

**CONFIDENTIAL**  
**LEGISLATIVE BILL REVIEW FORM: 2014**

Bill Number: H.589

Name of Bill: Fish and Wildlife hunting, fishing, trapping

Agency/Dept.: Fish and Wildlife Author of Bill Review: Catherine Gjessing

Date of Bill Review: February 6, 2014

Status of Bill (check one):

☐ Upon Introduction ☒ As passed by 1<sup>st</sup> body ☐ As passed by both bodies ☐ Fiscal

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**Recommended Position:**

☒ Support ☐ Oppose ☐ Remain Neutral ☐ Support with modifications identified in #8 below

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**Analysis of Bill**

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**1. Summary of bill and issue it addresses.** *Describe what the bill is intended to accomplish and why.*

This bill addressed multiple provisions related to hunting and trapping, including streamlining the process for setting annual migratory bird hunting regulations, closing a loophole related to captive hunt facilities, shifting the authority for developing regulations on deer rifle season to the Fish and Wildlife Board, addressing shooting from a public highway, reducing the veteran disability eligibility for free licenses, providing flexibility regarding fish and wildlife licenses plates, and allowing the Department to issue permits for the possession of feathers for cultural and ceremonial uses.

**2. Is there a need for this bill?** *Please explain why or why not.* Yes. The Fish and Wildlife Department strongly supports all of the proposed changes to improve internal management, better customer service for our constituents, enhance protection of wildlife habitats and species, and provide opportunities for more effective, efficient, and science-based management of wildlife species

**3. What are likely to be the fiscal and programmatic implications of this bill for this Department?**

Additional funds will be generated as a result of an additional license plate and the corresponding legislative authority to allocate the funds to conservation camps. Scientific wildlife management will be more efficiently applied and the public input process enhanced through the transition of authority for deer hunting and snaring to the F&W board and the streamlining of the rule making process for migratory birds. The decrease of eligibility requirements for veterans brings Vermont in line with other states and has been a priority for the licensing division.

**4. What might be the fiscal and programmatic implications of this bill for other departments in state government, and what is likely to be their perspective on it?** There may be additional funds generated by license plates. The amount is unknown. Currently, the Department collects approximately \$150,000 to 170,000 in funds. Any increase will likely be offset by decreases in hunting license revenues associated with free veterans licenses.

**5. What might be the fiscal and programmatic implications of this bill for others, and what is likely to be their perspective on it?** *(for example: public, municipalities, organizations, business, regulated entities, etc.)*  
None

*Please return this bill review as a Microsoft Word document to [Drusilla.roessle@state.vt.us](mailto:Drusilla.roessle@state.vt.us)*

## 6. Other Stakeholders:

6.1 Who else is likely to support the proposal and why? Hunters, veterans, the general public

6.2 Who else is likely to oppose the proposal and why? Depending on the language of the bill relating to the collection and possession of feathers, the Abnaki proponents may oppose that portion of the bill, if possession is linked to federal permitting or approval.

7. **Rationale for recommendation:** *Justify recommendation stated above.* Currently veterans have to be 100% disabled in order to be eligible for a free license. This is inconsistent with neighboring states. The Department recommends reducing the disability requirement to 60% to conform with other states in the region. A loophole exists in current statute that would allow for cooperative ventures related to fenced/captive hunting. The Department recommends clarifying language that prohibits individuals, hunt clubs, associations, corporations, or multiple landowners from transporting, possessing, fencing and hunting animals in an enclosure. The bill clarifies that muzzle loaders are firearms that that cannot be shot across a public highway or within 25 feet of the traveled portion of a highway. Under current law, the Department annually proposes the migratory bird hunting regulations, including seasons and bag limits to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board through APA rule-making process. The federal government, through the US Fish & Wildlife Service, sets the hunting season and bag limits however, this framework is not finalized and sent to Vermont until August. As a result, the Department has had to establish waterfowl hunting regulations via the emergency rule process. To provide better customer service, the Department proposes to set the waterfowl permit numbers by procedure. The Department will still hold public hearings on waterfowl hunting, as it historically has done. The bill also provides flexibility regarding the number and funding options related to Fish and Wildlife license plates so that the Department can use the funding from an additional plate to support conservation camps.

8. **Specific modifications that would be needed to recommend support of this bill:** *Not meant to rewrite bill, but rather, an opportunity to identify simple modifications that would change recommended position.*

Commissioner has reviewed this document: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary has reviewed this document: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_