



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Fish and Wildlife
Office of the Director
4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE
Salem, OR 97302
(503) 947-6044
FAX (503) 947-6042
odfw.com

February 5, 2020

**To: The Honorable Alan Olsen, Chair
Senate Committee on Veterans**



Senate Bill 1543
Shannon Hurn, Deputy Director for Fish and Wildlife Programs
Doug Cottam, Wildlife Division Administrator
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (department) appreciates the opportunity to discuss Senate bill 1543 with you today. The department has no position on the bill, however as introduced the bill will create challenges for the department to administer the program and result in lost revenue.

Senate bill 1543 would provide a Group Sports Pac license to qualifying facilities and programs that meet the qualifications outlined in this bill. Groups that would qualify for a free license are organizations that provide services or aid to veterans and active duty members of the armed forces, youth detention or correctional facilities, hospitals and long-term care facilities. Other qualifying groups include state or not-for-profit organizations licensed by the state that provide benefits to individuals with disabilities or who have a serious or terminal illness. This bill also provides free group licenses to adult foster home residents. There is no reference to residency to Oregon to qualify as a person receiving this opportunity.

The Group Sports Pac License would be a calendar year license for activities organized by the facility or program. Under a Group Sports Pac License, in addition to the residents, other beneficiaries and staff may participate in the organized activities without purchasing a license. Participants would need to comply with area restrictions, equipment restrictions, take limits and other regulations, including hunter education; but could participate without securing individual licenses, permits, game bird validations, or tags. During the group activity at least one staff member must be present and in possession of the Group license.

As introduced the bill is very broad in its allowance of who may qualify, and creates new administrative duties for the department. Currently the department is responsible for making sure each hunter and angler has the appropriate license, tag, stamp and or validation to harvest wildlife in Oregon under ORS 497.075. This requires allocating opportunity by age, residency, and other designations made by the Oregon Legislative Assembly. A critical aspect of allocating opportunity is ensuring that each individual is able to lawfully engage in the activity and no abuse of hunting and angling privileges is occurring. This requires identifying individuals as unique license holders, prohibiting person identified under the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact from purchasing a license, having individuals attest to their ability to possess a firearm, and running a comparative

search social security numbers for Child Support Tracking purposes thru the Department of Justice database.

A Group Sports Pac would be a new permit type, but individual identification and verification is still necessary for two reasons; 1) identifying the individual still has hunting and angling privileges, and 2) accounting for participation and harvest. It is unclear in Senate bill 1543 whether the department or the Group Sports Pac permit holder would ensure this information is collected and retained as required by public record retention law.

The department collects valuable harvest information from hunters and anglers that assist with determining wildlife populations and acceptable harvest levels. Hunters are required to participate in Mandatory Hunter Reporting for all deer, elk, turkey, cougar, and bear tags under a Sports Pac. The new Electronic Licensing System was designed to collect real time harvest of halibut, sturgeon, salmon and steelhead information. Paper taggers are encouraged to return their Combined Angling Tag to assist in developing harvest predictions and estimating run size.

The Group Sports Pac holder would be required to record all harvest that may occur during an event. The current licensing system would require modifications since the structure would not accommodate this type of change. Having a single license and tag for multiple participants would also result in an enforcement conflict; current regulations require harvest to be identified to the individual that harvested the species (ORS 497.075 and 497.400).

This bill will likely has a significant fiscal impact on the department as qualifications for a free license are expanded to include hunting and would apply to a much larger group of individuals. The department does not have data to identify how many people in Oregon could be qualified under this bill so it is difficult to determine the total fiscal impact. The department also receives federal funding from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) based on the number of unique paid license holders. Issuing a free license would not only have a direct impact on license dollars but could also reduce the amount of federal funding received from the USFWS through the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (SFR).

The department recommends considering amendments to narrow the bill, potentially focusing on just enhancing opportunity to veterans. Currently, there does not exist a way for non-profit organizations that serve veterans to receive the same consideration for providing no cost angling and shellfish licenses as described for applications by Veteran's Administration in ORS 497.163(3).

Additionally, the Legislature has approved free combination hunting and angling licenses and shellfish licenses for Oregon residents who are veterans and have a 25% or greater disability rating. For hunting opportunity, the Legislature authorized controlled hunt tags for some big game species to be reserved and provided to programs for terminally ill children and to programs that serve veterans with disabilities (ORS 496.146). The authorization includes up to 35 big game tags, and OAR 635-065-0772 describes how the tags are allocated out to organizations for both terminally ill children and veterans with disabilities. The law allows for the tags to be issued at no cost.

CONTACT:

Shannon Hurn, Deputy Director, (503) 947-6044