



Fiscal Note for Proposed Rabbit Season Extension Rule Amendment for the Wildlife Resources Commission

Rule Amendments: 15A NCAC 10B .0207 RABBITS

Agency Contact: Michael Smallwood
Policy Analyst
NC Wildlife Resources Commission
1751 Varsity Drive, Raleigh, NC
919-707-0014
Michael.smallwood@ncwildlife.org

Impact: State Government: Yes
Local Government: No
Private Impact: Yes
Substantial Economic Impact: No

Authority: G.S. 113-134; 113-291.2

BACKGROUND

The wildlife resources of the State belong to the people of the State, including the enjoyment of these resources (G.S. 113-131(a)). The Wildlife Resources Commission (hereinafter WRC or Commission) is tasked with the conservation of wildlife resources of the State (G.S. 143-239). This responsibility includes managing as equitably as possible the various competing interests regarding these resources, including the use and take of such resources (G.S. 113-131.1(a)). The statutes governing wildlife resources are found in Chapter 113, Subchapter IV of the General Statutes, and WRC has been granted rulemaking authority to implement the provisions of these statutes (G.S. 113-134). In accordance with the supply of wildlife and other factors it determines to be of public importance, the WRC may fix seasons and bag limits upon the wild animals and wild birds authorized to be taken that it deems necessary or desirable in the interests of the conservation of wildlife resources (G.S. 113.291.2(a)).

A summary of the proposed rule amendment is shown below, with the full text included in Appendix A.

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The proposed amendment to this Rule will advance the start day of rabbit hunting season to the Monday on or nearest October 15, instead of the Saturday before Thanksgiving.

The proposed change contains the following features:

- Aligns the start of rabbit hunting season with the start of squirrel, grouse, bobcat, raccoon, opossum, and the extended rabbit season for falconry promoting rule simplification.
- Provides 33 additional hunting days on the front-end of the existing hunting season when rabbit populations are at their annual peak, and the effects of hunting mortality are lowest.
- Addresses rabbit hunters' requests for more hunting opportunity outside the regular deer gun season.
- Provides more rabbit hunting opportunity and harvest that will not impair long-term sustainability of the population.

Fiscal Impact

State Impact

This rule amendment has the potential to benefit the state by increasing hunting license sales, as it is possible that the additional hunting opportunity could provide additional hunter recruitment. However, this benefit is unquantifiable due to lack of data.

Local Impact

This rule has no local government impact.

Private Impact

Fiscal impacts are expected to be limited to those local rabbit hunters who take advantage of the additional hunting days. Although the Commission does not have a mechanism to determine the fiscal impact of this opportunity, economic research on the value individuals place on hunting can provide useful context for rules that affect opportunities for this activity. Taking the median of the findings across multiple studies, researchers have estimated that the value of hunting per person per day is approximately \$63.¹

This figure represents individuals' total willingness to pay to engage in the activity, less the cost to do so. It does not represent any economic activity generated by the activity, such as retail sales. Additionally, this estimate is not species or location-specific. However, to the extent that the proposed rule induces hunters to increase or decrease their trips in particular areas of the state, these findings provide a rough approximation of the costs or benefits to the individual. Unfortunately, due to lack of data, the Commission is unable to estimate the potential fiscal impacts at this time.

¹ Rosenberger, Randall S.; White, Eric M.; Kline, Jeffrey D.; Cvitanovich, Claire. 2017. Recreation economic values for estimating outdoor recreation economic benefits from the National Forest System. Gen. Tech. Rep. PNWGTR-957. Portland, OR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station. 33 p.

APPENDIX A

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- (a) Rabbit Open Season: The open season for taking rabbits shall be from the Saturday before Thanksgiving Day Monday on or nearest October 15 through the last day of February.
- (b) Rabbit Bag Limits: The daily bag limit for rabbits is five and there are no season and no possession limits.
- (c) Rabbit Box-traps: During the hunting season specified in Paragraph (a) of this Rule and subject to the bag limits set forth in Paragraph (b) of this Rule, rabbits may be taken with box-traps. A valid hunting license shall serve as a transportation permit for live rabbits taken pursuant to this Rule.

History Note: Authority G.S. 113-134; 113-274; 113-291.1; 113-291.2;

Eff. February 1, 1976;

Amended Eff. July 1, 1987; July 1, 1986; July 1, 1985; July 1, 1984;

Temporary Amendment Eff. August 1, 1998;

Amended Eff. August 1, 2018; May 1, 2008; April 1, 1999.