**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 50‑9‑665, AS AMENDED, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, RELATING TO THE ISSUANCE OF BEAR HUNTING TAGS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, SO AS TO INCREASE THE NONRESIDENT FEE TO OBTAIN A BEAR TAG, TO DELETE THE PROVISION THAT PROVIDES FOR THE RANDOM DRAWING OF TAGS BY BEAR TAG APPLICANTS IN GAME ZONES OTHER THAN GAME ZONE 1, AND TO ELIMINATE THE APPLICATION FEE; AND TO AMEND SECTION 50‑11‑430, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO THE HUNTING OF BEARS, SO AS TO ESTABLISH AN OPEN SEASON FOR HUNTING AND TAKING BEAR FOR STILL GUN HUNTS IN GAME ZONE 4, TO DELETE THE PROVISION THAT ALLOWS THE DEPARTMENT TO ISSUE PERMITS TO ALLOW THE HUNTING AND TAKING OF BEAR, TO ESTABLISH A SEASON FOR THE HUNTING AND TAKING OF BEAR ON PRIVATE LANDS AND ALL LANDS UNDER THE DEPARTMENT’S CONTROL IN GAME ZONES 2, 3, AND 4, AND TO DELETE THE PROVISION THAT PROHIBITS THE HUNTING AND TAKING OF BEAR BY THE USE OR AID OF BAIT.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Section 50‑9‑665 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 94 of 2013, is further amended to read:

“Section 50‑9‑665. (A) For the privilege of hunting bear, in addition to the required hunting license and big game permit the licensee must obtain a bear tag issued in his name, and the fee:

(1) for a resident is twenty‑five dollars per tag, one dollar of which may be retained by the license sales vendor;

(2) for a nonresident is ~~one~~ three hundred dollars per tag, two dollars of which may be retained by the license sales vendor.

(B) ~~In game zones other than Game Zone 1, applicants for bear tags must be chosen by a random drawing. The application fee is ten dollars per applicant and is nonrefundable. Tags are only valid for the specified game zone.~~

~~(C)~~ Youth under the age of sixteen are required to obtain youth tags for bear from the department at its designated licensing locations at no cost.”

SECTION 2. Section 50‑11‑430 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 227 of 2014, if further amended to read:

“Section 50‑11‑430. (A)(1) The open season for hunting and taking bear in Game Zone 1 for still gun hunts is October 17 through October 23; for party dog hunts is October 24 through October 30. A party dog hunt in Game Zone 1 may not exceed twenty‑five participants per party and shall register with the department by September first. Party participants, except those not required to have licenses shall submit their hunting license number in order to register.

(2) The open season for hunting and taking bear in Game Zone 4 for still gun hunts is October 17 through October 30.

(3) In all other game zones, the General Assembly finds it in the best interest of the State to allow the taking of black bear under strictly controlled conditions and circumstances. The department may establish a bear management program that allows for hunting and selective removal of bear in order to provide for the sound management of the animals and to ensure the continued viability of the species. The department must set the conditions for taking, including methods of take, areas, times, and seasons, and other conditions to properly control the harvest of bear. ~~The department may issue bear permits to allow hunting and taking of bear in any game zone where bear occur. In Game Zones 2, 3, and 4 a person desiring to hunt and take bear must apply to the department. The application fee is ten dollars and is nonrefundable. Successful applicants must be randomly selected for the permit, and must pay a twenty‑five dollar fee for residents and one hundred dollar fee for nonresidents.~~

(B) In Game Zones 2, and 3~~, and 4~~ where the department declares an open season~~, the department shall promulgate regulations necessary to properly control the harvest of bear~~ for the hunting and taking of bear, and in Game Zone 4, the season on private lands is from October 17 through October 30.

(C) In Game Zones 2, and 3 where the department declares an open season for hunting and taking bear on wildlife management areas, and all other areas under the ownership, control, or lease of the department, the season must be set by the department.

(D) Any bear taken must be tagged with a valid bear tag and reported to the department. The tag must be attached to the bear as prescribed by the department before being moved from the point of kill.

~~(D)~~(E) It is unlawful to:

(1) hunt, take, or attempt to take a bear except during the open season;

(2) possess an untagged bear;

(3) take more than one bear per person during all seasons. In Game Zone 1 a registered party dog hunt may take up to five bear per season per party; a person who has taken a bear during the season may participate in a registered party hunt as long as the hunting license shows the bear tag endorsement, but the person may not take another bear;

(4) take or attempt to take a sow bear with cubs;

(5) possess or transport a freshly killed bear or bear part except during the open season for hunting and taking bear. This prohibition does not apply to bear lawfully taken in other jurisdictions. The department may issue a special permit for possession or transportation of a freshly killed bear or bear part outside of the season;

(6) possess a captive bear except pursuant to a permit issued by the department. A violation of the terms of the permit may result in revocation or a civil penalty of up to five thousand dollars, or both. An appeal must be made in accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act;

(7) pursue bear with dogs; except during the open season for hunting and taking bear with dogs;

(8) ~~hunt or take bear by the use or aid of bait; or attempt to hunt or take bear by use or aid of bait; hunt or take bear on or over a baited area. As used in this item:~~

~~(a)~~ ~~‘Bait’ means salt or shelled, shucked, or unshucked corn, wheat or other grain, or other foodstuffs that could constitute a lure, attraction, or enticement for bear.~~

~~(b)~~ ~~‘Baiting’ or ‘to bait’ means placing, depositing, exposing, distributing, or scattering bait.~~

~~(c)~~ ~~‘Baited area’ means an area where bait is directly or indirectly placed, exposed, deposited, distributed, or scattered, and the area remains a baited area for ten days following complete removal of all bait. Nothing in this section prohibits the hunting and~~ ~~taking of bear on or over lands or areas that are not otherwise baited and where:~~

~~(i)~~ ~~there are standing crops on the field where grown, including crops grown for wildlife management purposes; or~~

~~(ii)~~ ~~shelled, shucked, or unshucked corn, wheat or other grain, or seeds that have been distributed or scattered solely as the result of a normal agricultural practice as prescribed by the Clemson University Extension Service or its successor;~~

~~(9)~~ buy, sell, barter, or exchange or attempt to buy, sell, barter, or exchange a bear or bear part; or

~~(10)~~(9) take or attempt to take a bear from a watercraft or other water conveyance or molest, take, or attempt to take a bear while the bear is swimming in a lake or river.

(E)(1) Each of the acts provided for in subsection ~~(D)~~(E) is a violation of this section and is a separate offense.

(2) A person violating the provisions of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than two thousand five hundred dollars or imprisoned not more than two years, or both. Hunting and fishing privileges of a person convicted under the provisions of this section must be suspended for three years. In addition, each person convicted of a violation of this section shall pay restitution to the department of not less than one thousand five hundred dollars for each bear or bear part that is the subject of a violation of this section.”

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

‑‑‑‑XX‑‑‑‑