

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

2013 Session
Legislative Proposals



Jackie Fauls, Legislative Affairs Director
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Hunting/Fishing Licenses Veterans/Active Military Exemptions

- Recreational hunting/fishing licenses – create license exemption for special events designed for disabled veterans, rehabilitating and active military



This proposal would provide an exemption from the requirement to purchase a recreational hunting or fishing license for all persons participating in a Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission-permitted event where the primary purpose of the event is rehabilitation or enjoyment of disabled veterans or active duty military personnel, Reservists, Florida National Guard, and U.S. Coast Guard. This issue is supported by the Florida Dept. of Veterans Affairs, and the Florida Dept. of Military Affairs.

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**Hunting/Fishing Licenses
Veterans/Active Military Exemptions**

Commercial Saltwater Fishing License

- Through June 30, 2014 – veterans honorably discharged since Sept. 11, 2001 – allow one year after acquiring license to satisfy income requirement of Restricted Species endorsement
- Beginning July 1, 2014 – veterans honorably discharged in previous 4 years – allow one year after acquiring license to satisfy income requirement of Restricted Species endorsement
- Disabled Veterans – allow one year after acquiring license to satisfy income requirement of Restricted Species endorsement; reduce income requirement by half to \$2500



This proposal provides assistance to veterans who wish to become commercial fishers by waiving certain income requirements for one year. There are 3 components to the proposal:

- Through June 30, 2014, the income requirement to acquire a Restricted Species endorsement (RS) issued on a Saltwater Products License (commercial fishing license) would be waived for one year for all resident military veterans who have been honorably discharged from any branch of the United States Armed Forces, Reserves, Florida National Guard, and U.S. Coast Guard between September 11, 2001 and June 30, 2014. The income requirement is \$5000 or 25% of income in one of the last three years. The waiver would be allowed on an individual Saltwater Products License, not on a crew or vessel Saltwater Products License
- Beginning July 1, 2014, the income requirement to acquire an RS would be waived for one year for a resident military veteran who applies within 4 years after an honorable discharge from any branch of the United States Armed Forces, Reserves, Florida National Guard, and U.S. Coast Guard; the waiver would be allowed one time per military enlistment, and would be issued on an individual Saltwater Products License, not on a crew or vessel Saltwater Products License
- Finally, the proposal waives and reduces the income requirement to acquire an RS for one year for any honorably discharged resident military veteran who is certified to have at least a 10% service-connected disability by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces; the income requirement is reduced by half to \$2500.

This issue is supported by the Organized Fishermen of Florida, the Florida Dept. of Veterans Affairs, and the Florida Dept. of Military Affairs.

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Hunting/Fishing Licenses

- Free Fishing Days – authorize the Commission to designate 2 additional free freshwater fishing days and 2 additional saltwater fishing days annually
- Residency Requirement, Recreational – remove 6 month residency requirement for recreational licenses, due to new residency requirements of Real ID driver license
- Residency Requirement, Commercial – remove 6 month county residency requirement for commercial saltwater fishing licenses; retain 1-year state residency requirement



The Free Fishing Days proposal would authorize the Commission to increase the total number of license-free recreational saltwater fishing days from two to four, annually; and it would allow the Commission to increase the total number of license-free recreational freshwater fishing days from two to four, annually.

The Recreational Residency Requirement proposal would eliminate the six month residency requirement in order to obtain a resident recreational hunting or fishing license. It would require, however, that one of five documents that prove residency for other governmental agencies must be provided when acquiring a resident hunting or fishing license. Those documents include: 1) valid Florida driver's license; 2) current voter registration card; 3) sworn statement filed with the Clerk of the Court showing that the individual lives in the county and intends to keep the residence as the permanent home; 4) current homestead exemption; and 5) a child under 18 may use a student ID from a Florida school, or if accompanied by a parent, the parent's proof of residency.

The Commercial Residency Requirement proposal would delete the requirement for a resident saltwater commercial fisherman to prove six months residency in a Florida county in order to obtain a resident Saltwater Products License (commercial saltwater fishing license). It retains, however, the requirement that a commercial fisherman prove one-year residency in the State in order to obtain the resident license.

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Other Proposals

- **Wildlife Alert Rewards Program** – authorize courts to assess an additional fine on fish/wildlife violations to help fund Wildlife Alert
- **Navigation Rule reference** – remove antiquated reference to Federal law and replace with proper reference



The Wildlife Alert proposal pertains to the Wildlife Alert Reward Association, a non-profit organization that offers citizens rewards in exchange for information that leads to the arrest of poachers or others who violate Florida's fish and wildlife laws. This proposal would grant trial judges the discretion to assess fines for violations of fish and wildlife laws, over and above those fines already statutorily authorized, to be paid to the Wildlife Alert Reward Association. The amount of the fine, or whether to assess this additional fine at all, would be left to the discretion of the judge, with a cap on the upper limit of the fine. The cap would be the maximum fine authorized by the violation. This fine would not impact funds currently received by the clerks of court, the judiciary, or other state agencies.

The Navigation Rule reference proposal would remove antiquated references to Federal law and insert the proper references. The proposal would not change the way any vessel related activities are currently enforced in State waters.

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Staff Recommendation

- Approve proposals to be submitted to the Legislature for the 2013 Legislative Session
- Authorize Executive Director in consultation with the Chairman to make adjustments as needed on these proposals, and advise on other legislation, through the 2013 Legislative Session

