
General Government Appropriations & Oversight Committee

HB 2217

Brief Description: Concerning the discover pass.

Sponsors: Representatives Hurst, Dahlquist and Kristiansen.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides that the final cost for the Discover Pass permit is thirty dollars and the Day-use permit is ten dollars.
- Prohibits dealer fees from being collected on the sale of a Discover Pass or Day-use permit.
- Allows for one Discover Pass or one Vehicle Access Pass to be used among motor vehicles registered at the same address.

Hearing Date: 1/26/12

Staff: Michael Bennion (786-7118).

Background:

The Washington State Parks system, the fourth oldest in the nation, includes 117 developed parks on over 100,000 total acres. Each year, the system sees well over 40 million visitors, with many using one of the over 2,000 modern camping sites or other overnight accommodation, group facilities, or simply to recreate.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the State Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks) are charged with managing the public lands of the state. The WDFW owns or manages nearly one million acres of public land for fish and wildlife, habitat conservation, and wildlife-related recreation. The DNR protects and manages 5.6 million acres of state-owned land.

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

Until July 1, 2011, there was no charge to the public for access to both DNR or State Parks land and recreational sites. The WDFW charged \$10 for the annual fish and wildlife lands vehicle use permit, or the permit was provided free of charge with all hunting and fishing licenses.

State Parks have historically been funded with varying levels of state general fund. In response to reductions in general fund support and in an effort to make State Parks self-supporting, agency request and subsequently enacted legislation in 2011 created the Discover Pass permit as a way to increase contributions from users.

Discover Pass Permit

The Discover Pass allows for vehicle access in designated recreational areas located on state lands owned or managed by the DNR, the WDFW, and the State Parks. The Discover Pass is the only pass needed to access recreational sites such as trailheads, parking areas, winter recreation areas, boat launches, and water trails. Visitors wishing to park on state recreational lands must obtain an annual Discover Pass or a Day-use permit allowing vehicle access for one calendar day. Holders of certain hunting and fishing licenses on WDFW recreation lands and water-access sites do not need a Discover Pass if they possess a WDFW provided Vehicle Access Pass.

The Discover Pass permit is valid for one vehicle for twelve months from the point of purchase at a cost of \$30, while a Day-use permit costs \$10. Every four years, the Office of Financial Management must review the cost of the permits and recommend to the legislature any adjustment to account for inflation.

A Discover Pass permit can be purchased through the Department of Licensing (DOL) at the time of vehicle registration, through the WDFW's automated licensing system, over the telephone, at nearly 600 retail sporting goods and recreational license dealers, at agency headquarters in Olympia, or at the actual park. With the exception of permits purchased in-person, a ten percent transaction fee is applied to each purchase to recover costs for computer system development and maintenance, dealer sales terminals and supplies, customer service, dealer training and support, financial accounting, and reporting of sales transactions. There is a \$2 dealer fee on each annual permit or \$.50 on each Day-use permit transaction that is paid to retail outlets as incentive to sell the Discover Pass or to offset the costs associated with Internet and telephone sales, including processing of credit card transactions, postage and the time to print and mail the permit documents to those who have purchased the pass online or by phone.

Proceeds from Discover Pass

Revenue from the Discover Pass and Day-use permits is deposited into the Recreation Access Pass Account. The first \$71 million in revenue is distributed as such:

- 8 percent is deposited into the State Wildlife Account (WDFW);
- 8 percent is deposited into Park Land Trust Revolving Account (DNR); and
- 84 percent is deposited into State Parks' Parks Renewal & Stewardship Account.

All revenues exceeding \$71 million each fiscal biennium are distributed equally amongst the agencies.

Revenue to State Parks is intended to recover the loss of state general fund support. Each agency is allowed broad uses for their portion of the overall revenue, with proceeds generally directed towards the maintenance and operations of their respective lands.

The Discover Pass and Day-use permit are not considered a fee under the Recreational Immunity Statute for purposes of liability.

Summary of Bill:

The final cost of the annual Discover Pass permit is \$30, and for the Day-use permit the final cost is \$10. No dealer fees are permitted for the sale of either permit. Any vendor transaction fee would come from the stated value of the permit.

Removes the requirement of only one motor vehicle per Discover Pass and Vehicle Access Pass, and allows for both to be transferrable between vehicles registered at the same address.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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