

Wild Perspective

Hunters' Dollars to Stay in West Virginia

For many years, some of the hard-earned money that West Virginia hunters spent on their guns, ammunition and other hunting equipment ended up going to other states. That is going to change in 2012, thanks to a new law passed this past legislative session.

Starting with Congressional passage of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act in 1937, a tax has been levied on the manufacturers of hunting equipment. As with most taxes, that tax is passed on to the consumer in the price of guns, shells and other equipment. All that money from around the country is given to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The funds are then distributed to each of the states based on a formula that involves the amount of land area in the state and the number of hunting license holders in the state. Far-reaching language inserted into the 1937 bill stated that the funds could only be used for wildlife management activities. West Virginia currently receives \$3.5 million to \$4 million each year of these "federal aid" funds.

One problem is that once our residents turn 65, they no longer need a base hunting license and are no longer counted as a license buyer. The purchase of additional stamps doesn't count them as a license buyer. So what has happened to the millions of dollars of tax money they have spent on hunting equipment? It has gone to other states which have more license holders, including those which for years have asked their senior citizens to buy a license.

Simply put, the result of this bill is that the WV DNR will receive additional money each year to spend on wildlife management efforts and law enforcement activities related to hunting and fishing.

Residents who turn 65 after January 1, 2012, will have to buy a \$25 Lifetime Senior Hunting, Trapping and Fishing License. Nonresident seniors have always had to buy a base hunting license so they are not affected by this bill. I encourage even those who have been "grandfathered" in and are thus exempt from having to buy the license, to make this one-time purchase to benefit themselves and future generations. Thanks for helping keep your money in Wild, Wonderful West Virginia.



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