

- 4) Requires, for both transfer programs, during the take of the animal, if the tag recipient is a child, that the child be accompanied by their parent, legal guardian, or grandparent, or any combination of those persons, and for the nonprofit transfer, that a person from the organization also accompany the child.
- 5) Authorizes CDFW to collect a fee from the transferor to cover the reasonable cost of transferring the tag; allows CDFW to collect a fee from the nonprofit organization to cover the reasonable cost of registering the organization and a fee to cover the reasonable cost of processing a request to transfer a tag; requires CDFW to deposit fee revenues into the Big Game Management Account (BGMA); and authorizes CDFW to adopt regulations to implement the transfer programs.

FISCAL EFFECT:

CDFW anticipates its costs to facilitate the transfer of hunting tags to family members and nonprofit organizations to be minor and absorbable (Fish and Game Preservation Fund (FGPF)).

The bill authorizes CDFW to collect fees to cover the reasonable costs of implementing the transfer programs and requires the department to deposit revenues into the BGMA (housed in the FGPF). CDFW charges fees (in varying amounts depending on the species and the hunter's residency) for hunting licenses, big game tag drawing applications, and the big game tags themselves. For example, a nonresident hunting license costs \$219.81, an elk tag drawing application costs \$8.13, and a nonresident elk tag costs \$1,825.85. In 2025, CDFW collected the following amounts from drawing application and tag fees: approximately \$7.8 million for deer, \$237,000 for pronghorn antelope, \$531,000 for elk, \$157,000 for bighorn sheep, and \$1.8 million for bear.

The Legislature established the BGMA account in 2010 to ensure funds generated through the purchase of big game tags are used for acquiring land, completing projects, implementing programs to benefit species, expanding public hunting opportunities, and related public outreach, and supporting administrative and enforcement costs. Through the Big Game Grant Program, CDFW makes grants to reimburse, or enter into contracts with, non-profit organizations for the use of BGMA funds to carry out various purposes.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

[This bill] focuses on improving access to hunting opportunities for families and for terminally ill and disabled kids and veterans. This bill is about making sure the traditions of hunting do not fade away, especially for the next generation. If an adult in the family draws a tag but can't use it, [this bill] would allow them to pass that opportunity down to a young hunter in the same hunt—so that the chance to learn and participate does not go to waste. This bill would make it easier for young hunters to get out in the field with their dad or grandpa—learning the skills, the respect for the land, and the stories that come with it.

- 2) **Background.** CDFW issues tags for five big game mammals (pronghorn antelope, elk, deer, bear, and bighorn sheep); a tag is required, in addition to a hunting license, to hunt these species. As the number of interested hunters far exceeds the quota numbers for some of these species, CDFW holds drawings using a modified preference point system for premium deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, and bighorn sheep hunts. In 2024, one drawing for a bighorn sheep hunt drew 1,913 applicants for a single quota spot, and many hunts across species drew hundreds of applicants for single-digit quota spots. Additionally, hunters are limited to a single tag per year for bear, elk, and pronghorn antelope, two tags per year for deer, and a single tag per lifetime for bighorn sheep.

Under the modified preference point system, applicants who enter a drawing but are unsuccessful accumulate a “preference point,” which improves that applicant’s odds in subsequent years (for each hunt, a portion of tags is drawn randomly from all applicants, and a portion is drawn from the pool of applicants with the most preference points). When an applicant is drawn for a tag, they lose all accumulated preference points for that species. Young people in particular face long odds, as they typically have far fewer preference points than hunters who have been entering drawings for decades.

When a personal conflict or health concerns prevent hunting (bighorn sheep hunts, for instance, occur mostly in extremely rugged terrain above 10,000 feet in elevation), sometimes hunters are unable to use the tags they have been awarded. Under existing law, if a hunter is unable to hunt for any reason, they may, before the season begins, return their tag to CDFW for a refund and reinstatement of preference points. Tag return to CDFW is the only lawful option currently available to hunters who are unable to use their tags (other than simply not utilizing the tag), as transfer of the tag to any other person is prohibited under existing law.

The California Rifle & Pistol Association writes:

AB 2207 provides a practical, targeted solution by facilitating tag transfers specifically for youth, helping more young Californians experience the outdoors, learn sustainable wildlife management, and develop a lifelong connection to conservation. This approach supports the Department of Fish and Wildlife’s mission to promote public use and enjoyment of fish and wildlife resources while increasing hunter recruitment and retention – critical for funding habitat conservation through license fees and excise taxes.

Analysis Prepared by: Nikita Koraddi / APPR. / (916) 319-2081