
THIRD READING

Bill No: SB 1021
Author: Choi (R), et al.
Amended: 4/7/26
Vote: 21

SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 7-0, 3/24/26
AYES: Becker, Seyarto, Allen, Cabaldon, Grove, Laird, Stern

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 5/14/26
AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

SUBJECT: Fishing and hunting: youth program

SOURCE: Field of Dreams, Inc.

DIGEST: This bill requires, contingent upon appropriation, the California Fish and Game Commission (commission) to develop and establish a program to increase opportunities to fish and hunt for youth with life-threatening illness, sets certain program requirements, including hunter education, authorizes the commission to provide reasonable accommodations, requires a legislative report containing information about the program, and sunsets on January 1, 2033, among other provisions, as provided.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the commission and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (department) in the California Natural Resources Agency. The department is led by its director.
- 2) Requires the commission to determine the form of all licenses, permits, tags, reservations, and other entitlements issued pursuant to the Fish and Game Code, and the method of carrying and displaying all licenses, and requires the department to prepare and issue all licenses, permits, tags, reservations, and

other entitlements, as provided. Requires both the commission and the department to establish fees in an amount sufficient to recover all reasonable administration implementation costs of the department and commission relating to the program for which the fee is paid. (Fish and Game Code (FGC) §1050)

- 3) Declares the legislative intent that the costs of hunting and sport fishing programs shall be provided out of hunting and sport fishing revenues and reimbursements and federal funds received for hunting and sport fishing programs, and other funds appropriated by the Legislature for this purpose, as specified. (FGC §711)
- 4) Requires a resident or a nonresident, 16 years of age or older, upon payment of a specified fee, to be issued a 365-day sport fishing license. The angler must possess the license while fishing. (FGC §7149.05) Requires a resident or nonresident to be issued a hunting license upon payment of a specified fee, as provided. (FGC §3031)
- 5) Makes it unlawful to:
 - a) Take or possess a bird, mammal, fish, reptile, or amphibian except as provided by the Fish and Game Code or applicable regulations, as specified. (FGC §§2000, 2002)
 - b) Transfer licenses, tags, validations, permits, applications, or reservations to another person. (FGC §1052)
 - c) Use or possess any license, tag, validation, permit, application, or reservation not lawfully issued to the user. (FGC §1052)
 - d) Hunt any game bird or mammal without having the required licenses, tags, and/or stamps in possession. (FGC §1054.2)
- 6) Defines “life-threatening illness” to mean the individual has an illness that can lead to a possibility of a termination of life within five years or less as stated in writing by his or her attending physician and surgeon. (Health and Safety Code §1250(i)(2)(B))

Existing regulation defines “big game” to mean deer (*genus Odocoileus*), elk (*genus Cervus*), pronghorn antelope (*genus Antilocarpa*), black bear (*genus Ursus*), and Nelson big horn sheep (*subspecies Ovis canadensis nelsoni*) found in certain locations, as specified. (Title 14, Code of California Regulations, §350)(14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) 350).

This bill:

- 1) Requires the commission to establish a program to increase opportunities to fish, and to hunt big game, upland game birds, and migratory game birds for youth with life-threatening illness on or before January 1, 2028.
- 2) Requires the commission in developing the program to consult through a public process with the department and interested nonprofit organizations that have goals and objectives directly related to the management and conservation of fish, big game, upland game, and migratory game species and primarily represent licensed anglers and hunters.
- 3) Requires the program to include, but not be limited to:
 - a) A prohibition on the waiver of hunter education requirements, as provided.
 - b) The department is required to take into consideration any potential allocation or an animal or animals to the program when determining the number of opportunities to be made available to take species with limited populations where tags are available by auction or lottery only.
 - c) The department director is required to notify the commission of any program activities at commission meetings.
 - d) The commission is authorized to establish special hunts for the program, as specified.
- 4) Requires the commission in establishing and implementing the program to provide reasonable accommodations for participants in accordance with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and any applicable state laws, as provided.
 - a) Accommodations include, but are not limited to, the presence of a qualified assistant during a hunt or modifications to the method of take, as provided.
- 5) Provides that nothing precludes the commission from granting reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities or limits the commission's existing authority to adopt regulations to implement the program, as provided.
- 6) Requires the department on or before January 1, 2032 to prepare and submit a report to the relevant legislative policy and budget committees including the number and types of opportunities provided, the number of youth who participated, the date or dates of participation, participating non-profit organizations, all department and commission costs in developing and implementing the program and any recommendations to improve the program, among other information, as provided.

- 7) Defines “big game” to be the same as identified in 14 CCR 350. Defines “life-threatening illness” to mean an illness that can lead to a possibility of a termination of life within five years or less, as provided.
- 8) Provides that implementation of all provisions is contingent upon appropriation by the Legislature, as provided. Sunsets all provisions on January 1, 2033, as provided.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- Unknown but likely significant ongoing costs (General Fund or special fund). The Department of Fish and Wildlife reports that the fiscal impact of the bill is unknown at this time without knowing the full magnitude of the program the Commission might develop. Unknown impacts include, but are not limited to, staff time and resources required to create, implement, and administer the program on an ongoing basis.

SUPPORT: (Verified 5/14/26)

Field of Dreams, Inc. (sponsor)
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
Black Pearl Sportfishing
Cal-Ore Wetland and Waterfowl Council
California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association
California Deer Association
California Houndsmen for Conservation
California Hawking Club
California Waterfowl Association
Captain Rollo’s Kids at Sea
Coastal Charters
Coastal Conservation Association
Dana Landing
Dana Wharf Sportfishing
Fish Emeryville
Grasslands Water District
Hunt of a Lifetime
Marina Del Rey Anglers
National Wild Turkey Association – California State Chapter
Outdoor Sporting Caucus Adv. Com.
Reel Guppy Outdoors

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
San Diego County Wildlife Federation
San Diego Rod and Reel Club
Santa Barbara Landing
Stoked on Fishing
Suisun Resource Conservation District
The Black Brant Group
The Origins Foundation
The Wild Sheep Foundation – California Chapter
Tulare Basin Wetlands Association

OPPOSITION: (Verified 5/14/26)

Angel's Furry Friends Rescue
Animal Cruelty Club, Hueneme High School
Animal Rescue Mission
Animal Rescuers for Change
Animal Wellness Action
Berkeley Animal Rights Center
betterTogether Forever
Born Again Animal Rescue and Adoption
Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife
Compassion Bay
Concerned Citizens Animal Rescue Inc.
Direct Action Everywhere
EartHeart
Feline Lucky Adventures
Giantmecha Syndicate
Greater Los Angeles Animal Spay Neuter Collaborative
Hugs and Kisses Animal Fund
Jamie Brianna's Legacy Fund
Latino Alliance for Animal Care Foundation
Leaders for Ethics, Animals, & the Planet
Lockwood Animal Rescue Center
Long Beach Spay & Neuter Foundation
Los Angeles Democrats for the Protection of Animals
NY4Whales
Pet Loss Support Group
Pibbles n Kibbles Animal Rescue
Plant-Based Advocates
Project Minnie

RABBIT SAVIOR

Real Good Rescue

Seeds 4 Change Now

Senior Citizens for Humane Education and Legislation

Social Compassion in Legislation

START Rescue

The Canine Condition

The Spayce Project

Underdog Heroes, Inc.

Women for Wolves

Women United for Animal Welfare

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the author, “Each year in the United States, tens of thousands of children are diagnosed with a life-threatening illness such as cancer, cystic fibrosis, or chronic heart condition. There are thousands of children with these illnesses in California that simply want to go hunting or fishing one last time. For the vast majority of these children, they do not have the luxury of waiting for the extremely small chance of being allowed to hunt or fish under California’s existing permit and tag systems. For example, in order to get a tag to hunt elk, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, and premium deer in California, the [department] only accepts applications from April 15 through June 2 of each year. SB 1021 creates hunting and fishing experiences specifically tailored to children with life-threatening illnesses. This bill is about getting children out in nature, creating unforgettable experiences, and fostering the next generation of conservationists in California.”

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: Writing in a joint opposition letter, Social Compassion in Legislation states “While we sincerely appreciate the goal of providing terminally ill youth and children [...] opportunities to enjoy California’s great outdoors and wildlife, we believe that [commission] and [department] resources would be better directed toward programs which provide opportunities to enjoy the same, but without the need to kill an animal in the process.”

They continue, “Exposure to nature can provide proven emotional and mental health benefits through peaceful engagement, conservation education, outdoor recreation, and wildlife observation. Additionally, directing the [commission] to partner primarily with hunting-interest organizations limits broader perspectives and excludes conservation groups focused on the enjoyment of our wildlife with non-lethal activities.”

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5/18/26 15:18:00

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