*Welcome to LLA Reports, a podcast produced by the Louisiana Legislative Auditor’s office. This podcast is intended to be an oral representation of the written report it highlights and is primarily for the use of the Louisiana Legislature.*

This is Krista Baker-Hernandez. I’m a manager with LLA’s Performance Audit Services. This episode of LLA Reports focuses on our recently released report on the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries’ license fees.

The purpose of this audit was to compare the license fees Wildlife and Fisheries charges with those charged in six nearby states. Those states were Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and Texas.

Louisiana’s license fee structure varies from these states because Louisiana requires users to pay for separate licenses. The fees are set by state law and regulations. The other states generally consolidate different hunting and/or fishing licenses into one license.

For our comparison, we looked at commonly purchased recreational and commercial fishing license fees and hunting license fees. We found Louisiana charged less for recreational resident freshwater and all water fishing licenses than the average of the comparison states. At the same time, Louisiana’s recreational resident saltwater and non-resident recreational fishing license costs were comparable or higher.

The most commonly purchased licenses from fiscal years 2016 through 2020 were the resident basic (freshwater) fishing license and the resident saltwater license, which accounted for an average of $6.3 million in revenue each year to Wildlife and Fisheries. If Louisiana changed its fees for these licenses to the average of the fishing license fees in the comparison states and the number of licenses sold remained the same, it might generate an additional $4.2 million annually.

In addition, we found Louisiana’s resident basic game, resident duck, and non-resident big game hunting license fees were lower than the average of the other six states. However, other Louisiana recreational resident and non-resident hunting license fees were comparable or higher.The most commonly purchased hunting licenses from fiscal years 2016 through 2020 were the resident basic hunting license and the resident big game license. On average, they accounted for $3.7 million in revenue annually.

Non-resident hunters must also be licensed to hunt in Louisiana; they accounted for an average $6 million in revenue annually. State law allows Wildlife and Fisheries to charge more than it currently does for non-resident basic, non-resident big game, and hunting with a bow or primitive firearm licenses. If it were to charge the amount allowed in state law, it could have generated an additional $1.7 million during fiscal years 2016 through 2020.

We found as well that Louisiana’s lifetime combination license fees were significantly lower than the average of the comparison states.The cost of lifetime licenses varies according to the resident’s age at the time of purchase. For instance, in Louisiana, a lifetime license costs $200 for an infant, $300 for a child, $500 for an adult, and $50 for seniors. If Louisiana adopted the average recreational fee schedule of the other regional states reviewed and the number of licenses sold remained the same, it may result in approximately $3.4 million in additional revenue annually.

Louisiana also does not require youth under the age of 16 to purchase hunting or fishing licenses, which prevents Wildlife and Fisheries from receiving additional federal grant money. The grants are apportioned according to how many licenses are purchased each year.Louisiana could increase the amount it receives if it charged a nominal fee for youth hunting licenses or youth combination hunting and fishing licenses.

We found, too, that Louisiana’s commercial resident and non-resident fisherman license fees were comparable or higher than the average of the six states reviewed for this report, bringing in about $950,000 each year from fiscal years 2016 through 2020.

On the other hand, Louisiana’s boater registration fees were lower than four of the six comparison states. If Louisiana adopted a fee structure similar to the four states, it could bring in an additional $4.4 million in revenue over a three-year renewal period.

Finally, we found that during fiscal years 2016 through 2020, Wildlife and Fisheries paid a total of $10.8 million to outside entities for agent commissions related to the issuance of recreational licenses and for vendor services. Louisiana does not add these fees to the cost of its recreational licenses, unlike in Mississippi, where an agent fee and a process fee are added to the cost of each license sold.

As a result of our audit, we developed three matters for legislative consideration.

The first one suggested the Legislature may wish to consider increasing fishing and hunting license fees for those commonly purchased licenses whose prices are lower than the average of the six comparison states.

The second one suggested the Legislature may wish to consider charging a nominal fee for youth hunting and fishing licenses, or for youth combination licenses to increase the amount of federal grant funds Wildlife and Fisheries can receive.

The third one suggested the Legislature may wish to consider allowing the addition of agent commission fees and electronic licensing service fees to the cost of recreational fishing and licenses to ensure that the full amount of the license fees goes to state wildlife and fisheries programs.

*We hope you found this podcast informative, and that you’ll follow future episodes of LLA Reports. You can subscribe to LLA Reports at Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, or your favorite podcast platform.*

*This podcast was created as a part of the audit report just discussed and is intended primarily for the use of the Louisiana Legislature. The full report and the podcast can be found on the LLA’s website at* [*www.lla.la.gov*](http://www.lla.la.gov)*.*

*Thank you for listening.*