



HOUSE BILL 640: Outdoor Heritage Act

2015-2016 General Assembly

Committee:	House Wildlife Resources	Date:	April 15, 2015
Introduced by:	Reps. Dixon, Malone, Lucas, Presnell	Prepared by:	Chris Saunders
Analysis of:	First Edition		Committee Counsel

SUMMARY: *House Bill 640 directs the Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) to study the establishment of the North Carolina Outdoor Heritage Trust Fund, establishes the Outdoor Heritage Advisory Council, creates several WRC studies, and makes various changes to WRC laws.*

CURRENT LAW AND BILL ANALYSIS:

Section 1 of the bill would direct the WRC, in conjunction with the Outdoor Heritage Advisory Council, to develop a plan for establishing and implementing the North Carolina Outdoor Heritage Trust Fund for Youth Outdoor Heritage Promotion. The Trust Fund would be used to provide for the expansion of outdoor opportunities for persons 16 years of age or younger, would be funded through voluntary check-off donations of not more than \$2.00 on transactions processed through WRC, and would be administered by the Outdoor Heritage Advisory Council.

Section 2 of the bill would establish the Outdoor Heritage Advisory Council (Council), an independent entity tasked with advising State agencies and the General Assembly on the promotion of outdoor recreational activities. The Council would have 11 members, 3 to be appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, 3 to be appointed by the Speaker of the House, 3 to be appointed by the Governor, 1 to be appointed by the Commissioner of Agriculture, and 1 to be appointed by the Chair of the Wildlife Resources Commission. The members would have staggered four-year terms. This section would become effective July 1, 2015.

Section 3 of the bill would direct the Legislative Research Commission (LRC) to study the need for expanded access to public lands, including the ways in which public land management plans affect opportunities to engage in outdoor recreational activities, and make recommendations on how to increase the public's opportunities to access public lands for outdoor recreational purposes.

Section 4 of the bill would require a two-year suspension of a hunting license for any individual who receives a third or subsequent conviction for trespassing on posted property for the purpose of hunting. Section 4 would also direct the WRC to review the statutes that provide for the suspension of hunting privileges for a conviction of criminally negligent hunting and make recommendations as to whether those provisions should be amended or expanded. The WRC must consult with organized hunting clubs and public interest groups in developing its findings.

Section 5 of the bill would allow hunting with firearms seven days a week, except that the following activities would be prohibited on Sunday: (i) hunting of migratory waterfowl; (ii) chasing deer with dogs, or permitting a dog or dogs to run or chase deer; and (iii) hunting within 300 yards of a place of worship or any accessory structure. After July 1, 2018, the statutory prohibition on hunting within 300 yards of a place of worship would be repealed and WRC would be required to enforce rules to restrict hunting times, locations, and manner of take on Sundays.

O. Walker Reagan
Director



Research Division
(919) 733-2578

* H 6 4 0 - S M T Q - 2 2 E 1 - V 2 *

House Bill 640

Page 2

Section 6 of the bill would require the WRC to amend its rules to provide that cub bears are those bears that weight at least 75 pounds. Currently, a cub bear is defined by WRC rule as weighing 50 pounds.

Section 7 of the bill would allow the WRC to restrict or prohibit the use of dogs for fox hunting during the breeding and raising season for game between April 1 and August 1, and would require the WRC to prohibit the use of dogs for fox hunting between April 1 and August 1 in Bladen Lakes State Forest Game Land. This section would become effective June 1, 2015.

Section 8 of the bill would codify a policy statement encouraging cooperative and neighborly agreements between landowners and hunters for the retrieval of hunting dogs, and would provide that any landowner or lessee who grants a hunter permission to enter the land to retrieve hunting dogs owes that hunter the same duty of care that the landowner or lessee would owe a trespasser.

Section 9 of the bill would require WRC offers to wear body cameras during the execution of a warrant that is based on information gathered during any undercover operation conducted by the WRC.

Section 10 contains a severability clause.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Except as otherwise provided, this act would become effective October 1, 2015.