

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based only on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Date: March 2, 1998 Revised: _____

Subject: Game and Fishing Licenses

	<u>Analyst</u>	<u>Staff Director</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Action</u>
1.	<u>Green</u>	<u>Voigt</u>	<u>NR</u>	<u>Favorable</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>WM</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

The bill deletes an under-utilized resident \$10 for a 10-day saltwater fishing license and fee. Provides for fee changes in several licenses issued by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. Transfers the value of a validation stamp to the universal license form. Deletes a lifetime sportsman’s license for those 64 years of age or older and creates a new permanent license for these residents. Revises age categories for the issuance of certain licenses. Authorizes the commission to establish processing fees by administrative rule. Authorizes the use of the Florida Panther Research and Management Trust Fund for environmental education projects. Revises licenses and fees for the exhibition of wildlife. Revises licenses and fees for the personal possession of wildlife.

The bill amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 370.0605, 372.16, 372.561, 372.57, 372.661, 372.672, 372.674, 372.87, 372.921, and 372.922.

The bill creates section 372.579, Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

The Florida Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission issues over 8,000 commercial and special purpose license units per year. All license fees for taking wild animal life or fresh water aquatic life are prescribed by specific statute. Revenues derived from these licenses are appropriated by the Legislature for the management, protection, and conservation of wild animal life and fresh water aquatic life. Several license fees currently collected by the commission have not been increased in many years. The current fees for these licenses do not cover the cost of implementing these programs. For example, the game farm permit fee was adopted as \$5 in 1929 and has not increased in almost 70 years.

More than 6,000 permits are issued annually to the public at no cost by the Divisions of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Law Enforcement. There are over 37 different types of permits. While administrative costs alone average \$10 per permit, a permit containing a field inspection requirement adds \$100 to agency costs. The commission proposes charging a fee in direct proportion to the cost of processing the application and investigating the activity. For some permits currently issued at no cost, the commission would not want to charge a processing fee. For example, the wildlife rehabilitation permit requires site inspections and a test of applicants, but the commission indicates it does not wish to charge a processing fee for this permit because the applicants are performing a service for the state.

The commission also regulates the possession of wildlife for public display or sale and the possession of wildlife as personal pets. Currently, captive wildlife are classified based on the degree of danger posed to human safety. Permits for the exhibition of captive wildlife, as well as personal use wildlife permits, are issued under this classification system. The fees for possession were last set in 1974 and do not cover the costs associated with this program. Wildlife inspectors conduct routine inspections of commercial and private facilities to ensure compliance with captive wildlife regulations. The commission must also contend with the matter of biological pollution due to the escape of exotic species. Additional funding for inspections and enforcement is needed to keep up with the demands of these activities. Also, violators of captive wildlife law do not have to reimburse the commission for any expenses incurred relative to an animal's escape under the current law.

Presently, the commission offers a lifetime sportsman/seniors license to a resident 64 years of age or older for \$12. To date, 7,410 of these licenses have been sold for a total of \$88,920. Because these monies go into an endowment fund where only the interest can be used, the commission would like to drop the license. However, because \$8 in matching federal funds is paid per license for the first 8 years after the license is purchased, the commission would like to establish a new permanent license for these residents. The new permanent license will still allow the commission to keep track of how many seniors are hunting in Florida and take advantage of federal matching dollars, but will also allow the commission to use the principle rather than just the interest on the license fees.

While no 10-day license for freshwater fishing exists, there is a \$10 for a 10-day saltwater fishing license. Only 66 of these saltwater licenses were sold in FY 95-96 because most people pay the few extra dollars to purchase a one-year license. Therefore, the license is not cost effective.

Another issue for the commission is lost validation stamps. Currently, tax collectors and their subagents are responsible to the commission for all licenses and permits sold, as well as for the value of all validation stamps reported as lost. The value is on the stamp and the license is not valid until the stamp is affixed. Because the tax collectors and their subagents must keep up with both a universal license and a stamp, their administrative costs are increased.

Sections 372.672 and 372.674, F.S., establish funding sources for environmental education projects, but do not mention the Florida Panther Research and Management Trust Fund. The

fund was historically used for this purpose, but was inadvertently deleted in the 1996 legislative transfer of the Environmental Education Advisory Council to the commission.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1. Deletes the \$10 for a 10-day saltwater fishing license in s. 370.0605, F.S.

Section 2. Increases the annual private game preserve or farm permit fee in s. 372.16, F.S., from \$5 to \$25 per year.

Section 3. Deletes the validation stamp in s. 372.561, F.S., and places the value on the universal form instead and increases the value from \$5 to \$25.

Section 4. Deletes a lifetime sportsman's license for those 64 years of age or older in s. 372.57, F.S., and creates a new permanent license for these residents. Amends s. 372.57(8)(c), F.S., to allow residents 13-64 years of age to obtain a resident lifetime sportsman's license.

Section 5. Amends s. 372.59, F.S., to allow the commission to establish by rule a processing fee of up to \$100 for each license or permit required by chapter 39, F.A.C. This provision is intended to allow the commission to charge processing fees for permits or licenses currently issued to the public at no charge.

Section 6. Increases the annual permit fee in s. 372.661, F.S., for operation of a private hunting preserve commercially or otherwise from \$25 to \$50 per year.

Section 7. Amends s. 372.672, F.S., to allow the Florida Panther Research and Management Trust Fund to be used for environmental education programs.

Section 8. Amends s. 372.674, F.S., to allow the Florida Panther Research and Management Trust Fund to be used for environmental education programs.

Section 9. Amends s. 372.87, F.S., to increase the annual permit fee from \$5 to \$25 for the keeping, possessing or exhibiting of poisonous or venomous reptiles.

Section 10. Amends s. 372.921, F.S., to establish a uniform classification system for exhibition and possession of wildlife. Restructures the fees in accordance to the wildlife classification and the number of wildlife possessed. Requires persons convicted of violating captive wildlife laws to reimburse the commission for any expenses incurred relative to the animal's escape and subsequent capture, transport, boarding, veterinary care, and other costs.

Section 11. Amends s. 372.922, F.S., to establish a uniform classification system and restructures the fees accordingly for personal possession of wildlife. Requires persons convicted of violating captive wildlife laws to reimburse the commission for any expenses incurred relative

to the animal’s escape and subsequent capture, transport, boarding, veterinary care, and other costs.

Section 12. Provides an effective date.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

Passage of this bill will increase or decrease the following license and permit fees:

License Type	Current Fee	Proposed Fee
Private game preserves or farms	\$5	\$25
Universal forms	\$5	\$25
Processing fees for licenses and permits currently issued to the public at no charge	\$0	up to \$100
Hunting preserves	\$25	\$50
Exhibition or possession of venomous reptiles	\$5	\$25
Wildlife exhibition under 25 species	\$5	\$100
Wildlife exhibition over 25 species	\$25	\$250
Class III wildlife exhibition	\$0	\$25
Class II personal wildlife possession	\$100	\$50
Class III personal wildlife possession	\$0	up to \$25

B. Private Sector Impact:

Deleting the \$10 for a 10-day saltwater fishing license will have a minimal effect on the private sector because only 66 of those licenses were sold in FY 95-96.

Transferring the value of a validation stamp to the universal form and increasing the value from \$5 to \$25 will impact the private sector, but will also make everyone more accountable for lost forms or stamps.

Owners of game farms will pay \$25 instead of \$5 for an annual license. Private hunting preserves will pay \$50 instead of \$25 for an annual license. Also, those requesting licenses or permits currently provided at no cost may have to pay a nonrefundable processing fee of up to \$100.

While the cost of a venomous reptile license will increase from \$5 to \$25, the fee increase is to cover the costs associated with the program.

While the bill imposes significant fee increases on businesses and individuals that engage in exhibition and possession of wildlife, these increases are directly related to the services provided by the commission. The license fees are being reset to charge reasonable fees for the commission's services.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Deleting the \$10 for a 10-day resident saltwater fishing license will have a minimal impact because most people purchase a one-year license for \$12.

The Florida Panther Research and Management Trust fund has all recurring revenue fully appropriated each year and cannot take on any new activities that would have recurring costs.

The following projected increases in license revenues were provided by the commission: The proposed increase in game farm licenses should raise \$14,850 in 1998-99, as compared to \$2,970 collected in 1996-97.

The proposed increase for private hunting preserve commercial licenses should raise \$5,400 in 1998-99, as compared to \$2,700 in 1996-97.

The proposed increase for a venomous reptile license should raise \$10,000 in 1998-99, as compared to \$2,120 in 1996-97.

The proposed increases in commercial permit fees for the exhibition and possession of wildlife should raise approximately \$247,500 in 1998-99, as compared to \$116,760 in 1996-97, which can be used to add increased management, inspections, and care for captive wildlife.

Altogether, the fee increases in this bill are estimated to generate approximately \$277, 750 in 1998-99, as compared to \$124,550 for the same licenses and permits in 1996-97.

In addition, the establishment of nonrefundable processing fees, determined by the commission by rule, of up to \$100 for each license or permit currently issued to the public at no charge should raise approximately \$180,000 annually.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.

This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's sponsor or the Florida Senate.
