

Modify Fish and Wildlife Violations



2025 Agency Request Legislation



With more than 160 commissioned law enforcement personnel statewide, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Police enforce laws and regulations related to human-wildlife conflict, hunting and fishing, and the protection of fish, wildlife, and their habitats. WDFW officers enforce laws in state and federal waters, parks, and forest lands. Their unique capabilities, assets, and jurisdiction mean officers also respond to public safety issues such as dangerous wildlife encounters, natural disasters, and search-and-rescue operations.

This bill proposal aims to tackle low-level fish and wildlife violations. As natural resource crimes, fish and wildlife criminal violations are often given low priority when compared to crimes against people, DUIs, or significant property crimes. In 2020, a highly successful bill was enacted that increased civil infraction options for recreational fishing and small game hunting. Lower-level fish and wildlife violations are better handled through civil infractions, increasing deterrence, and reducing court and prosecutor staff time processing low-level natural resource violations.

This bill focuses on adding options for big game violations, limited firearm-use violations, minor hydraulic violations, and minor commercial guiding violations:

- Add definitions to RCW 77.08.010 regarding guides
- Add guide and charter recreational liability for violations of infraction fishing rules
- Add infraction options for certain big game hunting violations
- Add infraction for failing to notch a transport tag
- Add infraction options for certain hydraulic violations including driving through rivers and building rock dams by hand
- Add infraction options for certain guide violations including failure to properly display stickers and logbook violations

The actions listed above are currently classified as criminal offenses. This bill allows enforcement officers to issue a civil infraction for non-egregious behavior, such as violating big game hunting rules without killing or taking of an animal.

Contact information: Captain Jeff Wickersham

Enforcement Captain,
Southwest Region
jeffrey.wickersham@dfw.wa.gov

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