

Article 7: Relating to the Environment

This article repeals the requirement that hunting and fishing regulations promulgated by the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) only remain in effect for one year after the date of effectiveness. The article also changes fees related to recreational hunting and fishing, as well as certain agriculture fees.

FISCAL IMPACT

The article is projected to increase general revenue generated from the collection of registration fees for pesticide products, commercial feed, and commercial fertilizer by \$1.4 million.

Changes to recreational hunting and fishing license fees are projected to increase restricted receipts by \$62,960 in FY2022. The article proposes three hunting and fishing fee increases over an eight-year period

Fishing and Wildlife Fees Increased Restricted Receipts	
FY2022	\$62,960
FY2026	187,840
FY2029	314,433

ANALYSIS AND BACKGROUND

Agriculture Fee Increases

The article increases fees paid by manufacturers or distributors to register pesticide, commercial feed, and commercial fertilizer products. The fees are deposited as general revenue. According to DEM, the increased fees would align with neighboring states.

Agriculture Fee Increases					Regional Agriculture Fees			
Fee	Current	Proposed	Change	Projected Revenue	Fee	RI		
						Proposed	MA	CT
Pesticide Product	\$200	\$300	\$100	\$842,900	Pesticide Product	\$300	\$300	\$188
Commercial Feed	60	100	40	460,640	Commercial Feed	100	100	80
Commercial Fertilizer	72	100	28	103,992	Commercial Fertilizer	100	250	75
Total Revenue				\$1,407,532				

Recreational Fishing and Hunting License Fees: The article repeals the requirement that hunting and fishing regulations promulgated by the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) only remain in effect for one year after the date of effectiveness. The administration asserts that repealing the requirement will reduce unnecessary work for the Division of Fish and Wildlife and, since there are minimal changes from year to year, there is no need for the automatic sunset. While most fees increase, junior hunting license fees decrease, and license fees for the disabled and those over 65 years of age remain free. The article also establishes a new category of hunting license for resident and non-resident juniors, and provides for fee changes to various recreational fishing and hunting licenses, as provided in the following table.

Article 7. Recreational Fishing and Hunting License Fees

License/Permit	Rhode Island				Massachusetts Fees	Connecticut Fees	Regional Average ¹
	Current Fee	FY2022 Fee	FY2026 Fee	FY2029 Fee			
Hunting	\$18.00	\$21.00	\$24.00	\$27.00	\$27.50	\$19.00	\$26.49
Hunting Jr.	18.00	14.00	14.00	14.00	11.50	10.00	8.11
Hunting - non-resident	45.00	55.00	65.00	75.00	65.50/99.50 ²	91.00	118.54
Hunting Jr. - non-resident	45.00	40.00	40.00	40.00	65.50/99.50 ²	91.00	47.49
Hunting Landowner - non-resident	18.00	21.00	24.00	27.00	n/a ³	n/a ³	n/a
Hunting Tourist 3-day - non-resident	16.00	20.00	20.00	20.00	n/a	35.00	42.63
Hunting Tourist Jr. 3-day - non-resident	16.00	16.00	16.00	16.00	n/a	n/a	n/a
Hunting Active Military - non-resident	18.00	21.00	24.00	27.00	27.50	19.00	26.49
Freshwater Fishing	18.00	21.00	24.00	27.00	27.50	28.00	25.09
Freshwater Fishing - non-resident	35.00	38.00	41.00	44.00	37.50	55.00	45.89
Freshwater Fishing Tourist 3-day - non-resident	16.00	18.00	20.00	22.00	23.50	22.00	17.84
Freshwater Fishing Active Military - non-resident	18.00	21.00	24.00	27.00	27.50	28.00	25.09
Freshwater Fishing Disabled	0.00						
Freshwater Fishing Permanent over 65 yrs.	0.00						
Combination	33.00	38.00	43.00	48.00	n/a	40.00	50.65
Combination Disabled	0.00						
Combination Permanent over 65 years	0.00						
Trapping	10.00	15.00	20.00	25.00	35.50	34.00	25.29
Fur Buyer	10.00						
Trapping - non-resident	30.00	50.00	75.00	100.00	200.00	250.00	192.32
Fur Buyer non-resident	30.00						
Game Bird Permit	15.50	17.00	18.50	21.00	n/a	25.00	28.58
Deer Permit	12.50	13.00	14.00	15.00	5.00	19.00	15.61
Deer Permit All Outdoors Package	75.00	75.00	75.00	75.00	n/a	n/a	n/a
Deer Permit - non-resident	25.50	26.50	27.50	28.50	5.00	68.00	29.11
Turkey Permit Spring	7.50	8.00	9.00	10.50	5.00	28.00	18.11
Turkey Permit Spring - non-resident	20.00	21.50	23.00	24.50	5.00	28.00	25.61
Turkey Permit Fall Archery	7.50	8.00	9.00	10.50	5.00	28.00	18.11
Turkey Permit Fall Archery - non-resident	20.00	21.00	23.00	24.50	5.00	28.00	25.61
Trout Stamp	5.50	5.50	6.00	6.50	n/a	5.00	10.22
Waterfowl Stamp	7.50	8.00	9.00	10.00	5.00	17.00	8.99/9.88 ⁴

¹Regional Average includes MA, CT, ME, NH, VT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, and PA.

²MA charges \$65.50 for a nonresident small game hunting license (includes all game except deer, bear, and turkey), and \$99.50 for big game hunting (includes deer, bear, and turkey).

³Ma and CT do not offer this license - nonresident landowners must obtain a regular nonresident hunting license.

⁴Resident/non-resident

According to DEM, the changes bring Rhode Island Fishing and Wildlife fees more in line with neighboring states. In addition, the fee collections provide the state match for federal funds used to administer the State's fish and wildlife programs. The Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) relies primarily on fee collections and federal funds to administer the State's fish and wildlife programs; consequently, Rhode Island's low fee structure has made it difficult for the DFW to unlock all the available federal funding.

Rhode Island receives federal funding through two separate laws – the Wildlife Restoration Act (aka "Pittman-Robertson) and the Sport Fish Restoration Act (aka Dingell-Johnson). Funds for the Wildlife Restoration Act are derived from a federal excise tax on the sale of firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment. Similarly, funds for the Sport Fish Restoration Act are derived from a federal excise tax on fishing equipment, certain motorboat fuels, and import duties.

These funds are collected by the federal government and then apportioned to each state on an annual basis using a formula set in federal law. The use of these funds is tightly restricted by both state and federal law to purposes that directly benefit fish and wildlife purposes. Notably, the federal government requires as a condition of providing the funding that the state dedicates this funding solely to the state fish and wildlife agency (in our case, DEM Fish and Wildlife and DEM Marine Fisheries) pursuant to statute. Consequently, Rhode Island is required by statute (Title 20, Chapter 20-9-3) to restrict revenues raised from fees on

hunting, fishing, and related licenses to fish and wildlife purposes and these funds are used to provide the state match for the federal funding made available through the two programs.

In recent years, federal funding has increased rapidly as sales of firearms and ammunition have increased and revenue from license fees has not been sufficient to provide the full amount of state match needed. DEM has been able to utilize in-kind contributions and other sources of state match to access federal funding, but these methods are unlikely to prove sufficient in the future. The proposed fee increases occur in three steps over eight years to provide a predictable and measured increase that is need to ensure the state's fees remain competitive with our neighbors, keep pace with the rising costs of programming, and provide an increased state match.

The proposal is estimate to increase restricted receipts by \$62,960 in FY2022, \$187,340 in FY2026, and \$314,433 in FY2029. The additional revenue is projected to leverage additional federal funds at a ratio of 1:3, resulting in a corresponding increase in federal funds of \$188,880 in FY2022, \$563,520 in FY2026, and \$943,299 in FY2029.

Analyst Note: While the article does not provide a definition for "junior", RIGL 20-13-5(1), Issuance of Licenses, provides that a junior hunting license may be obtained for persons 12 to 14 years of age upon completion of a basic hunter's safety course, and provided they only hunt in the immediate company of a qualified, license adult 21 years of age or over. Otherwise, a person must be at least 15 years of age to obtain a hunting license.