



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #515

### **Grouse and Woodcock Hunting Stamp (DNR -- Fish, Wildlife, and Recreation)**

[LFB 2005-07 Budget Summary: Page 355, #4]

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#### **CURRENT LAW**

Currently, the purchase of a small game license authorizes hunters to pursue both small game and unprotected species (which include gray squirrel, fox squirrel, cottontail rabbit, jack rabbit, snowshoe hare, bobwhite quail, ruffed grouse, Hungarian partridge, crow, mourning dove, woodcock, snipe, sora and Virginia rail, raccoon, fox, coyote, feral pig, opossum, skunk, weasel, starling, English sparrow, coturnix quail and chukar partridge). Certain species, including pheasant, waterfowl, bobcat, fisher, otter, and sharp tailed grouse, require special permits or stamps in addition to a small game license.

#### **GOVERNOR**

Create a hunting stamp for the pursuit of ruffed grouse and woodcock that must be purchased in addition to a small game or sports license. Set the fee for the stamp at \$10 (which includes a 15¢ issuing fee to be retained by the vendor). Add the grouse and woodcock hunting stamp to the privileges included with the purchase of a conservation patron license for both residents and nonresidents. Specify that all revenues received from the sale of this stamp be deposited in a new continuing appropriation to be used for developing, managing, preserving, restoring, and maintaining the wild ruffed grouse and woodcock population of the state. This provision would take effect on March 1, 2006, and is estimated by the administration to generate revenues totaling \$49,500 in 2006-07.

#### **DISCUSSION POINTS**

1. During license year 2004 (which closed in March, 2005), a combined 283,508

authorizations were issued that allowed the pursuit of small game in Wisconsin (including resident and nonresident small game, furbearing, sports, and conservation patron licenses). Through surveys and field contacts, the Department estimates that as many as 100,000 (or 35%) of small game hunters pursue ruffed grouse or woodcock, and at least 10% (or over 10,000) of those currently hunting grouse or woodcock do not purchase patron licenses and would continue to hunt grouse and woodcock, even if an additional stamp were required. This level of sales would be expected to generate approximately \$100,000 in 2006-07 (rather than the \$49,500 estimated under the Governor's budget). The administration indicates that the initial revenue estimate was based on a \$5 stamp fee (rather than \$10). The revenues were not adjusted when the fee was changed due to an oversight.

2. The Department indicates that the woodcock has been identified as a state "species of great concern," and that woodcock populations have declined by 39% statewide since 1968. Habitat surveys indicate that approximately 80% of the primary woodcock breeding areas in the United States are under private ownership, which complicates efforts to restore and protect the species preferred habitat. Ruffed grouse also face habitat concerns, with aspen cover (the species preferred habitat) in decline. As both species share similar habitat preferences (early successional forests), regeneration of aspen, alder, and oak habitats would benefit both species.

3. Proposed projects that may be funded through the stamp program, include conducting follow up work after timber cuttings to maximize aspen regeneration, increasing clover seeding for forage opportunity, maintaining and restoring herbaceous forest openings in state and county forests, promoting smaller aspen clear cuts at different times and interspersed geographically to keep habitat areas in different stages of succession, increasing shrub edge along forest openings, developing alder and aspen management plans for private landowners, conducting landowner workshops to provide information on the management of grouse and woodcock populations on private land, and conducting alder strip cuts to improve woodcock feeding and brood nesting habitat.

4. However, given the level of fee increases for fishing and hunting licenses over the last few years, it may be argued that charging a fee for a formerly free privilege may cause some resentment from small game hunters. The fee proposed by the Governor would price the grouse and woodcock stamp at the same level as the fees proposed for pheasant stamps, waterfowl stamps, resident extra turkey tags, and put and take pheasant permits.

5. An alternative may be to price the tag at \$5.25 (including a 15¢ issuing fee), the same price as a wild turkey hunting stamp. The lower fee may induce a larger number of small game hunters to purchase the stamp, making up for a portion of the revenue anticipated to be lost due to price resistance. If 15% of small game hunters who formerly pursued grouse and woodcock continued to do so and purchased the reduced-price stamp, revenues for grouse and woodcock habitat management could approach \$76,500 in 2006-07.

6. Finally, while the creation of a new appropriation for grouse and woodcock habitat maintenance was included under the bill, no estimation of anticipated expenditure authority was

provided. As a continuing, all monies received appropriation, DNR would have the authority to spend any revenues deposited to this appropriation. However, in order to more accurately reflect anticipated Department expenditures, the appropriation included in the bill should be reestimated to reflect anticipated revenues

**ALTERNATIVES**

1. Adopt the Governor's recommendation to create a hunting stamp for the pursuit of ruffed grouse and woodcock that must be purchased in addition to a small game or sports license. Set the fee for the stamp at \$10 (which includes a 15¢ issuing fee to be retained by the vendor). Add the grouse and woodcock hunting stamp to the privileges included with the purchase of a conservation patron license for both residents and nonresidents. Specify that all revenues received from the sale of this stamp be deposited in a new continuing appropriation to be used for developing, managing, preserving, restoring, and maintaining the wild ruffed grouse and woodcock population of the state. This provision would take effect on March 1, 2006.

<u>Alternative 1</u>	<u>SEG-REV</u>
2005-07 REVENUE (Change to Bill)	\$50,500

2. Adopt the Governor's recommendation. Further, provide \$100,000 SEG in 2006-07 to reflect anticipated revenues.

<u>Alternative 2</u>	<u>SEG-REV</u>	<u>SEG</u>
2005-07 REVENUE (Change to Bill)	\$50,500	
2005-07 FUNDING (Change to Bill)		\$100,000

3. Adopt the Governor's recommendation, except set the fee for the stamp at \$5.25 and provide \$76,500 SEG in 2006-07.

<u>Alternative 3</u>	<u>SEG-REV</u>	<u>SEG</u>
2005-07 REVENUE (Change to Bill)	\$27,000	
2005-07 FUNDING (Change to Bill)		\$76,500

4. Maintain current law.

<u>Alternative 4</u>	<u>SEG-REV</u>
2005-07 REVENUE (Change to Bill)	- \$49,500

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