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BILL ANALYSIS



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Senate Bill 276 (Substitute S-3)
Senate Bill 277 (as introduced 5-1-25)
Sponsor: Senator John Cherry (S.B. 276)
Senator Jon Bumstead (S.B. 277)
Committee: Appropriations

Date Completed: 9-23-25

CONTENT

Senate Bill 276 (S-3) would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA) to allow the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to charge a permit fee for the use of State-owned shooting ranges and require the DNR to deposit the fee in the proposed Shooting and Education Fund (which the bill would create). The bill also would amend Part 435 (Hunting and Fishing Licensing) to do the following:

- Increase various hunting, fishing, and combination license fees and require the State Treasurer to adjust them to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index, rounded to the nearest dollar.
- Allow an individual who holds a valid fur harvester's license to purchase a bobcat kill tag.
- Increase an additional fee applied to all base licenses, combination hunt and fish licenses, and all-species fishing licenses that are not qualified senior or child licenses from \$1 to \$5 and modify the allocation of this fee revenue.
- Establish resident and nonresident "complete licenses", which would include a base license, two deer licenses, one antlerless deer license, an all-species fishing license, a spring and fall wild turkey hunting license, a waterfowl hunting license, a pheasant hunting license, and a fur harvester's license.
- Make additional changes to NREPA, as described below.

Senate Bill 277 would amend the General Sales Tax Act to earmark annually from the sales tax collected at a rate of 4% an amount equal to the amounts reported to the Department of Treasury under Senate Bill 276 (S-3) concerning qualified licenses and fees, beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2025-26. Earmarked revenue would be credited to the game and fish protection account and two subaccounts, the pheasant subaccount and the cold-water subaccount.

The bills are tie-barred. Senate Bill 276 (S-3) is discussed in greater detail below.

Senate Bill 276 (S-3) would amend NREPA to allow the DNR to require individuals to possess a base license, mentored youth license, all-species fishing license, or to pay a recreational passport fee for the use of State-owned shooting ranges. The DNR would have to deposit the fees collected into the proposed Shooting and Education Fund to be used for the operation and maintenance of State-owned shooting ranges and administering shooting education programs.

The bill also would amend Part 435 of NREPA to change the types of hunting and fishing licenses available and the fees associated with those licenses. The bill would allow the Natural Resources Commission to discount the price of licenses for marketing or to achieve a harvest or management objective.

Under the current structure, an individual who wishes to hunt any type of game first must purchase a base hunting license, followed by a license for the specific type of game the individual wish to hunt. The bill also would allow an individual who holds a valid fur harvester's license to purchase a bobcat kill tag.

Currently, an additional fee of \$1 is applied to all base licenses, combination hunt and fish licenses, and all-species fishing licenses that are not qualified senior or child licenses. This fee is deposited into the Michigan wildlife management public education subaccount. The bill would increase this additional fee to \$5 and would allocate the revenue as follows: \$2 from each license to the Michigan wildlife management public education subaccount, \$2 from each license to a newly created hunting and fishing education and recruitment fund, and \$1 from each license to the Sportsman Against Hunger Fund (which the bill would rename to the "Hunters Feeding Michigan Fund"). The bill also would increase the fee for sportcards, from \$1 to \$2 each.

The bill would create a "complete license" and generally increase the application fees for hunting licenses issued via the "lottery" system from \$5 to \$6. The complete license would include a base license, two deer licenses, one antlerless deer license, an all-species fishing license, a spring and fall wild turkey hunting license, a waterfowl hunting license, a pheasant hunting license, and a fur harvester's license. The bill would direct fee revenue from complete licenses to be spent as follows: \$15 deposited to the cold-water subaccount, \$12 to the research, surveys, and habitat management for wild turkeys, \$16 to the purposes outlined for waterfowl hunting license fees, \$25 to the pheasant subaccount, \$1.50 for deer habitat improvement and maintenance. In addition to the complete license, the bill introduces a bobcat kill tag available for individuals who already possess a valid fur harvester's license. Table 1 provides a comparison between current license fees and those contained in the bill.

Table 1

Combination License Fees		
License Type	Current Fee	Fee Under Bill
Resident Complete ^{1,2}	N/A	\$150
Nonresident Complete ¹	N/A	\$450
Resident Hunt/Fish Combo ^{1,2}	\$75	\$100
Nonresident Hunt/Fish Combo ¹	\$265	\$355
Hunting License Fees		
Resident Base ¹²	\$10	\$15
Nonresident Base ¹	\$150	\$200
Mentored Hunting License	\$7.50	\$10
Resident Deer ²	\$20	\$25
Nonresident Deer	\$20	\$150
Resident Deer Combo ²	\$40	\$50
Nonresident Deer Combo	\$170	\$225
Resident Bear and Bear Participation	\$15	\$30
Nonresident Bear	\$150	\$180
Elk	\$100	\$125
Resident Fur Harvester ²	\$15	\$18
Nonresident Fur Harvester	\$150	N/A
Turkey	\$15	\$18
Waterfowl	\$12	\$18
Pheasant	\$25	\$25
Bobcat	N/A	\$18
7-day Nonresident Small Game	\$80	\$125
3-day Nonresident Small Game	\$50	\$80

Fishing License Fees		
Resident Annual All-Species ²	\$25	\$30
Nonresident Annual All-Species	\$75	\$90
Resident Daily All-Species	\$10	\$15
Nonresident Daily All-Species	\$10	\$25

¹The fees above do not include the \$5 fee added to base and combination licenses not purchased by a qualified senior or child.

²The fees above do not include 60% senior (65 and older), child (16 and younger), and antlerless deer discounts discussed below.

Currently, discounts on certain licenses are available for Michigan seniors, mentored youths, and members of the military. Seniors age 65 and over may purchase a base license, first deer, wild turkey hunting, and fur harvester license at a 60% discount. The bill would allow for children 16 and younger to purchase licenses at this same discounted rate. The bill would add to that a discount on all antlerless deer licenses 80% from other deer licenses. The bill would retain the discount for children and seniors but instead would refer to it as a "qualified license", which includes seniors and youths 16 and younger, discounted antlerless deer licenses, and free licenses issued to disabled veterans and active military members. Existing statute requires the Legislature to appropriate from the General Fund an amount equal to the total fees that would be collected if these qualified licenses were not discounted (the Legislature has not elected to do so). The bill would require the Department to report the sum of discounted fees, qualified licenses, and fees retained by vendors to the Department of Treasury for reimbursement into the game and fish protection account.

The bill would create the cold-water subaccount in the game and fish protection account. Funds in this account would include \$5 from each resident all-species fishing license, and \$15 from each nonresident all-species fishing license, sold. Funds in the cold-water subaccount could be spent only for cold-water habitat improvement and monitoring, production, and dam removal to benefit cold-water species.

Other Changes under the Bill

The bill would make the following additional changes to Part 435:

- Refer to "hunters feeding Michigan" instead of "sportsmen against hunger".
- Remove a 0.25% limit on the use of waterfowl license revenue to acquire lands and increase the amount designated for this purpose to \$12 per license.
- Increase the allotment from waterfowl hunting license revenue to manage waterfowl areas from \$1.93 per license to \$3.
- Designate \$1 from each waterfowl hunting license to matching Federal wetland investment programs.
- Reduce the age at which the State requires individuals to possess a valid fishing license, from 17 years and older to 16 years and older.
- Eliminate 72-hour resident and nonresident fishing licenses.
- Require the DNR to manage land purchased or leased for propagating and rearing wildlife or fish and for maintaining game refuges, wildlife sanctuaries, and public shooting and fishing grounds.
- Allow the Commission to require individuals to take an antlerless deer before being eligible to take a second antlered deer.
- Set the fee for deer management assistance permits (DMAP) at \$5 and allow for the 80% discount of antlerless DMAPs.
- Direct funds in the Hunting and Fishing Education and Recruitment Fund to be spent equally on education and recruitment activities.

FISCAL IMPACT

The bills would have a significant positive fiscal impact on the DNR and no fiscal impact on local units of government. The fee changes in the bill would generate approximately \$29.4 million in additional annual revenue for the Game and Fish Protection Fund. In FY 2024-25, the Game and Fish Protection Fund received approximately \$67.9 million from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, so the changes in the bill would represent roughly a 43.3% increase in revenue for the Fund. A significant portion, approximately \$10.7 million of this revenue, would be transmitted to the Game and Fish Protection Fund from the State General Fund generated by the 4.0% sales tax (this transmittal would occur as prescribed in amended Section 43546 of Senate Bill 276 (S-3) and amended Section 25(5) of Senate Bill 277.

The Game and Fish Protection Fund is used, upon appropriation, to support a number of programs administered by the DNR. Those programs include wildlife management, law enforcement, fisheries management, fish production, and grant programs that support fishery and wildlife habitat improvement. Table 2 below details to which program areas the additional revenue from a fee increase would be appropriated.

Table 2
Hunting and Fishing License Fee Increase Appropriations

Program Area	Appropriation Amount
Wildlife Management	\$6,285,600
Fisheries Resource Management	5,772,400
Hunting and Fishing Education and Recruitment	2,806,900
State Game and Wildlife area infrastructure	2,364,500
Marketing and Outreach	2,078,300
Fisheries Habitat Improvement Grants	1,927,400
Fisheries Cold Water Management	1,927,400
Fish Production	1,536,000
Hunters feeding Michigan	1,403,400
Wildlife Management Public Education	1,403,400
Fisheries Infrastructure	1,326,900
Wetlands restoration, enhancement, and acquisition	433,700
IT	82,300
Finance and Operations	75,100
TOTAL	\$29,423,300

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.