

STATE FISCAL IMPACT

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Prime Sponsor(s): Sens. Tochtrop; Schwartz Bill Status: Senate Agriculture
Reps. Vigil; Rankin Fiscal Analyst: Clare Pramuk (303-866-2677)

TITLE: CONCERNING A PROGRAM TO GIVE LANDOWNERS A PREFERENCE FOR HUNTING LICENSES TO ENCOURAGE HUNTING ON PRIVATE PROPERTY.

Table with 3 columns: Fiscal Impact Summary, FY 2013-2014, FY 2014-2015. Rows include State Revenue, State Expenditures (Cash Funds, Wildlife Cash Fund), FTE Position Change, Effective Date, Appropriation Summary for FY 2013-2014, and Local Government Impact.

Summary of Legislation

This bill replaces the current landowner preference programs for allocating hunting licenses with a single program that:

- establishes requirements for the land, including minimum size and wildlife carrying capacity;
• allocates the number of licenses based on the size of the land, from 1 license for the first 160 acres to a maximum of 19 licenses for 11,440 acres;
• limits the percentage of hunting licenses in a restricted game management unit (a geographical area identified by DNR) that is allocated to the program to between 10 and 25 percent;
• makes unused licenses available to landowners prior to the general public;
• authorizes an owner to transfer vouchers for the licenses to hunters but prohibits brokering and restrictions on the vouchers; and
• authorizes Parks and Wildlife to disqualify a landowner or hunter from the program for up to five years if he or she does not comply with the provisions of the program.

Land in the existing programs remains eligible until July 1, 2016. The Parks and Wildlife Commission will promulgate rules implementing the new program by July 1, 2014.

Background

Under current law, Parks and Wildlife in the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) operates the Wildlife Conservation Application Program to allocate big game hunting licenses to agricultural landowners through a system of transferable vouchers. The Wildlife Conservation Application Program is an umbrella for four programs. These are the Traditional Landowner Preference Program, the Priority Landowner Preference Program, the Elk Pilot Program, and the Pronghorn Pilot Program. There are more than 6,000 properties enrolled in the current preference programs. Landowners can receive up to six license applications under a system of six tiers based on acreage. Landowners can apply for any number of leftover applications in their game management unit.

State Revenue

This bill does not affect the number of hunting licenses that will be issued so no change in revenue is expected. Should the cost of implementing the program be such that an increase in revenue is required, the fiscal note assumes that Parks and Wildlife will address that issue through fees or other means.

State Expenditures

This bill is expected to *increase expenditures by \$51,800 from the Wildlife Cash Fund* in FY 2013-14 for Parks and Wildlife in DNR. The bill is also expected to increase workload in Parks and Wildlife, but as the amount of the increase is not estimated in the fiscal note, no funding requirements are identified at this time. Increases are expected in the four areas discussed below. The fiscal note assumes that as the implementation date comes closer, Parks and Wildlife will have better information on which to request an appropriation through the annual budget process.

Information technology. Hunting license vouchers are allocated electronically for landowner preference programs. Parks and Wildlife requires an increase of *\$51,800 from the Wildlife Cash Fund* in FY 2013-14 to update its system to accommodate the changes in the bill. This assumes 700 hours of programming will be purchased from the Office of Information Technology. If the project requires more hours, this will be addressed in the annual budget process.

Determination of eligibility. Under current law, landowners provide a signed affidavit to Parks and Wildlife to be eligible to participate in landowner preference programs. Under the bill, agency staff are required to determine eligibility through examination of property records and physical inspections, a much more labor intensive process. This provision is expected to have the greatest impact on workload. Because landowners can manipulate their existing deeds to maximize the number of applications they can receive, the fiscal note is unable to estimate the total number of participants in the program after July 1, 2016.

Communication and outreach. Due to the complexity of the new program, the fiscal note expects Parks and Wildlife to have an increase in inquiries from landowners and hunters. This may require additional staffing, but that will be addressed closer to implementation of the new program.

Regulatory changes. Parks and Wildlife will use its rule making and regulatory review processes to address many of the details of the new program. Specific issues that will be addressed include, but are not limited to, habitat management, program eligibility, and split deeds. The fiscal note assumes these issues will be addressed within existing appropriations.

State Appropriations

For FY 2013-14, Parks and Wildlife requires an appropriation of \$51,800 from the Wildlife Cash Fund. This amount is reappropriated to the Office of Information Technology.

Departments Contacted

Office of Information Technology

Natural Resources