

RECREATIONAL LICENSE AND BOAT REGISTRATION CHANGES

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) presents the following information to Georgia citizens, especially those sportsmen and women who hunt, fish and boat.

A contract has been signed with Central Bank authorizing a new recreational license and boat registration system that will bring much needed improvements to the previous system.



WHY A NEW SYSTEM?

Q: *Why is DNR adopting a new license system?*

A: The decade-old system is antiquated. The machines that currently are in use at license vendors are no longer manufactured. While maintenance could be continued for a short time on the existing machines, the life expectancy of these units is limited. There is no option to continue with the currently used system, it must be replaced.

Q: *Why outsource the system?*

A: Outsourcing allows the Department to take advantage of lessons learned through many other states' licensing systems. Outsourcing also allows for technological support for this complex computer system. DNR does not have the technology or the support necessary to develop and maintain this system in-house.

Q: *When will the new system be implemented?*

A: The new boat registration system is expected to be available by September 2008 and the hunting and fishing licensing system is expected to be available December 2008.

NEW VENDOR INFORMATION

Q: *Who is the new vendor?*

A: The chosen vendor, Central Bank, is recognized as a data and financial expert who also serves 21 other states in a similar capacity. They have partnered with Automated Licensing Systems (ALS), computer system technical experts who also handle licensing for multiple states, and InfoSpherix, experts in call center operations.

Q: *How was the vendor chosen?*

A: Central Bank was chosen through a competitive bid process administered by the Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) in Georgia. The bid request was posted through normal channels used by DOAS and all qualified applicants who submitted bids were considered.

Q: *Why use an out-of-state vendor?*

A: In short, no company from Georgia submitted a bid. Beyond that, state government - as is the case for virtually any private company - has to periodically conduct business with vendors headquartered outside of the State. To require that a vendor be housed in Georgia would artificially exclude competition, which almost certainly would guarantee a higher end cost. Rather than looking at it as money going out of state, people should look at it as trying to get the best deal for the customer.

New System Benefits Include:

- License sales by phone, which have not been available for over a year, will once again be an option in addition to continuing to offer Internet license sales.
- Provides for replacement licenses in case of loss.
- Prevents duplicate license purchase.
- Prevents license sales to game and fish law violators.
- Central Bank, a data and financial expert that services 21 other states in a similar capacity, is responsible for system maintenance of this complex computer system.

Q: *But won't that mean my sportsman's dollars are going out of state?*

A: No. The money and the federal benefits that sportsmen and women pay for when they purchase a license will still come to Georgia. In fact, this new system will ensure that data reported to the federal government is even more accurate (which could mean additional dollars returned to the State). A spin-off benefit will be that \$550,000 in operations and personnel costs that it currently takes to manage the old system will be shifted from administration to on-the-ground wildlife management.

Q: *Will my private and personal information be made available to anyone through the use of this system?*

A: There is some misunderstanding regarding the availability of private and public information. Data collected through the licensing process belong to DNR, not to Central Bank. Central Bank cannot use or release this information. Data, such as name and address, held by any government agency is public record except for a few special circumstances specifically excluded in law. This legal requirement is not new, and it was not created by DNR. This requirement comes from Georgia law on open records (OCGA 50-18-72). Names and addresses that DNR collects on an application or at a point of sale are considered public record. This data has been and will continue to be provided upon request when required by law (OCGA 50-18-70). Many types of organizations (publications, vendors, etc.) request license buyer and quota hunt applicant lists. Note: The records collected through the old licensing system had certain (but not complete) protection only because name and address was collected through linking with driver license data that does have a legal exclusion.

AVAILABILITY

Q: *How will this new system affect availability of licenses?*

A: As specified in the existing contract, licenses will be available by Internet and phone. The new system is web-based, offering immediate accessibility to anyone with a computer and web service. Additionally, licenses will be available by telephone, a convenient option that has not been available to customers for over a year. DNR is working with Central Bank to provide for walk-in vendors, but cannot guarantee the total number of vendors or their distribution at this time.

Q: *What does this mean to current license vendors?*

A: Of the 1,030 active license agents, 25 percent of them sell 75 percent of all hunting and fishing licenses. And while Central Bank has indicated a desire to contract with a portion of point-of-sale license agents to provide walk-in, cash service, it is expected that not all active agents will continue to sell licenses.

Q: *If a current license vendor wants to participate in the new system, can they?*

A: Possibly. Central Bank and/or DNR will contact each current license agent to provide such details as agents who may be eligible to operate under the Central Bank contract, computer compatibility needs, Internet access requirements, and commissions.

BENEFITS

Q: *What basic advantages does this new system provide to sportsmen and women?*

A: Benefits will include real-time customer data. This will allow sportsmen to obtain replacement licenses in case of loss and will prevent duplicate license purchase (meaning it will not allow for the duplicate purchase of a same or similar license which could help save money for the customer). In addition, this new system will prevent license sales to violators with suspended hunting and fishing privileges (for states, including Georgia, participating in the Wildlife Violator Compact). It also shows potential to block sales to other ineligible applicants, such as violators of child support laws.

Q: *Will this new system improve license data information?*

A: Yes. The new system will provide real time capability to secure licensing data, which is used to apply for federal funding, associated with license sales, and may make more funding available for wildlife conservation. Centralized data also will assist in gathering more accurate wildlife harvest information. This information is used to set and/or evaluate bag limits and season lengths for game animals and also is provided to the Legislature to assist in the drafting and deciding on potential legislative action.

Q: *Who will provide upkeep on this new system?*

A: The cost for maintenance, manipulation, upgrading and technical support all will be borne by Central Bank who currently has staff to provide program support functions. If DNR had to maintain responsibility for this new system, these costs would fall to the State and could further lessen the amount of funding available for conservation practices.

SERVICE CHARGE

Q: *Why is there a service charge?*

A: The license system is dependent upon a modern computer network. The service charge goes directly to Central Bank for development use and operational costs of the new system and call centers.

Q: *Why can't the State provide some funding to assist with the service charge?*

A: The General Assembly annually appropriates more money to DNR than is generated by annual license sales. Through this appropriation process, the Legislature has recognized the contribution of sportsmen and the responsibility of all Georgians to bear some investment in the conservation of wildlife, which belongs to all citizens of our state. Lump sum funding for development and operations of a license system does not exist.

Q: *How much will the service charge be?*

A: As specified in the existing contract, a single service charge will be applied to a license sale regardless of the number of licenses purchased by an individual. During the first and second year, Internet sales will add \$2.75. This charge reduces to \$2.50 after the first two years. The service charge on telephone sales of licenses is \$4 for the first year, \$4.50 for the second year, and \$5 thereafter. Boat registrations will have an \$8 service charge for Internet transactions and for applications submitted by mail and \$10 for telephone transactions. At this time, it has not been determined what service charge might be required for a walk-in vendor. All licenses that currently are free will continue to be free and will not generate a transaction fee: H.I.P. licenses, deer harvest records, senior licenses (65 and older) and honorary licenses.

Q: *Do other states sell licenses this way?*

A: Yes. Central Bank handles license sales for 21 other states. For example, Florida charges \$2.25 + 2.5% surcharge of total sale per person will be added to the purchase for a single transaction of a hunting or fishing license, South Carolina adds \$2.50. Numerous other states also use similar vendors.

PUBLIC INPUT

Q: *Why weren't sportsmen and women allowed to comment on this change?*

A: Due to the ever-growing need to replace the current system and the knowledge that no State monies would be available to replace and/or support a new system, DNR had to move forward with initiating this change. Contracts do not require approval by the DNR Board nor are public meetings and/or hearings required. However, DNR does take the input and concerns of its constituents seriously. Briefing sessions to share the benefits of the new system and to better inform the public may have helped make this new system more acceptable, but were not required.

Q: *Why didn't DNR inform sportsmen about these changes?*

A: DNR had begun the process of providing this information to the public (examples: 2008-2009 Fishing Regulations Advertisement-Feb. 2008; News release-Feb. 20, 2008; Letter to License Vendors- Feb. 2008). Unfortunately, this information did not reach our core audience expediently enough before much misinformation was made available. There is good opportunity with this new system that will benefit sportsmen, but this positive information is getting lost in defense of many of these other issues.

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