
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 2460

Brief Description: Regarding fish and wildlife law enforcement.

Sponsors: Representatives Blake, Chandler, Hurst, Lytton, Takko, Wilcox, Kretz, Warnick, Tharinger and Tarleton; by request of Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Makes a number of changes related to the enforcement policies of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the crimes primarily enforced by the WDFW.

Hearing Date: 1/23/14

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Law Enforcement.

The enforcement officers of the WDFW are general authority peace officers. This status authorizes the WDFW to enforce all criminal laws in the state. In addition to the WDFW law enforcement officers, the laws contained in Title 77 may be enforced by ex-officio officers. These are certain law enforcement officers from different jurisdictions who are recognized to enforce fish and wildlife laws.

Unlawful Trade in Shark Fins.

A person commits the crime of unlawful trade in shark fins if that person offers to or does sell, purchase, or otherwise exchange a shark fin or derivative product for commercial purposes, or

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prepares or processes a shark fin or derivative product for human or animal consumption for commercial purposes.

There are two exemptions to the crime of unlawful trade in shark fins. First, a person may take, possess, sell, or purchase sharks or shark parts to conduct research or education activities under a WDFW permit without being liable for unlawful trade in shark fins. Second, a person is not liable for the unlawful trade in shark fins for the offer to sell, purchase, or otherwise exchange for commercial purposes of shark fins or derivative products lawfully harvested or acquired before July 22, 2011.

Criminal wildlife penalty assessments.

Criminal wildlife penalty assessments are assessed to a person convicted of the unlawful taking of certain wildlife species. In addition to the underlying criminal sanctions, an additional charge of between \$2,000 and \$12,000 may be assessed. The assessment must be doubled if the person kills one of the identified species within five years of conviction of another significant wildlife-related crime or if the animal was killed with the intent of deriving economic profit. The assessment money is dedicated to the Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Reward Account and used by the WDFW for enforcement efforts.

Fish buyers.

A fish buyer is a person employed by a wholesale fish dealer to purchase food fish or shellfish from a licensed commercial fisher. A fish buyer's license is required to serve as a fish buyer for a wholesale enterprise. A fish buyer is subject to specified accounting requirements and the WDFW is authorized to search a fish buyer's operations without first obtaining a warrant.

Unlawful taking for endangered or protected fish and wildlife.

It is unlawful to hunt for, fish for, possess, or maliciously harass fish and wildlife that has been designated as endangered or protected. This extends to the malicious destructions of nests and eggs. This crime can be prosecuted as either a misdemeanor, gross misdemeanor, or a felony, depending on the status of the fish or wildlife injured and the perpetrator's history of convictions.

Unlawful use of a dog.

A person may be found guilty of unlawful use of dogs if the person negligently fails to prevent a dog under the person's control from pursuing, harassing, attacking, or killing deer, elk, moose, caribou, mountain sheep, or animals classified as endangered, or if the person uses a dog to hunt deer or elk. The WDFW may take a dog into custody or destroy the dog if there is a reasonable belief that the dog is being used to pursue, harass, attack, or kill a snow bound animal.

Summary of Bill:

WDFW Law Enforcement.

The authority for a WDFW officer to require a person aged 16 or older to display photo identification is expanded to ex official officers as well. Similarly, authority is also expanded to

ex officio officers to direct a person to stop at a WDFW check station and produce all hunting and fishing equipment for inspection.

Unlawful Trade in Shark Fins.

The exemption that allows a person to offer to or sell, purchase, or otherwise exchange for commercial purposes lawfully harvested or acquired before July 22, 2011 is removed.

Criminal wildlife penalty assessments.

New criminal wildlife penalty assessments are established for certain fish species. These are assessments that must be paid in addition to any underlying criminal sanctions. The added species are white sturgeon longer than 55 inches (\$2,000 assessment) and wild salmon or steelhead (\$500 assessment). This assessment must be applied jointly and severally if more than one person is convicted of catching the same fish. These assessments must be doubled if the underlying violation occurs within 5 years of a previous gross misdemeanor or felony conviction related to fish and wildlife violations or if the trier of fact determines that the sturgeon or salmon were taken with the intent to derive economic profit.

The WDFW is required to revoke the fishing license of anyone who incurs an assessment and suspend that person's fishing privileges until the assessment is paid.

Fish buyer.

The definition of fish buyer is expanded to include wholesale fish dealers and sellers who directly purchase fish or shellfish from a commercial fisher or who receives fish or shellfish in interstate commerce or from a foreign nation. This new class of individual is required to obtain a fish buyer's license and is subject to the accounting and warrant provisions applicable to all fish buyers. The requirement to have a license is expanded to all of those who buy from all commercial fishers.

Unlawful taking of endangered or protected fish and wildlife.

The elements of the crimes of unlawful taking for endangered or protected fish and wildlife are changed. To be prosecuted, a person no longer has to be found to have maliciously destroyed the eggs or nest of a protected or endangered species. Instead, the mental state that must be proven is that the person did so knowingly. However, the destruction of nests is limited to nests that are being actively used or that are likely to be reused annually even if empty at the time of the act.

Unlawful use of a dog.

The limitation that an animal being attacked by a dog must be snow bound before the WDFW can confiscate or destroy the dog is removed. In addition, clarity is provided that using dogs consistent with WDFW-approved hazing activity is not considered unlawful.

Other enforcement provisions.

A number of other enforcement-related changes are made. These include:

- specification that a member of the armed services must be on active duty and not retired in order to be considered a state resident for the purposes of hunting and fishing unless that person satisfies one of the other criteria for residency;
- adding the mental element of "reckless" to violations of the prohibition on wasting fish and wildlife;
- makes failure to maintain wildlife rehabilitation records and reports a civil infraction;
- updates and changes certain verbs that are associated with fish and wildlife crimes (i.e. "killing" to "taking," and "taking" to "removing");
- extends the crime of unlawful trapping to include wild birds;
- adds "possessing" to the list of unlawful verbs associated with introducing live plants and animals into the state (added to a list that contains "releasing", "planting", and "placing");
- differentiates between white and green sturgeon as it applies to unlawful recreational fishing (all green sturgeon are unlawful while only white sturgeon of a certain size are unlawful);
- declares a public nuisance any article or device used for harassing fish or wildlife;
- updates elements of the crime of unlawful fish and shellfish accounting to reflect the act of delivering fish and shellfish (not just receiving);
- expands the definition of "vessel" as it applies to approaching an orca and establishes a \$500 fine for violating orca-related provisions;
- creates criminal liability for possessing fish or wildlife known to be taken in violation of another state or county's laws and for engaging in wildlife rehabilitation without a permit; and
- makes permanent the option to conduct a pilot project that allows a non-tribal member to fish on Lake Rufus Woods under a license issued by the Colville Indian tribe.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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