

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1850

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Revenue*

Title: An act relating to hunting and fishing licenses.

Brief Description: Raising various hunting and fishing fees.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Wang and Holland; by request of Department of Wildlife and Office of Financial Management.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Revenue, March 10, 1991, DPS.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
REVENUE**

Majority Report: *That Substitute House Bill No. 1850 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.* Signed by 10 members: Representatives Wang, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair; Holland, Ranking Minority Member; Appelwick; Belcher; Day; Leonard; Morris; Phillips; and Rust.

Minority Report: *Do not pass.* Signed by 5 members: Representatives Wynne, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Brumsickle; Morton; Silver; and Van Luven.

Staff: Rick Peterson (786-7150).

Background: Nearly half, 47.9 percent, of the Department of Wildlife's budget is funded by hunting and fishing license fees. Hunting and fishing license fees were most recently increased in 1985. Increases also occurred in 1982, 1976 and 1971.

The license sales have declined in the last 10 years. A number of factors explain this decline: increased population density, increased urbanization of the population, changing family structure and aging of the state's population. License sales will continue to decline in the future.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Hunting and fishing license fees are increased by approximately 25 percent. The most popular resident hunting and fishing licenses are increased as follows: combined hunting and fishing from \$24.00 to \$30.00; hunting from \$12.00 to \$15.00; deer tag from \$15.00

to \$19.00; elk tag from \$20.00 to \$25.00; waterfowl stamp from \$5.00 to \$7.00; fishing from \$14.00 to \$18.00; and steelhead card from \$15.00 to \$19.00. See the bill for details on increases for nonresidents and other categories of fees.

Free fishing licenses for residents 70 years and older are eliminated and replaced with a \$3 fee. New fees are established for lynx tags, \$225 resident and \$375 nonresident.

License fees are to be adjusted annually by the Department of Wildlife for inflation. Changes in fees are to be rounded up to the nearest dollar. The Department of Wildlife is directed to study fees levels and recommend adjustments to the Legislature.

This bill is null and void unless both it and SHB 1250, the business tax on the manufacture, wholesale and retailing of outdoor recreational equipment, are referenced in the Omnibus Budget Bill.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill increased hunting and fishing fees by about 40 percent. Some license fees were increased by an amount significantly greater than or less than the average 40 percent increase. The substitute bill increases fees across the board by 25 percent and then rounds the fee amount up to the next dollar. The inflation adjustment is set at the lower of the growth in the implicit price deflator or 5 percent. The fishing license fee for those over 70 is reduced from \$9.00 in the original bill to \$3.00. The null and void clause is added.

Fiscal Note: Requested March 12, 1991.

Appropriation: None.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect July 1, 1991.

Testimony For: The license fee increase is necessary to support the budget of the Department of Wildlife.

Testimony Against: The license fee increase is necessary to support the budget of the Department of Wildlife, however, additional funding sources should be found. Note: SHB 1250 raises money for the wildlife fund through a tax on outdoor recreational equipment. The fee increases in the original bill should be changed to an across the board increase. Note: the substitute bill does this. The hunters and fishers cannot be expected to pay the costs of nongame

programs through license fee increases. The general fund should make a greater contribution to the support of these nongame programs. The money available to support the Department of Wildlife operating budget has been reduced through diverting interest earnings on the Wildlife Fund, creation of new capital projects and reduction of general fund contributions for habitat management. Many expressed a willingness to support license fee increases once these issues are addressed.

Witnesses: James L. Brummett, Sportsmen's Advocate (con); Jeff Parsons, National Audubon Society (pro); Charles Cheshire, Vancouver Wildlife League (pro); Ronald J. Holtcamp, Trout Unlimited Olympia (pro and con); Cliff Kuppinger, West Bass (con); Daniel Werner, Vancouver Wildlife; Ted Cowan, KC Outdoor Sports Council (con); Gene Knowles, Issaquah Sportsmen's Club (con); Bill Robinson, Trout Unlimited; Jim King, Washington State Sportsmens Council (con); Mark Graham, Washington State Bowhunters (pro); Jon Akers, Washington State Bowhunters; Rob Allen, Washington State Association of Bow Hunters (pro); John F. Rolle, Vancouver Wildlife (pro); Bill Jones, Wildcat Steelhead & HUB Sportsmens Club; Arnold Livingston, seniors; Jeff Parsons, National Audubon Society (all pro); and Curt Smitch, Washington Department of Wildlife (pro).