



HOUSE BILL 181: Wildlife Resources Comm'n. Amendments.

2021-2022 General Assembly

Committee:	House Finance. If favorable, re-refer to Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House	Date:	June 3, 2021
Introduced by:	Reps. Adams, Yarborough, Wray	Prepared by:	Kyle Evans
Analysis of:	PCS to Second Edition H181-CSBRf-9		Staff Attorney

OVERVIEW: *The Proposed Committee Substitute (PCS) to House Bill 181 would make various changes to statutes governing the Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC).*

The PCS removes two sections that would have given WRC exemptions from certain Department of Administration requirements, and adds a section reducing the fee for operating a controlled rabbit hunting preserve.

CURRENT LAW AND BILL ANALYSIS:

AUTHORIZE ACQUISITION OR CONSTRUCTION OF CERTAIN CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS OF THE COMMISSION

The Office of State Budget and Management manages the budgeting of capital improvement projects for State agencies. This budgeting process includes a database of existing facilities owned by State agencies, criteria used to evaluate capital improvement needs, six-year capital improvement needs and estimates, and recommendations for capital improvement in the Recommend State Budget. The Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina and the National Guard are exempt from seeking approval for capital improvement expenditures provided certain criteria concerning the use of federal funds are met.

Section 1 would exempt WRC from requiring approval for capital improvement expenditures provided that the project will be funded entirely with agency receipts or federal funds and any operating costs associated with the project will be paid entirely with agency receipts or federal funds.

This section would become effective July 1, 2021.

REVISE REQUIREMENTS FOR HARVEST OF BLACK BEAR

Section 2 would require any hunter who harvests a black bear to submit at least one premolar tooth to WRC no later than January 31 following the applicable prior bear hunting season. The hunter must include with the tooth the hunter's name, mailing address, WRC customer number, and bear harvest authorization number, the harvested bear's sex, and the county of harvest.

Failing to submit a premolar tooth in accordance with this section would be an infraction punishable by a \$35 fine. The Executive Director of WRC would be authorized to revoke the bear e-stamp privileges for any individual guilty of a violation of this section for two consecutive years.

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This section would become effective October 1, 2021 and apply to bear hunting seasons beginning on or after that date. WRC may adopt temporary and permanent rules to implement this section.

REPEAL COMMISSION LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER REPORT

Section 35(b) of S.L. 2015-263 requires WRC to report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety regarding complaints against WRC law enforcement officers.

Section 3 would repeal this reporting requirement.

WILDLIFE CONTROL TECHNICIAN CERTIFICATION AMENDMENTS

Section 4 would establish a wildlife control technician certification for employees of wildlife control agents who engage in wildlife damage control or wildlife removal activities for compensation. The certification would have an annual fee of \$25. The certification would not authorize individuals to issue depredation permits and would not be required for licensed trapper taking wild animals during the appropriate established trapping season. The Wildlife Resources Commission may adopt rules to certify and set standards for wildlife control technicians.

This section would become effective October 1, 2021.

VETERANS EXEMPTION FOR MOUNTAIN HERITAGE TROUT WATERS LICENSE

Section 5 would exempt veterans discharged under honorable conditions from needing a Mountain Heritage Trout fishing license while fishing in waters designated by WRC as Mountain Heritage Trout waters. To qualify for this exemption, a veteran would be required to always have valid documentation of their service on his or her person during the fishing activity.

This section would become effective October 1, 2021.

WATERFOWL HUNTING PUBLIC PROPERTY

S.L. 2019- 98, which applies only to Roanoke Rapids Lake in Halifax and Northampton Counties, made it unlawful during established waterfowl seasons to leave waterfowl hunting equipment or vessels unattended or unoccupied prior to 4:00AM each day. Violation of this act is a Class 2 misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not less than \$250 in addition to any other punishment prescribed for that offense.

Section 6 would amend S.L. 2019-98 to make it unlawful during established waterfowl seasons to leave or place any waterfowl hunting equipment or vessels between two hours after sunset and 4:00AM. This section would also change the hours during which it is unlawful to leave waterfowl hunting equipment and vessels unattended or unoccupied to between the hours of 4:00AM and two hours after sunset.

This section would apply only to Roanoke Rapids Lake in Halifax and Northampton Counties, and would become effective on October 1, 2021 and apply to offenses committed on or after that date.

PREPARATION FOR CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

Section 7 would allow WRC to declare a wildlife emergency to respond to an outbreak of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in the State. Upon declaring a wildlife emergency, WRC would be authorized to request

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needed funding for immediate investigation, containment, and eradication of the outbreak from the Contingency and Emergency Fund to the Council of State following the existing process for requesting an allocation from that fund. WRC would be required to request any available federal funds to address a CWD outbreak, and those funds would be used to offset State funds appropriated from the Contingency and Emergency Fund.

This section would become effective July 1, 2021.

RESTORE WILDLIFE PROTECTOR INSPECTION AUTHORITY

S.L. 2015-263 provided that a wildlife inspector, protector, or other law enforcement officer may not inspect weapons or equipment possessed incident to an activity under the officer's jurisdiction unless the officer has a reasonable suspicion that a violation has been committed, except to check whether a shotgun is plugged or unplugged. This session law also made it unlawful to refuse to allow inspectors, protectors, or other law enforcement officers to inspect fish or wildlife for the purpose of ensuring compliance with bag limits and size limits. Pursuant to this session law, officers are also prohibited from inspecting weapons, equipment, fish, or wildlife in the absence of a person in apparent control of the item to be inspected, with some exceptions.

Section 8 would no longer require that a wildlife inspector, protector, or other law enforcement officer have reasonable suspicion before inspecting weapons, equipment, fish, or other wildlife possessed incident to an activity under inspector/protector jurisdiction.

HALF-PRICED LIFETIME LICENSES FOR CERTAIN RESIDENTS

Section 9 would provide a 50% discount on the cost of an Adult Resident Lifetime Sportsman License and a Resident Adult Lifetime Unified Sportsman/Coastal Recreation Fishing License for residents of the State who are between the age of 50 and 70 and who are not otherwise eligible for a discounted license fee as an eligible member of a volunteer fire department.

REDUCE CONTROLLED RABBIT HUNTING PRESERVE OPERATOR LICENSE FEE

WRC is authorized to set standards for and license three types of controlled hunting preserves: one for domestically raised birds, one for foxes and coyotes, and one for rabbits. The fee for each controlled preserve operator license is \$100.

Section 10 would reduce the controlled hunting preserve operator license for rabbits from \$100 to \$25.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Except as otherwise provided, this act would become effective when it becomes law.