

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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REPRESENTATIVE DAN SADDLER

House Bill 260 -- Sponsor Statement

"An Act relating to electronic possession of certain licenses, tags, and identification cards issued by the Department of Fish and Game; and providing for an effective date."

Smart phones have become an indispensable part of modern Alaska life. They provide users with inexpensive, convenient and reliable information and services, including communications, navigation, scheduling, research, photography, and entertainment. There is almost no aspect of life that smartphones don't make easier and better.

HB 260 seeks to leverage modern communications technology to enhance the timeless pleasures of traditional Alaskan activities of hunting, fishing, and trapping, by allowing state licenses for these activities to be displayed on digital devices, as well as in paper form.

State law currently requires outdoorsmen and women to carry paper licenses while enjoying licensed activities. But as anyone who's ever tumbled into a stream while landing a king salmon, or sat in the rain in a duck blind knows, paper licenses can be damaged or lost at the worst possible time. And while a person might misplace their wallet, their smartphone is almost always within arm's reach.

Alaskans have been authorized since 2013 to display secure proof of insurance on a digital device, and the benefits of extending that capability to outdoors recreational licenses are clear. They would:

- Make it easier and more convenient for hunters, fishers and trappers to obtain and carry required licenses
- Help entice new participants in these activities, by lowering one barrier to entry
- Make Alaska a more attractive tourist destination by making it easier for visitors to get licenses
- Improve compliance with state fish and wildlife management laws, by making it easier for enforcement officials to verify users are legal
- Save money for the state and private license vendors, by reducing or eliminating printing costs
- Enhance licensing security with harder-to-counterfeit digital licenses

HB 260 also lays the foundation for smartphone-based "apps" that will eventually let ADF&G deliver timely information on local regulations, opening dates and times, and hazards to users; while letting outdoorsman reciprocate by sending back real-time data on harvest effort and success. Until then, the advantages of digital licenses are significant enough to warrant swift passage of HB 260.

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