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Shreveport lawmaker trying to lessen costs for hunting and fishing in neighboring states

MELINDA DESLATTE Associated Press

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BATON ROUGE, La. — State lawmakers have shelved a proposal to let residents of neighboring states purchase Louisiana hunting and fishing licenses at resident prices if those states offer the same privilege to Louisiana residents.

Instead, the Senate Natural Resources Committee asked Thursday for a study of the idea by Sen. Barrow Peacock, R-Shreveport.

Louisiana residents regularly hunt in Arkansas, Mississippi and Texas, and Peacock said the costs of out-of-state licenses are hard to afford for many people. Peacock said he wants to encourage those states to let Louisiana residents pay the cheaper in-state cost by offering something similar here.

"It's getting where it's prohibitive for people to go across state lines to hunt," Peacock said. "Right now, it's gotten to where the average person cannot afford this."

State Wildlife and Fisheries Secretary Robert Barham raised concerns about the drop in revenue for his department from the out-of-state license fees, and he questioned how to match up the licenses when Louisiana has different types of fishing than some of its neighboring states.

"The corresponding licenses don't match. Arkansas doesn't have saltwater fishing, for example," Barham said. "There are a lot of technical issues that would have to be worked through. I understand. I applaud him. We want to encourage tourism."

Louisiana residents regularly hunt in Arkansas, Mississippi and Texas, and Peacock says the costs of out-of-state licenses are making it cost-prohibitive.

The wildlife and fisheries secretary said he'll discuss the idea with his counterparts in Texas, Arkansas and Mississippi to see how they feel about the idea of offering resident license prices to neighboring states and to determine if the idea could work.

Louisiana charges its residents an annual fee ranging from \$2.50 to \$9.50 for recreational fishing, depending on the type of fishing, and between \$5 and \$15 for a yearly hunting license. For people from other states, Louisiana charges non-resident fishing fees ranging from \$5 for a one-day permit to \$60 for the season. Hunting licenses for non-residents can cost up to \$150 a year.

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Yearly non-resident hunting licenses in Louisiana's neighboring states can reach \$300, and annual fishing licenses for out-of-state visitors there can cost in the range of \$50 to \$70.

More than 200,000 non-resident hunting and fishing licenses were sold in Louisiana last year, drawing people from all 50 states and several countries, Barham said.

Out-of-state licenses sold to residents of Arkansas, Mississippi and Texas brought in nearly \$3 million for Barham's department in the last budget year, nearly two-thirds of the money generated by non-resident hunting and fishing licenses, according to a financial analysis of Peacock's bill.

Online:

Senate Bill 322 can be found at <http://www.legis.state.la.us>

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