

SUBJECT: Requiring a quail stamp for hunting quail

COMMITTEE: State Recreational Resources — favorable, with amendment

VOTE: 6 ayes — Kuempel, Siebert, Hightower, Oakley, Turner, Woolley
0 nays
3 absent — Black, Horn, Rabuck

WITNESSES: For — Charlie Schnabel, Cen Tex Bird Hunters Club; Chip Martin, Quail Unlimited; Timothy G. Connolly, Fort Worth Sportsmen's Club, Tarrant County Bird Hunters Association.

Against — None

On — Don E. Wilson and Jim Dickinson, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

DIGEST: HB 1390, as amended, would amend Parks and Wildlife Code Chapter 43 to require any person hunting wild quail during a hunting season to purchase a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department quail stamp for \$7 or a fee set by the commission. Exemptions are provided for persons under 17 and persons hunting in their home county.

The stamp would be valid from September 1 through August 31, unless the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission (TPWC) sets another period. Failing to show proof of a quail stamp or proof of exemption to a game warden or peace officer could constitute a Class C Parks and Wildlife misdemeanor (up to a \$500 fine). A person would still be required to maintain a hunting license to hunt quail.

An agent of the TPWD would be required to receive a minimum 50-cent collection fee (or fee as set by the commission) on the stamp fee; the remaining stamp proceeds would go to TPWD. These proceeds could only be spent on research, quail protection, habitat development on public land and acquiring or leasing quail habitat.

The commission would be required to establish an advisory committee for assistance in monitoring stamp account expenditures. Committee members would not be entitled to any compensation, but would be reimbursed for

travel expenses. TPWD would be required to provide an annual report of sales and expenditures of the stamp account to the advisory committee.

The bill would take effect September 1, 1995.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 1390 is needed to ensure the management and habitat preservation of a statewide quail program (bobwhite, scaled and gambel's quail).

Hunters would be willing to buy a quail stamp if proceeds went to managing and preserving a quail habitat program. Persons who hunt wildlife have shown their support in previous years for distinctive programs like duck, wild turkey and elk. Stamp programs have proven to be successful in supporting wildlife throughout the United States

The TWPD estimates the state has 222,000 quail hunters. Quail is the state's second most sought after game bird after doves and are under TWPD control and regulation. TWPD spends nearly \$39,000 annually on quail. While the quail population is declining in other states, Texas has a stable population of bobwhites. The state has an economic incentive to conduct research and protect the quail habitat.

HB 1390 contains many safeguards to assure appropriately spending of the approximately \$1 million a year the stamp would raise for the quail stamp account in the general revenue fund.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Hunters should not be expected to pay another fee to the state, which already imposes too many on those who support outdoor recreation.

NOTES:

Committee amendments to HB 1390 deleted language that would have provided a travel expense reimbursement for advisory board members, added specifications on how the funds would be spent, created an exemption for persons younger than 17 and those hunting in their home county.

SB 16 by Armbrister, the companion bill, is pending in the Natural Resources Committee.

The LBB estimates an annual printing cost of \$17,000 to the TPWD and additional yearly revenue of nearly \$1.2 million to the state.