

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2505

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to increasing participation in recreational fishing and hunting.

Brief Description: Increasing participation in recreational fishing and hunting.

Sponsors: Representatives Blake, Orcutt, Walsh, Chapman, Dent, Stanford, Muri, Hayes, Eslick, Shea, Tharinger and Young; by request of Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/17/18, 1/24/18 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Changes the age at which a person qualifies as a "youth" for fishing licenses from age 15 to under age 16, and removes the requirement for youth to obtain a license in order to fish.
- Allows the use of temporary freshwater fishing licenses for the lowland lakes fishing season opening day.
- Authorizes the Fish and Wildlife Commission to create multi-year license packages and authorizes the Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife to offer temporary license fee discounts.
- Creates a one-time discount on the purchase of the first hunting license for new hunters upon completion of hunter education training.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Chapman, Vice Chair; Buys, Ranking Minority Member; Dent, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Fitzgibbon, Lytton, Orcutt, Pettigrew, Robinson, Schmick, Springer, Stanford and Walsh.

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

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.

Background:

Licenses.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) is responsible for managing the state's fish and wildlife resources and 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, the Department issues licenses, tags, endorsements, and permits for hunting and fishing in Washington. Individuals age 15 and older must purchase a fishing license, and there is a reduced fee for youth age 15. Youth under age 15 are not required to purchase fishing licenses or endorsements in order to fish. A Family Fishing Weekend license allows for up to six anglers, a combination of one or two residents plus four or five youth, to fish during specified times determined by Department rule. The license fee is \$20.

A person may purchase an annual or temporary freshwater, saltwater, or combination freshwater and saltwater fishing license (combination license). Temporary combination licenses are valid for a period of one to three consecutive days. In addition to a base freshwater or combination license, a Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement (Endorsement) is required in order to fish for salmon and steelhead on the Columbia River and its tributaries. An annual freshwater or combination license is required to fish during the first eight days of the lowland lakes fishing season. Only active duty military personnel may fish during the first eight days of the lowland lakes fishing season with a temporary license.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) may create and sell combined license packages for hunting or fishing activities at or below the total cost of individual licenses included in the package.

Hunter Education.

All individuals born after January 1, 1972, must show proof that they have completed a hunter education course before purchasing a hunting license for the first time. The course must include at least 10 hours of instruction covering firearms and outdoor safety, hunter responsibility, and wildlife management. To receive proof of completion, a person must pass an exam, either in a classroom setting or online, and demonstrate safe firearms handling skills in the field. Members of the United States military and certain law enforcement officers who complete the online hunter education course are exempt from the field firearms skills portion.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Licenses.

The age at which a person qualifies as a "youth" for the purposes of purchasing fishing licenses is changed from age 15 to under age 16, and individuals under age 16 are not required to purchase fishing licenses or endorsements. Temporary combination fishing licenses are valid for the opening day of lowland lakes fishing season. The Commission may authorize multi-year license packages as combined license packages. The Director the Department may offer temporary promotional license discounts. The Family Fishing Weekend license is deleted.

Hunter Education.

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

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The Family Fishing Weekend license and the youth fees for combination fishing licenses and the Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead licenses are deleted.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on January 25, 2018.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This is an agency request bill, and a long-term effort to increase participation in hunting and fishing. Recreational hunting and fishing are popular activities and significant economic drivers in Washington, particularly in rural areas. The bill reduces some barriers to hunting and fishing, and incorporates some changes brought up last session, including aligning the youth age for hunting and fishing licenses, and providing a discount on the first hunting license after completing the hunter education training program. There are 11,000 people who complete hunter education each year; however only about 3,000 people buy a license. While the bill will reduce revenue in the short term, the Department anticipates the changes will increase recruitment and retention of hunters and fishers.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Blake, prime sponsor; Tom Echols, Hunters Heritage Council; and Nate Pamplin, Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.