

Wildlife...

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Last fall, the Constitutional Revision and Recreation Committee voted not to introduce a bill to these effects, with full committee sponsorship. In committee chairman Sen. George Syas' words, the fee increases were "too much, too fast," for Nebraska outdoor sports enthusiasts to bear.

Columbus Sen. Donald Dworak, who voted against committee sponsorship of the bill, this session introduced LB861 containing the rate increases.

Wildlife habitat shrinking

Dworak said that since 1973, 600,000 acres of prime wildlife habitat have been lost to agriculture. Those acres had been set aside for crop production control by the federal government. This year more acres covered by the federal cropland adjustment program, keeping land out of agricultural production, will expire.

According to Nebraska Department of Agriculture statistics, there are 3 million more acres of Nebraska land under cultivation than there were in 1972. Not all of that land was wildlife habitat, and there is no measure of exactly how much of it was.

Further, Nebraska has lost 85 per cent of its wetlands habitat, mostly in the south-central Nebraska rain basin, according to Dworak. He said center-pivot irrigation, a practice of increasing popularity among farmers, has accounted for much of the reduction in shelter-belt habitat.

Larry Morris, a Game and Parks Commission administrator, said measures of available nesting cover for game birds, and game bird counts made by rural mail carriers have fallen correspondingly since 1950.

Some legislators, without specifically opposing fee increases, have wondered aloud why hunters, trappers and fishermen have to bear the entire load of saving wildlife habitat.

Sportsmen's clubs, representing those who will be paying most, are unanimous in their support for almost anything that will preserve game, even if it means doubling the fees they pay.

NRDs could help

One way the Game and Parks Commission may receive taxpayer's money from LB861 is through the 24 Natural

Nebraska Resource Districts (NRD), each having taxing power of up to 1 mill. If the bill is passed, 40 per cent of the \$2.7 million the bill generates will be applied to cost share programs with the NRDs. The districts would be able to put up about \$300,000 to the Game and Parks Commission's \$1 million to pay private landowners to fence off wildlife habitat, plant cover or leave existing cover alone.

Another \$700,000 would be used by the Commission strictly to buy land for wildlife habitat.

Of the remaining \$1 million, \$600,000 would be spent on development and management of public lands for wildlife and \$400,000 for the increase in operating costs, including more full-and part-time employees, the bill would produce.

Bill Bailey, assistant director of the Game and Parks Commission, said \$2.7 million is what the bill would raise, assuming the volume of licenses issued does not decline because of the increased costs. He said with the NRD money, and funds from federal excise taxes on recreational equipment and the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, the \$2.7 million could become about \$5.2 million.

Lewis opposes bill

One opponent of the bill, reported to the floor of the Legislature Tuesday, is Bellevue Sen. Frank Lewis.

He said he is a devoted supporter of providing habitat for wildlife, but that LB861 is a "band-aid approach."

The fee increases are a serious injustice to sportsmen, he said, and they should not be required to carry the entire load.

He said he advocates a long-range planning-and-financing-from-state-tax-funds approach to insure wildlife habitat.

Game and Parks Commissioners and staff have contemplated such a plan, but considered it politically unfeasible this year, administrator Morris said. They are planning a campaign for state tax money during the next legislative session, he said.

Missouri has a tax on soft drinks which is projected to raise \$15 million for its game fund this year, he added.

Whatever method is selected, in Dworak's words, "wildlife habitat does not have time on its side."

The present Game and Parks Commission game fees, and the changes proposed in LB861 are as follows:

| Permit | present fee | proposed fee (LB861) |
|------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Upland game stamp | \$ 1 | — |
| Habitat stamp | — | \$7.50 |
| Resident hunting | 4.50 | 6.50 |
| Resident fishing | 4.00 | 7.50 |
| Resident hunt/fish | 8.00 | 13.50 |
| Resident turkey | 5.00 | 15.00 |
| Resident trapping | 3.50 | 7.00 |
| Resident fur buyer | 10.00 | 100.00* |
| Non-resident hunting | 25.00 | 30.00 |
| Non-resident fishing | | |
| Annual | 15.00 | 20.00 |
| 5-day | 5.00 | 7.50 |
| Non-resident turkey | 15.00 | 35.00 |
| Non-resident deer | 35.00 | 50.00 |
| Non-resident antelope | 35.00 | 50.00 |
| Non-resident trapping | 100.00 | 200.00 |
| Non-resident fur buyer | 100.00 | 300.00 |

*Resident fur buyers' permit fees probably will be amended to \$50. Resident deer and antelope permits would remain \$15. Habitat acquisition under LB861 essentially is intended for smaller game.

CLEP tests allow testing out of class

Getting college credit for classes you have not taken is not a myth. It's possible to test out of classes if a score above fifty percentile is obtained on the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests.

The nationally accepted tests are available for students who want to bypass a class because they already know the material covered in the course, said Shirley Thomsen, UNL assistant director of registration and records of academic services.

English, humanities, mathematics, natural sciences and social sciences-history are covered in the general examination, a one hour objective test.

Tests in history, biology, sociology, chemistry and foreign languages relate to specific college courses.

CLEP tests are given the third week of every month at the University Examinations Service, Seaton Hall 1222. A completed registration form and a check or money order must be received three weeks before the examination date.

There is a \$20 fee for taking one test and \$30 for taking two. March 23 is the registration deadline for the April 14th test.



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