House Legislative Analysis Section

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COMPREHENSIVE LIFETIME LICENSE

House Bill 4992 (Substitute H-1)
First Analysis (9-26-89)

Sponsor: Rep. Jerry C. Bartnik
Committee: Tourism, Fisheries, & Wildlife

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

The Game and Fish Protection Fund is the primary source of funding for the state's hunting and fishing programs, including enforcement of game and fish laws and related support services, educational services, and administrative costs. The fund has been plagued with short- and long-term budgetary problems. Public Act 94 of 1988 (House Bill 4764) created the Game and Fish Lifetime Trust Fund (the trust) to establish a long-term revenue source for the Game and Fish Protection Fund. The act created several lifetime licenses including a lifetime sportspersons license which includes privileges for small game, all fish (including trout and salmon), and deer (both rifle and bow and arrow) at a cost of $1,000. Some hunters have expressed concern that privileges for bear, waterfowl, and fur harvesting are not included under the sportspersons license. Legislation has been introduced to address this concern.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would amend the Game and Fish Lifetime License Trust Fund Act to establish a comprehensive lifetime hunting and fishing license that would add bear, waterfowl, and fur harvesting privileges to the existing privileges included under the sportspersons license. The license would cost $1,025, and owners of a lifetime sportspersons license could purchase a comprehensive lifetime hunting and fishing license for $25. Sellers of comprehensive lifetime licenses could retain $15 from each license sold, just as is currently retained from each lifetime sportspersons license sold. The bill would specify that ownership of a lifetime license would not guarantee the license holder the right to take game and that game could only be taken in compliance with harvest regulations and license and permit conditions established for a species by the Commission of Natural Resources.

The act specifies that after the close of the sale of lifetime licenses (February 28, 1990) and for each year thereafter, the state treasurer is required to credit to the Game and Fish Protection Fund for each lifetime license issued the amount of money the department would have received had the license holder purchased the equivalent annual license during the license year. However, the bill would specify that for a comprehensive license the equivalent annual license for purposes of the calculation detailed above would be the annual sportspersons license.

MCL 316.1003, 316.1004, and 316.1006

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

According to the Department of Natural Resources, the bill would have negligible fiscal implications for the state. (9-21-89)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Consolidating all of the licenses and stamps into one license and one purchase would provide greater convenience for individuals who hunt bear, waterfowl, and fur bearing animals because annual purchases would not be necessary. In addition, it is only fair that these hunting privileges are included in a lifetime license since all other popular hunting and fishing privileges are covered by a lifetime license. Further, although the bill is expected to nominally reduce the annual revenue from the sales of bear, waterfowl stamp, and fur harvester licenses, it is expected that very few license buyers would have purchased all three licenses every year.

Against:

Although the addition of resident bear, waterfowl stamp and fur harvester privileges to the lifetime sportspersons license is laudable, some provision should be made for those lifetime license holders who have already purchased their bear license for the 1989 season. They should not have to pay the full $25 since they have already paid $14.35 for their bear licenses.

Against:

The Hunting and Fishing License Act was recently amended by Public Act 63 of 1986 to specify that fees collected for waterfowl stamps would be used for the acquisition of wetlands. However, the bill does not specify that money that would have been received each year from the sale of waterfowl stamps under the comprehensive lifetime licenses would specifically be used for the purchase of wetlands. There are fears that the bill will effectively decrease the amount of money available for the purchase of wetlands.

POSITIONS:

The Department of Natural Resources supports the bill. (9-21-89)

Ducks Unlimited supports the bill. (9-25-89)

The Michigan United Conservation Clubs supports the bill. (9-22-89)

The Sportsmen's Alliance of Michigan supports the bill. (9-22-89)

H.B. 4992 (9-26-89)

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