50	$6.90
saltwater	$25.50	$35.19	$7.59

These amounts do not include dealer or transaction fees.

For fishing licenses, the definition of youth is changed from under age 15 to under age 16. Modifications are made to the harvest reporting requirements to ensure that those failing to report are subject to the administrative penalty for not reporting. The Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) may adopt rules to offer a one-time discount up to $20 on a first-time resident hunting license for those who have completed the Hunter Education Program.

A migratory bird authorization is required for all persons to hunt band-tailed pigeon, brant, sea duck, snow goose, and southwest Canada goose.

The Commission may, by rule, allow persons to apply for multiple season hunting season

permits as well as for special hunting quality permits.

Enhancement programs and a portion of the Puget Sound Dungeness crab endorsement must receive the following percentages, rather than specific dollar amounts:

- 2 percent of the revenue from each small game hunting license fee will be deposited in the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Account;
- 6.8 percent of all freshwater and combination fishing licenses will be deposited into the Warm Water Game Fish Account;
- 12 percent of all saltwater and combination fishing licenses will be deposited into the Recreational Fisheries Enhancement Account;
- 2.3 percent of all saltwater, freshwater, and combination fishing licenses will be deposited into the Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group Account;
- 1.8 percent of all saltwater and combination fishing licenses will be deposited into the Rockfish Research Account; and
- 11 percent of the revenue from each Puget Sound Dungeness crab endorsement is dedicated to the removal and disposal of derelict shellfish gear.

In addition to a small game license, a turkey tag is required to hunt for turkey. Two-thirds of the moneys received from turkey tags must be appropriated solely for turkey or upland game bird management.

The Commission may adopt rules to offer license packages and discounted promotional opportunities. The DFW director may offer temporary discounted promotional pricing to increase participation in fishing, hunting, or wildlife viewing.

The Commission may set an administrative penalty amount for a hunter or fisher that fails to report their harvest. The penalty must be paid before a new hunting license, catch record card, or Puget Sound Dungeness crab endorsement may be issued.

The Commission may apply a surcharge on license fees to fund compensation, central service, and other increased operating costs approved by the Legislature in the biennial budget. The surcharge may not exceed the percentage increase needed to generate revenue to offset the increased costs and must apply equally to all fees, except the surcharge does not apply to transaction fees, commercial application fees, and dealer fees.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	25	24
House	51	46

Effective: July 1, 2025
September 1, 2027 (Section 18)