
Environment Committee

HB 2803

Brief Description: Expanding recreational access to department of fish and wildlife and department of natural resources lands.

Sponsors: Representatives Taylor, Shea and Young.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates Discover Pass, Vehicle Access Pass, and day-use permit requirements for access to recreational lands managed by the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Hearing Date:

Staff: Jacob Lipson (786-7196).

Background:

Discover Pass, Vehicle Access Pass and Day-Use Permits.

The Discover Pass establishes a user fee for motor vehicle access to recreational areas managed by the State Parks and Recreation Commission (State Parks), the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). A Discover Pass costs \$30 per year, while a day-use permit costs \$10 per day. Certain DFW lands may also be accessed with a Vehicle Access Pass that is issued in conjunction with certain hunting and recreational fishing licenses. The penalty for a failure to comply with the Discover Pass, Vehicle Access Pass, or day-use permit requirements is \$99. The DNR, DFW, and State Parks share responsibility for various aspects of the implementation of Discover Pass and day-use permit, such as responsibility for selling passes and permits and for sanctioning volunteer projects that entitle volunteers to credit toward a free Discover Pass.

Revenues from the sales of Discover Passes and day-use permits is distributed to three accounts (the State Parks Renewal and Stewardship Account, the Parks and Trust Revolving Fund, and the State Wildlife Account) used to respectively fund the activities of State Parks, DNR, and DFW.

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.

For the first \$71 million dollars in pass and permit revenues per fiscal biennium, State Parks receives 84 percent of revenues while DNR and DFW each receive 8 percent; after the first \$71 million dollars, pass and permit sale revenues are distributed evenly among the three agencies.

William D. Ruckelshaus Center Process.

In 2016, State Parks was directed via an operating budget proviso to work with the William D. Ruckelshaus Center (Center) or another neutral third party to coordinate a process to develop options and recommendations to improve the consistency, equity, and simplicity in recreational access fee systems. The Center was chosen to facilitate this process and convened a leadership team of parties representing a variety of interest groups that met throughout 2017. The DNR, DFW, State Parks, and other state agencies participated in an advisory capacity to the leadership team in the process facilitated by the Center. In a report to the Legislature issued in December, 2017, the leadership team recommended three possible recreational access schemas that would meet the consistency, equity, and simplicity criteria of the budget proviso, including:

- a pass-free access package that would replace the Discover Pass (identified by the leadership team as the recommended option);
- a two-vehicle pass system similar to the existing Discover Pass, but with some standardization of existing exemptions and additional coordination with federal access systems; and
- a one-vehicle access pass with a lower price as compared to a two-vehicle pass, and with a similar standardization of existing exemptions and additional coordination with federal access systems.

In conjunction with these packages, the leadership team's report to the Legislature identified several recommendations that were common across the three packages.

Summary of Bill:

A Discover Pass, day-use permit, or Vehicle Access Pass is no longer required in order for a motor vehicle to be parked at or operate on recreational lands operated by the Department of Natural Resources or the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Revenue from the sales of Discover Passes and day-use permits is entirely directed to the State Parks Renewal and Stewardship Account. State Parks is given sole responsibility for the implementation and administration of the Discover Pass, including for sales of the Discover Pass.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 16, 2018.

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