

Comments on House Bill No. 137

This bill as written closely agrees with the way wildlife licenses and tag fees are assessed in all of the other states that I am familiar with. As a forty plus year resident of Alaska, I was licensed as a non-resident hunter in 5 other states and hunted in 3 last year. In no other state (that I am aware of) are tags or harvest tickets provided to hunters - except perhaps; elderly, handicapped or low income hunters - free. In the western states (and others?) where hunters pay for tags, they certainly seem to have more influence in the allocation of harvestable wildlife resources than we do in Alaska.

Under a previous administration, out of curiosity, I reviewed the costs of licenses and tags for residents and non-residents throughout the northwestern states. Realizing that species, access issues and commercial influences are entirely different, the comparisons were very approximate. My review for general hunting licenses and fees for residents' vs non-residents resulted in a ratio range of 1:7 to 1:11. As reviewed, this bill tends to under value the cost of non-resident licenses and resident harvest tags or tickets.

Specific comments:

Pg1. 1-5: Rising the exemption age from 60 to 65 is in line with other states which have such an exemption. Without my reference material, it seems that Idaho has 70 as its exemption age.

Pg2. No comments

Pg3. 5-14(+): In this section. I view the black bear, wolf and would include the coyote as predatory species. For this reason and subject to the change on line 25, I would down value the Black bear tag to \$150., the wolf to \$20. and not require a tag for coyotes.

Bison are only hunted on drawing permits which are quite limited. Because of the trophy status, I would rise the Non-resident fee to \$1000. Which meets the 1:10 fee ratio as stated above.

Elk. Moose and sheep would share a two tag fee structure. If the tag is issued in conjunction with a drawing or registration hunt, the fees would be \$500., \$700. and \$1500. Respectively. Over the counter tags would be as listed for elk and moose but \$1200. for sheep. Drawing tags not filled could be used outside the drawing area for the same species or lesser valued harvest tags.

Pg3. 15-24: No comments

Pg3. 25: I would substitute the word "require" for the word "eliminate" as presently written. This would eliminate the need for residents to purchase a tag in order to take a nuisance or incidental animal unless there was an identified bear management concern.

Pg3. 26-31: If the above paragraph with the "require" modification is applied to black bears, the \$50. fee should be reduced to \$30. If the paragraph is not applied, the fee should not be more than \$10. ADF&G has completed more than enough studies to show the predatory effects of black bears.

Pg4. 1-3: I would substitute the word "require" for eliminate, as recommended on pg3. 25: above.

Pg4. 4-11+: Because bison tags are "Unique" and by drawing only, the tag fee should be at least \$200. or more. Drawing tags for elk and sheep should be not less than \$100. and \$150. respectively or \$50. and

\$100. as over the counter tags. It is felt that my proposed values for sheep tags are still lower than they should be.

Summary

- HB137 is a step in the right direction. It's not likely to be popular with Alaska resident hunters, non-resident hunters or commercial operators.
- The above suggested fee changes are based on what I as a hunter would expect or be willing to pay. Compared to other states where harvest tags for animals such as sheep and moose are commonly "one in a life time" tags, Alaska's fees - across the board- are real bargains.
- Under the above changes, tags associated with drawing or registration hunts are assigned higher costs than "over the counter" tags or harvest tickets for the same species.
- The "opportunistic" taking of Coyotes in conjunction with a hunting license should be free with no tag requirement. Again, predation on sheep has been well documented by F&G as well as at least one UAF graduate student.
- Tags associated with unique Alaska hunting opportunity species – Dahl Sheep, Bison, Grizzly/Brown Bear, and Musk Ox should more closely reflect the true trophy value of the animal.
- Concerning Black and Grizzly bears, the annual "requirement" that the board impose bear tag and fees for specific areas/management units (see pg3:25, pg4:1-3) reverses the Board of Games required action as stated in the bill. This will simplify resident requirements for "defense of life and property" takings as well as incidental harvest opportunities.

I have no further comments on this proposed legislation. As presently written, without further change, HB137 is an improvement over the States existing license and tag cost structure. Revenue generated under this legislation along with Pitman/Robertson and Dingle/Johnson matching federal funds could be used as a basis for Department of Fish & Game funding with less or no reliance on the State's general fund. I have no knowledge as to how other states fund their Wildlife Management organizations but, would venture to suggest that the topic should be investigated!

If additional information is needed, I can be reached at (907) 479-3835.

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