



HOUSE BILL 747: 2025 Wildlife Resources Changes.

2025-2026 General Assembly

Committee:	House Finance. If favorable, re-refer to Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House	Date:	May 6, 2025
Introduced by:	Reps. Adams, Moss, Clampitt, Turner	Prepared by:	Trina Griffin Staff Attorney
Analysis of:	PCS to Second Edition H747-CSSVxfr-12		

OVERVIEW: House Bill 747 would do all of the following:

- *Authorize the Executive Director of the Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) to exempt from public disclosure certain records containing site-specific information on rare species or sensitive habitats.*
- *Authorize the Division of Motor Vehicles (i) to develop a new Lifetime Conservationist special registration plate, and (ii) to develop the Wildlife Resources special registration plate as a full-color background plate. It also makes a technical change to the Native Brook Trout plate by indicating that \$20 of the fee is transferred to the WRC.*
- *Make certain changes to the State's Boating Safety Laws in conformance with federal law.*
- *Increase from 3% to 3.25% the sales tax on boats and transfer 6% of the total net proceeds from the tax to the Wildlife Resources Fund.*

CURRENT LAW, BACKGROUND, AND BILL ANALYSIS:

SECTION 1: CONFIDENTIALITY OF WILDLIFE RESOURCE INFORMATION

The Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) is subject to the State's Public Records Law (Chapter 132 of the General Statutes) and is prohibited from intentionally communicating or otherwise making available to the general public a person's social security number and other identifying information, which (as applied to WRC) includes a person's mailing address, residential address, email address, and WRC-issued customer identification numbers.

Section 1 of the PCS would authorize the Executive Director of WRC to exempt records that contain site-specific information regarding the occurrence of certain rare species of plants or animals, or the location of sensitive habitats, from disclosure under the State's Public Records Law upon finding that disclosure would create a risk of harm, theft, or destruction to the species or habitat or the area where it is located. This section would not apply to a record requested by the landowner of the property where the rare species or sensitive habitat are located.

SECTION 2: AUTHORIZE DMV TO ISSUE LIFETIME CONSERVATIONIST AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES REGISTRATION PLATES

North Carolina offers a number of special registration plates. Upon application and payment of the required registration fees, a person may obtain from the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) a special registration plate for a motor vehicle registered in that person's name if the person qualifies for the plate.

Kara McCraw
Director



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The issuance of most authorized plates is contingent upon the receipt by the DMV of at least 300 applications for a standard background plate, or 500 applications for full-color background plates.

As a general rule, the fee for a special registration plate is the regular vehicle registration fee plus a \$10 special registration plate fee. The \$10 special registration plate fee is credited to the Special Registration Plate Account. The cost of some special plates includes a fee in addition to the \$10 special registration plate fee. In those instances, the first \$10 goes to the special registration plate fund and the remainder is transferred quarterly to designated beneficiaries.

In 2014, the General Assembly enacted legislation creating a development process for special registration plates, which requires the organization desiring the plate to submit the required number of paid applications to the DMV before legislation is introduced to authorize the plate. Once legislation has passed, the organization must submit the final artwork and list of paid applicants to the DMV within 60 days, or the authorization expires.

Section 2 would authorize the DMV to produce a new Lifetime Conservationist special registration plate, to be a standard background plate with the WRC's "North Carolina Lifetime Conservationist" logo. The special registration plate fee would be \$30, with \$20 going to the Wildlife Resources Fund to be used by WRC.

Section 2 would also authorize the DMV to produce the Wildlife Resources special registration plate as a full-color background plate with a picture in the background representing a native wildlife species occurring in North Carolina. The development of the Wildlife Resources special registration plate would not be subject to the minimum applications requirement nor the 60-day requirement for submitting final artwork. Currently, the DMV produces a Wildlife resources special registration plate as a standard background plate.

This section would also make a technical conforming change to reflect that \$20 of the current \$30 charge for the sale of each Native Brook Trout special registration plate is transferred to the WRC to be used to fund public access to and habitat protection of brook trout waters. The Native Brook Trout special registration plate was authorized by the General Assembly in S.L. 2013-376, which established a \$30 special registration plate fee.

Section 2 would become effective July 1, 2025.

SECTION 3: RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY CONFORMING PROGRAM CHANGES

Current State law provides a 90-day reciprocity period whereby the owner of a vessel already covered by an identification number pursuant to federal law or a federally approved numbering system of another State, does not have to record their vessel's identification in North Carolina unless it has been within this State for a period in excess of 90 consecutive days.

Section 3(a)-(b) would reduce the number of days that vessels registered out-of-State can be present in the waters of this State before having to register their vessel in North Carolina, from 90 days to 60 days.

The federal Inland Navigation Rules expressly applies to all vessels upon the inland waters of the United States (33 CFR § 83.01). Under current State law, however, only the following types of vessels operated on the waters of this State are expressly required to comply with the navigation rules: (i) vessels required under State law to obtain an identification number; (ii) vessels that have a valid marine document issued by the federal Bureau of Customs; and (iii) vessels issued an identification number pursuant to a federally approved numbering system of another state.

Section 3(c) would clarify that every vessel operated in the waters of this State is required to comply with the Inland Navigation Rules, not just numbered or documented vessels.

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Current State law requires that persons operating a personal watercraft that is equipped by the manufacturer with a lanyard-type engine cut-off switch must keep the lanyard securely attached to them at all times during operation.

Section 3(d) would revise this provision so as to apply to personal watercraft equipped with any sort of engine cut-off switch, not just lanyard-type engine cut-off switches.

This section would become effective October 1, 2025. Prosecutions for offenses committed before the effective date of this act would not be abated or affected by this act, and the statutes that would be applicable but for this act would remain applicable to those prosecutions.

SECTION 4: INCREASE STATE SALES AND USE TAX ON BOAT SALES

Under current State law, the sales price of each boat sold at retail, including all parts and accessories attached to the boat when it is delivered to the purchaser, is subject to the 3% State rate of sales and use tax with a maximum tax of one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500). The tax is computed on the sales price of the boat without any deduction for any trade-in credit or allowance. A boat sold at retail is not subject to any local or transit rates of sales and use tax.

Section 4(a) would increase the sales tax imposed on the sales price of each boat sold at retail, including all parts and accessories, from 3% to 3.25%.

Section 4(b) would transfer 6% of the net proceeds of the sales tax imposed on retail boat sales to the Wildlife Resources Fund.

This section would become effective October 1, 2025, and apply to sales occurring on or after that date.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Except as otherwise provided, this act would become effective when it becomes law.

**Aaron McGlothlin and Wendy Ray, staff attorneys with the Legislative Analysis Division, substantially contributed to this summary.*

