

# Idaho Fish & Game News

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## F&G Proposes Fee Increase and Discount Legislation

Idaho Fish and Game is proposing a fee increase and discount authority legislation.

Under the proposed legislation, if approved, hunters and anglers would be able to lock in the current price of their hunting and fishing license for at least the next three to five years.

Idaho Fish and Game is hoping hunters and anglers will like this idea, called a “fee lock.” Agency officials think it will help raise needed revenue, and at the same time reduce the need for fee increases.

Idaho resident license fees are the same today as they were in 2005. At the same time, the cost of managing Idaho’s wildlife has increased with higher costs of fish food, gas, and more.

Idaho Fish and Game doesn’t want to raise license fees. Instead of calling for only a traditional fee hike, Fish and Game is proposing a two-part plan that gives hunters and anglers the choice to lock in the price of a license against a possible fee increase, or not.

Here’s how the two-part license fee lock concept could work:

Fish and Game will present two proposals to the legislature when it meets in January.

- One seeks expanded authority for the Fish and Game Commission to discount license, permit and tag fees.
- The second seeks to raise fees on most resident licenses, permits and tags between \$1 and \$6 starting in 2015.

If both parts of the proposal become law, the Idaho Fish and Game Commission would have a mechanism to create the fee lock. For Idahoans who consistently buy annual licenses, the price of licenses, permits and tags would be the same as buying them in 2014. Hunters and anglers who don’t buy a license every year would pay the increased fees.

The commission would review the fee lock in three to five years and decide whether it should continue.

Licenses and tags fund Idaho Fish and Game, but not all hunters and anglers consistently buy hunting and fishing licenses. The fee lock would exempt those who buy annual

licenses from the fee increase and hopefully encourage others to buy annually.

If more people bought a license every year, Fish and Game’s funding would be more stable for wildlife management, and there would be less need for regular fee increases.

To inform license buyers about the legislation and what it means to them, Fish and Game has developed a simple flier with basic information and a web page with more information.

Copies of the flier will be available at regional offices and most vendors.

The “Fee Lock” web

page includes a short video and Q&A. The link is in the lower left of the Fish and Game website at

<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov> or at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/about/?getPage=363>.



Anglers who buy a license every year would benefit under a new fee strategy proposed by Fish and Game.

*IDFG photo*

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# 'Fee Lock:' A Market-Driven Strategic Approach to Revenue

Every four or five years, in order to keep up with inflation and increased operating costs, Fish and Game launches a campaign to increase revenue by raising hunting and fishing license fees.

Recognizing that these are hard times for many Idahoans, Fish and Game officials felt it necessary to try a new strategic approach that keeps fees flat for residents who fund wildlife management every year with their license purchases, creates incentives for residents to buy more consistently, and entices nonresident hunters and anglers to come back to our state.

***In the past two years, every other adult Idahoan fished – every third adult hunted. But they don't all hunt or fish every year.***

Revenues are going to have to increase in the next 12 to 24 months if Fish and Game is to meet the expectations of hunters, anglers and residents. But it is possible to lessen the higher fees on those who consistently buy licenses and fund wildlife management and conservation. This proposal also encourages others who haven't hunted or fished in a while to consider participating in funding Idaho's fish and wildlife.

It has been eight years since Idaho residents last saw a hunting and fishing fee increase. While Fish and Game has been able to manage its way through tough economic times, the agency is producing fewer fish than it was five years ago and conducting fewer aerial surveys of big game populations because of increased cost. Officials say this

strategic market-driven approach should be considered with any fee increase.

Hunters and anglers are proud supporters of Idaho's wildlife conservation and management legacy paid for by their license fees.

Those who buy licenses more often

have borne a greater share of the cost of that legacy over the years, and their dedication could be rewarded by lessening the impact of a future fee increase, meaning license fees stay where they are for hunters and anglers who consistently buy licenses year after year.



An opportunity to hunt elk every year is important to many hunters.

IDFG photo

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## The Fee Lock Concept

### What is it?

A fee lock for Idahoans who buy annual licenses.

### Who is eligible?

Idahoans with a valid annual license in 2014. This includes annual hunting and fishing licenses, sportsman packages, and valid three-year licenses.

### What are the advantages?

An exemption from the fee increase so long as you buy a valid license annually.

### How long will it last?

The fee lock would remain in effect for at least three to five years – until a commission review of the program.

## What's Next?

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission approved the fee lock and fee increase concept earlier this year.

The proposed legislation has been submitted to the Idaho Legislature for consideration in the pre-bill form of legislation known as "Routing Slips."

The legislation would probably be assigned to the House Resources and Conservation Committee, because bills that affect fees generally start in the House of Representatives.

If the committee approves a print hearing for each Routing Slip, they will be printed as bills and become trackable on the Legislature's website at <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/>.

If the committee chairman approves, the legislative committee will have bill hearings, providing the public an opportunity to comment on the bills.

The legislative page on the Fish and Game website will track these and any other bills that affect Fish and Game and wildlife.

If the enhanced discount authority legislation passes, the commission could adopt rules for the fee lock as soon as the bill is signed by the governor. The fee increase, if passed, would not require commission action, and would become effective December 1, 2014.

## 2013 Resident Cost to Fish

Rank	State	License	1 Day	2 Day	3 Day
1	<b>Idaho</b>	<b>\$25.75</b>	<b>\$11.50</b>	<b>\$16.50</b>	<b>\$21.50</b>
2	Montana	\$26.00		\$13.00	
3	Utah	\$26.00	\$8.00		
4	New Mexico	\$29.00	\$16.00		
5	Washington	\$29.50	\$11.35	\$15.75	\$19.05
6	Oregon	\$33.00	\$16.75	\$31.50	
7	Colorado	\$36.00	\$19.00		
8	Wyoming	\$36.50	\$6.00		
9	Nevada	\$39.00	\$9.00	\$12.00	\$15.00
10	Arizona	\$39.25	\$16.25	\$24.25	\$32.25
11	California	\$45.93	\$14.61	\$22.94	
	<b>Average</b>	<b>\$33.01</b>	<b>\$12.69</b>	<b>\$19.56</b>	<b>\$21.95</b>

Source: Idaho Department of Fish and Game Survey

## 2013 Resident Cost to Hunt

(Includes licenses, tags and vendor fees)

Rank	Deer	Elk	Sheep	Pronghorn
1	\$31.00 MT	\$35.00 MT	\$134.50 WY	\$29.00 MT
2	<b>\$32.50 ID</b>	<b>\$43.50 ID</b>	\$140.00 MT	\$44.00 CO
3	\$44.00 CO	\$50.40 WA	\$160.00 OR	<b>\$44.00 ID</b>
4	\$44.90 WA	\$59.00 CO	\$166.00 NV	\$50.50 WY
5	\$54.00 OR	\$69.50 WY	\$180.00 NM	\$80.00 NM
6	\$55.50 WY	\$72.00 OR	<b>\$185.75 ID</b>	\$82.00 OR
7	\$61.00 NM	\$81.00 UT	\$264.00 CO	\$86.00 UT
8	\$71.00 UT	\$110.00 NM	\$304.75 AZ	\$106.00 NV
9	\$74.50 AZ	\$153.75 AZ	\$332.00 WA	\$117.25 AZ
10	\$76.00 NV	\$171.00 NV	\$445.06 CA	\$193.37 CA
11	\$76.43 CA	\$468.31 CA	\$544.00 UT	NA WA
<b>Avg.</b>	<b>\$56.44</b>	<b>\$119.41</b>	<b>\$259.64</b>	<b>\$83.21</b>

Source: Idaho Department of Fish and Game Survey

## A Comparison of the Cost to Hunt and Fish in Western States

Idaho hunting and fishing licenses continue to be the most affordable in 11 western states.

Idaho Fish and Game is a self-funded agency and receives no tax money from the state's general fund. Hunters and anglers provide funding for Fish and Game programs and operations through their purchase of hunting, fishing and trapping licenses, tags and permits.

This license revenue pays for things such as fish hatchery operation and trout stocking, habitat management and

enforcement programs, and to match federal wildlife and sport-fish restoration funds dedicated to funding fish and wildlife management and recreational access.

In recent years, Fish and Game's license-based revenue has fallen below the level necessary to fund its legislatively approved budget. Because Fish and Game must operate on a balanced budget, spending on programs and services has been reduced to stay in line with reduced revenue.



## What's A Fee Lock? Some Common Questions and Answers

### Q. Why are licenses so important to Fish and Game?

**A.** Idaho Fish and Game receives no tax money from the state's general fund for wildlife management and relies heavily on hunters and anglers who purchase hunting, fishing and trapping licenses, tags and permits. Forty percent of Fish and Game's annual budget is from license sales, which pays for things such as fish hatchery operation and trout stocking, big game aerial surveys and research, habitat management and enforcement programs, and as mandated "match" dollars for federal Wildlife and Sport-fish Restoration funds dedicated to fund Fish and Game's fish and wildlife management and access programs.

### Q. How will these proposals work to raise revenue?

**A.** One in two adult Idahoans went fishing during the last two years and one in three went hunting. Interestingly, a relatively small proportion of Idaho's hunters and anglers get in the field or on the water every year. Fish and Game would like to keep prices low, and the more Idahoans purchase their licenses every year then the lower prices can be. To accomplish this, Fish and Game is proposing to raise the fees for Idaho residents in 2015 but provide a "fee lock" at the old price to anyone who held an annual license in 2014. The fee lock will continue for those who buy an annual license every year. Only those who do not to buy a license in 2014 and annually thereafter, would pay the increased price. All licenses, tags and permits would be eligible for the 2014 "fee lock." Idahoans would be able to maintain their "fee lock" by continuing to buy any annual license, regardless of the one they held in the previous year.

The Fish and Game Commission may also consider using the requested authority to offer hunters and anglers the opportunity to receive a discount for the purchase of multiple tags or permits. This would be similar to the "Sportsman's Pack" that currently packages a fixed

combination of items and sells at a considerable discount compared to the price for each individual item. New package discounts could be offered as an alternative to the Sportsman's Pack and would allow a hunter or angler the flexibility to pick what they want in their custom package from a list of items, including the appropriate season license, and receive a flat rate discount. This discount would be in addition to the "fee lock" discount or could be applied to the new 2015 prices for sporadic buyers.

### Q. Why does Idaho Fish and Game need more revenue?

**A.** In recent years, Fish and Game's license fee revenue has fallen below the level needed to fund its legislatively approved budget for existing programs. Because Fish and Game must operate on a balanced budget, spending on programs and services has been reduced to stay in line with reduced revenue. For instance, vacant positions have been held open for a minimum of six months, positions have been consolidated, and the agency has reduced the number of hatcheries producing catchable trout to cut costs

But inflation and increasing operational costs necessary to deliver professional fish and wildlife management in Idaho have also gone up, acting to further erode the buying power of Fish and Game's reduced revenue stream.

### Q. Will this allow the Fish and Game Commission to increase fees in the future?

**A.** No. Only the Idaho legislature can increase license, tag, and permit fees. The commission would only have the authority to establish discounts from the legislatively approved fee structure.

### Q. Why this approach to raising additional revenue?

**A.** Fish and Game was asked by legislators, the commission and sporting groups to explore new methods to increase revenue outside the standard across-the-board fee increase. This

approach is unique to Idaho in that it offers all Idaho hunters and anglers an opportunity to lock-in 2014 license prices. The "fee lock" would provide an incentive for more hunters and anglers to buy their license every year. The hope is that if more people buy licenses every year, enough license revenue will be generated to meet the budget approved by the legislature. Fish and Game has heard loud and clear from Idaho families who hunt and fish together that they can't afford to pay more for licenses and tags to hunt and fish. This proposal freezes the cost for families that buy licenses and hunt and fish every year.

Fish and Game is also responding to hunters' and anglers' requests to pick their own package of tags and permits, and get a discount on the price.

### Q. How long will the "fee lock" be in effect?

**A.** Because it is a new and untested concept, the Fish and Game Commission is proposing to review its effectiveness after three to five years. If the program is successful, the commission will consider extending it further into the future.

### Q. I don't hunt or fish; why should I care about this proposal?

**A.** A large portion of people in Idaho don't hunt or fish, but they value fish and wildlife and support professional management and conservation. Many people, including hunters and anglers, are simply unaware that fishing and hunting license fees are the mechanism for them to contribute to important management, conservation and access programs. These programs are part of what makes Idaho such a great place to live and recreate.

### Q. Why not raise nonresident fees?

**A.** In 2009, nonresident license and tag fees were increased significantly. Another nonresident fee increase at this time could price Idaho out of the market for nonresident hunters, causing a significant impact to the state's economy, particularly in rural Idaho.