

## MDC seeking comments

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is proposing three changes to its free permits for landowners and wants public input. First, MDC is proposing adjusting acreage requirements for its definition of resident landowners from 5 to 20 acres. Second, MDC is proposing the implementation of a landowner registry to qualify for landowner permits. Third, MDC is proposing discounted deer and turkey hunting permits for nonresident landowners with 75 acres or more in a contiguous tract.

## **Change in acreage for free landowner permits**

MDC issues free landowner permits for deer and turkey hunting to qualifying Missouri landowners with at least five acres and members of their immediate households. MDC also does not require resident landowners with at least five acres and members of their immediate households to have permits for hunting small game, fishing on waters of the state, and trapping on their qualifying properties.

MDC held an initial public comment period in March for input on acreage requirements needed to receive free landowner deer and turkey hunting permits and free small-game hunting and trapping landowner privileges. Of the more than 14,000 comments received, a minimum of 21 acres was the most common preference. Based on this initial public feedback, MDC is proposing changing the minimum acreage for landowner permits and privileges from 5 to 20 acres. This change will impact no-cost landowner deer and turkey hunting permits as well as permit requirements for small-game hunting, fishing, and trapping on qualifying properties.

## **Adding a landowner registry**

The proposed landowner registry is needed by both MDC and vendors who issue permits to help eliminate misuse of the free permits. According to MDC, conservation agents around the state find several hundred violations each year related to the misuse of landowner permits.

“While most hunters properly use their free landowner permits from MDC, we find several hundred cases each season where folks do not play by the rules – intentionally or by mistake,” said MDC Protection Division Chief Randy Doman. “Many of the violations involve people fraudulently obtaining and using the free permits when they do not qualify for them, such as claiming to be a resident landowner when they are not or misrepresenting the number of acres they have. We also find folks who share their permits with others – which is illegal -- and who use the permits on land other than the property for which the permits were issued, which is also not allowed.”

The online registry would provide secure records of landowners and members of their households who qualify for the free permits. The electronic registry would also provide proof of land ownership and boundaries of the properties for which the free permits apply. Individuals would be required to provide their information online through a secure MDC webpage, or in paper form.

## Discounts for nonresident landowners

According to MDC, many nonresident landowners provide wildlife habitat work on their properties and those efforts can provide significant benefits to state wildlife resources. MDC is proposing the following price increases for nonresident permits and the following discounted permits for nonresident (NR) landowners with a minimum of 75 acres:

<u>NR PERMIT</u>	<u>CURRENT NR PRICE</u>	<u>PROPOSED NR PRICE</u>	<u>NR LANDOWNER PRICE</u>
Spring Turkey	\$190	\$224	\$165
Fall Turkey	\$110	\$130	\$96
Archery	\$225	\$265	\$195
Firearm Deer	\$225	\$265	\$195

Offering discounted deer and turkey permits to nonresident landowners with 75 acres or more in a contiguous tract is similar to a past regulation that was in effect until 2009. MDC eliminated the offering during its last round of permit changes in 2008.

## Public comments wanted

The proposed changes were given initial approval by the Missouri Conservation Commission at its May 23 meeting.

**As part of the rulemaking process, MDC is asking for public comment on the changes during July and early August at [short.mdc.mo.gov/Z49](http://short.mdc.mo.gov/Z49). To comment on landowner acreage requirements, refer to “3 CSR 10-20.805 Definitions.” To comment on the landowner registry, refer to “3 CSR 10-7.434 Deer: Landowner Privileges” or “3 CSR 10-7.455 Turkeys: Seasons, Methods, Limits.”**

The Commission will consider input received and make a final decision to move forward, modify, or withdraw the changes during its Aug. 23 meeting. If approved, the anticipated effective date of the changes would be Feb. 29, 2020.