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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 2/12/17

SPONSOR Stefanics LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE Game & Fish License Duration SB 246

ANALYST Armstrong

REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY17	FY18	FY19		
(\$100.0)	(\$800.0)	(\$250.0)	(\$1,150.0)	Game Protection Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Revenue Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Department of Game and Fish (DGF)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 246 (SB246) provides that the term of hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses expire 365 days after the date of purchase, rather than licenses being valid from April 1 through March 31 as provided by current statute.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

DGF does not anticipate the direct revenue from licensing activities will be significantly impacted due to a change in the valid dates of Department licenses. It is the expectation that current license holders will adjust to the change. However, the potential revenue generated from federal sources could experience a slight, temporary decrease because the level of federal funding DGF receives each year is impacted by the number of paid license holders. This is the figure estimated in the table above.

DGF could experience unknown increased operating costs in meeting the requirements of the bill. For example, the department would need to revise all online sales systems and State Game Commission (SGC) rules – both licensing and valid hunt dates for certain year-round license types – to reflect the new license date requirements, and all the necessary paper documents

associated with licensing (such as the annual rules and information booklet) would have to be revised. SB246 may also require training for license vendors and department staff on processing licenses within the new license years.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Currently, all DGF licensing systems are based on the license year currently in statute. To make the appropriate changes necessitated by SB246, the agency would need to rework the license sales system which could take six to eight months.

DGF analysis raises concern about the impact of SB246 on hunters and fishers who may be unaware of the changes if the bill were enacted. Hunters are required to purchase permits prior to applying for certain licenses, and under SB246 the permit could expire before the licensed hunt date. Additionally, anglers may inadvertently forget their license is expired and may be charged with fishing without a valid license. While it is true that changing the expiration date of licenses “could potentially create violators out of otherwise law-abiding citizens” as DGF notes, it is also true that DGF has discretion in enforcing game and fish laws and could exercise this as needed in interactions with hunters and anglers adapting to changes required by SB246.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

DGF notes revisions would be necessary to SGF rules establishing valid hunt dates, harvest reporting requirements, dates for licenses that are valid for “year-round” hunting and fishing, and all language regarding the valid license period. Currently all SGC rules are based on the April 1 to March 31 license year. There would need to be a transition period to allow the Department to update all of the pertinent licensing and hunt structure rules to be in alignment with the bill.

Implementing SB246 would require changes to the big game draw process because applicants are required to purchase an annual game hunting license prior to applying. Additionally, this proposed change could cause unintended violations of licensing requirements because the particular license (game hunting) could potentially expire before the actual valid hunt dates occur. If a hunter is found to have an expired game hunting license while in the field and harvesting a big game species animal, the hunter could be charged with hunting without a valid license, unlawful killing, and unlawful possession of that animal.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

Because of all of the necessary changes to DGF’s licensing systems and SGC rules, and public outreach that would be required, the department requests SB246 not take effect until April 1, 2018.

JA/al/jle