



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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October 19, 2005

TO: Members
Joint Committee on Finance

FROM: Bob Lang, Director

SUBJECT: Assembly Bill 131: Trapping Licenses and Permits Issued to Nonresidents

Assembly Bill 131 would create a nonresident trapping license to be issued by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The bill was introduced on February 22, 2005, and referred to the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources. On March 30, 2005, the bill was recommended for passage by the Committee on a vote of Ayes, 15; Noes, 0. On April 12, 2005, the bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Finance.

CURRENT LAW

The Department issues a variety of approvals and licenses to residents and nonresidents, authorizing the pursuit of fish and game within the state. Under current law, DNR may only issue trapping licenses to state residents. In order to be eligible to purchase a trapping license, the individual must complete a trapper education program administered by the Department, unless they had previously held a state trapping license on or before May 12, 1992, or were farmers.

DNR also limits the number of bobcats, fishers, or otters that may be trapped in a geographical area by issuing separate permits for each type of animal in each region. In order to trap a bobcat, fisher, or otter, individuals must apply for and receive a permit in addition to purchasing a trapping license. Residents who applied for permits in prior years but did not receive them are given higher preference in the next allocation process. Individuals who purchase trapping licenses but do not apply for or receive additional permits may still trap raccoon, fox, mink, muskrat, beaver, skunk, weasel, and opossum. Resident landowners in Wisconsin do not need a license to trap coyotes, beaver, fox, raccoon, woodchucks, rabbits, or squirrels on their property, and may do so year-round.

SUMMARY OF BILL

The bill would create a nonresident trapping license, priced at \$150 (including issuance fees). Currently, the fee for a resident trapping license is \$20. The bill would also include a trapping license as an approval included with the purchase of a nonresident conservation patron license. Under the bill, only nonresidents who have successfully completed the trapper education course offered by DNR or a similar course offered out of state would be eligible to purchase a trapping license. No exemptions from this requirement are provided. Further, nonresident trapping approvals would only be sold to individuals whose state of residence also allows nonresidents to trap within that state.

The bill would authorize DNR to allow a nonresident trapper education course graduate to use their certificate in lieu of a trapping license for a specified period. Currently, a resident who successfully completes a trapper education safety course may use their completion certificate in lieu of a trapping license for their first year.

Further, the bill would authorize DNR to impose greater or stricter limitations on applications for permits to trap bobcats, fisher, and otter by nonresidents, and would allow DNR to give greater preference to state residents in the allocation of available trapping permits within a geographical area. The Department would be responsible for devising a system to allocate available permits between residents and nonresidents, presumably through the administrative rule process.

ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT 1

Assembly Amendment 1 to AB 131 was offered on April 15, 2005, but has not yet been acted upon. The amendment would delete the provision allowing nonresidents who had completed a trapper education course to use their certificate in lieu of a license for a specified period of time. Further, the amendment would change the effective date of the bill from March 10, 2005, or on the day after publication, whichever is later, to April 1, 2006. The delayed effective date would enable DNR to put the new license requirement into effect at the beginning of the 2006 license year.

FISCAL EFFECT

In fiscal year 2004-05, approximately 3,800 trapping licenses were purchased by residents. In 2004, almost 7,500 applications to trap bobcat were received (1,540 permits were issued); 6,800 applications to trap fisher were received (5,680 were issued); and 7,900 applications to trap otter were received (3,975 were issued). Currently, applications for bobcat, fisher, and otter trapping permits from residents exceed the available number of permits. As the bill would allow DNR to give preference to state residents in the allocation of available trapping permits, it is unlikely that nonresidents would have the opportunity to pursue these species in the foreseeable future. However, any individual holding a trapping license may still pursue raccoon, fox, mink, muskrat,

beaver, skunk, weasel, and opossum. Given the higher price of the nonresident trapping license and the level of competition for species-specific trapping permits, the Department estimates that nonresidents would purchase an average of approximately 25 permits each year, for an increase in revenue to the fish and wildlife account of \$3,800 annually. Further, DNR may see some increased revenue from increased participation in trapper education courses by nonresidents.

Under the bill, trapping license sales to nonresidents would be limited to those whose state of residence also allow nonresidents to purchase trapping licenses. In order to remind vendors selling licenses through the Department's automated licensing system (ALIS) of this requirement, an additional step would need to be programmed into the licensing system when the nonresident trapping license is added. Two options are available. A prompt could be included, requiring the seller to ask the customer whether or not their state of residence allows nonresident trapping. If the customer answered affirmatively, the nonresident license would be sold to them. This feature would be less costly to add to the system, requiring a programming cost change of around \$3,000. However, confirmation that the customer met the reciprocity requirement would be entirely based on the customer's declaration.

A second alternative would be to add reciprocity tables to the ALIS system which would automatically flag states allowing nonresident trapping, and check these against the customer's state of residence. While this system would ensure a higher level of accuracy, and potentially be more user-friendly for ALIS vendors, it would require additional programming features that would increase the cost of modifying the system for the new license (to perhaps \$15,000). Depending on which alternative the Department selected, the one-time costs of adding the new nonresident trapping license to the automated licensing system may range from \$3,000 to \$15,000. However, as the bill does not increase DNR expenditure authority, any increase in costs would be required to be reallocated from existing sources.

While the nonresident trapping license is not expected to generate substantial revenue, the license's creation would expand trapping opportunities for Wisconsin residents who also hunt, or own land, in other states. Currently, of the 46 states that allow non-residents to purchase trapping licenses, approximately one-half have a reciprocity requirement that limits the sale of nonresident trapping permits to individuals whose state of residence also allows nonresidents to purchase trapping approvals. Of Wisconsin's neighboring states, only Minnesota would continue to exclude nonresident trappers (and the state's residents would therefore not be allowed to purchase nonresident trapping permits in Wisconsin under the bill).

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