



Weighing In on Proposed Conservation Changes

JEFFERSON CITY — Earlier this year, the Missouri Conservation Commission approved some significant changes that will affect thousands of Missouri hunters and fishermen. I want to encourage Missourians to weigh in on the proposed changes by taking advantage of the public comment period, which began Nov. 17 and continues through Dec. 17.

Among the most talked-about proposed changes is increasing the acreage necessary for property owners to receive no-cost deer and turkey permit privileges from 5 acres to 80 contiguous acres. The proposed change could affect more than 75,000 landowners.

If approved, the commission's recommendation will go into effect on July 1, 2009. Their recommendations include:

- Creating a "landowner registry" for property owners seeking no-cost permits.
- Modifying most sport-permit fees. Increases of two to three dollars each are likely.
- Establishing a 50 percent discounted price for resident and non-resident youth on deer, turkey and trout permits and eliminating permits for youth antlerless hunting.
- Eliminating non-resident landowner reduced-price hunting permits.
- Allowing "Forever" permits for seniors who hunt small game and fish.
- Approving non-resident college and technical school students to purchase resident permits.
- Requiring the minimum age for obtaining deer and turkey permits to be age 6.

The goals of the proposed changes, I'm told, are to simplify the permit structure, make age and hunter education requirements more consistent, to encourage greater participation by young outdoors people, and to maintain conservation funding.

Because these proposed changes directly affect you, it's important for you to voice your views on these matters. To make a comment, citizens should log on to www.mdc.mo.gov or write to: Missouri Department of Conservation, Attn: Assistant Director David Erickson, P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102, **no later than Dec. 17**. The Conservation Commission will meet Dec. 18-19 in Jefferson City. The Dec. 19 meeting is open to the public and begins at 8:30 a.m. at the Conservation Department's Central Office, 2901 W. Truman Blvd. Items to be placed on the

agenda should be sent in writing or by fax at least 10 working days before the meeting date, making that deadline Dec. 4.

One of the department's missions is to serve the public and facilitate their participation in resource management activities, so this is your opportunity to do just that.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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