



**Fiscal Note for 2025-2026 Annual Cycle Rule Proposals  
Wildlife Resources Commission - Land and Water Access**

**Rule Amendments:** 15A NCAC 10D .0219 COLD MOUNTAIN GAME LAND IN HAYWOOD COUNTY  
15A NCAC 10D .0229 GOOSE CREEK GAME LAND IN BEAUFORT AND PAMLICO  
COUNTIES  
15A NCAC 10D .0232 GULL ROCK GAME LAND IN HYDE COUNTY  
15A NCAC 10D .0239 JOHNS RIVER GAME LAND IN BURKE COUNTY  
15A NCAC 10D .0244 LANTERN ACRES GAME LAND IN TYRRELL AND WASHINGTON  
COUNTIES  
15A NCAC 10D .0263 LITTLE FORK STATE FOREST GAME LANCE IN WILKES COUNTY

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**Fiscal Impact:** State Government: Yes  
Local Government: Yes  
Private Impact: Yes  
Substantial Economic Impact: No

**Authority:** G.S. 113-134; 113:264; 113-291.2; 113:291.5; 113-296; 113-305

**BACKGROUND**

The wildlife resources of the State belong to the people of the State as a whole, including the enjoyment of these resources (G.S. 113-131(a)). The Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) is tasked with the conservation of wildlife resources of the State (G.S. 143-239). This responsibility includes managing as equitably as possible the various competing interests regarding these resources, including the use and take of such resources (G.S. 113-131.1(a)). The statutes governing wildlife resources are found in Chapter 113, Subchapter IV of the General Statutes, and WRC has been granted rulemaking authority to implement the provisions of these statutes (G.S. 113-134).

As part of its mission, the WRC conducts an annual review of its inland fish, wildlife, and game land regulations to determine whether the rules need to be adjusted in order to accomplish the objectives of managing wildlife resources or Commission property through a biologically sustainable harvest consistent with sound conservation objectives; managing WRC-owned land for the conservation of wildlife resources, and the enjoyment of the public; and implementing

legislative directives.

The proposed rule changes will modify the use of game lands, some will increase outdoor recreation opportunities, while others are expected to restrict such opportunities. A summary of the proposed rule amendments is shown below, with the full rule text included in Appendix A.

## **PROPOSED AMENDMENTS BY CATEGORY AND RULE**

### ***USE OF GAME LANDS:***

#### **15A NCAC 10D .0219 COLD MOUNTAIN GAME LAND IN HAYWOOD COUNTY (pg. 10)**

The proposed amendment prohibits target shooting on Cold Mountain Game Land in Haywood County. The exclusion of this prohibition was an oversight following the construction of the shooting range.

Opportunities currently exist for target shooting at alternative sites appropriately constructed and monitored to provide a safe environment for target shooters. The Wayne E. Smith/Cold Mountain Shooting Range located on the Cold Mountain Game Land is within a 30- to 50-mile radius. This change is consistent with other game lands where target shooting is prohibited within an acceptable radius of shooting ranges and would limit potential issues of unsafe target shooting practices or conflict between game land user groups.

### **Fiscal Impact**

#### ***State Impact***

#### **Cost**

Agency staff are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the game lands. Individuals target shooting on game lands regularly leave broken glass, plastic bottles, paper, and steel cans on the property, which must be cleaned up by staff. Game lands staff typically clean frequented target shooting areas at each game land three times per year. Assuming 100% compliance with the proposed amendment, prohibiting this activity is projected to save the agency approximately \$816/year in staff time (\$34/hr x 8 hours/clean up x 3 clean-ups/year = \$816). Additional signage will be needed at the game land kiosk to indicate that target shooting is not allowed. Staff will post signage as part of their regular duties. New signage will cost the agency approximately \$0.90 (\$0.90/sign x 1 sign).

#### **Benefit**

Targets on game lands are often placed on trees in the area, many of which have been damaged to the point that mortality has already occurred or is imminent. This proposed amendment should prohibit the damage caused to live trees. The agency has no way to quantify this benefit.

### *Local Impact*

The proposed amendment has no anticipated local government impacts.

### *Private Impact*

#### Cost

The proposed amendment could affect private individuals who want to target shoot, as they will now have to travel to a shooting range. Depending on where the individual is traveling from, this could impose an additional financial burden. There is no way to quantify this impact.

#### Benefit

Prohibiting target shooting will improve safety for both target shooters and other users of the game lands. The agency has no way to quantify this benefit.

## **15A NCAC 10D .0229 GOOSE CREEK GAME LAND IN BEAUFORT AND PAMLICO COUNTIES (pg. 11)**

This proposed amendment will add the Bates-Bay River Tract, in Pamlico County, to the Goose Creek Game Land. This 407-acre tract is made of several small parcels with residential homes on multiple sides. Hunting on this tract for deer, bear, and turkey will be by permit only.

### Fiscal Impact

#### *State Impact*

#### Cost

The proposed addition is anticipated to have an estimated one-time cost to the agency of approximately \$18,142. This will include boundary survey and markings (\$7,392), gates to control vehicle access (\$750) and parking areas (\$10,000).

#### Benefit

The new addition will provide revenue through permit hunts. Permit applications cost hunters \$8 plus a transaction fee (transaction fees vary from \$0 to \$4 depending on the sales channel). Though expected revenue can vary greatly in any given year, as many factors can influence the number of hunts and the interest in those hunts, based on similar game lands, the agency can likely anticipate at least \$1,000 ( $\$8/\text{permit} \times 100 \text{ applications} = \$800$ ) (average  $\$2/\text{transaction} \times 100 \text{ applications} = \$200$ ) ( $\$800 + 200 = \$1,000$ ) in permit and transaction fees for permit hunts at this new addition.

### *Local Impact*

Adding additional permit hunt opportunities will likely increase the number of people visiting

local businesses, which may result in an increase in the purchase of goods and services as they relate to needs of this user group (e.g., food, gas, camping supplies, etc.). This anticipated benefit cannot be quantified.

### *Private Impact*

#### Cost

The proposed amendment would impact hunters who choose to hunt in the Bates-Bay River Tract, as they will have to purchase a permit for the hunt opportunity. Permit applications cost \$8 plus a transaction fee (up to \$4).

#### Benefit

The new addition will provide additional opportunities for hunting and outdoor recreation. Game land users will have increased opportunities for wildlife-based recreation and 407 acres of land will be conserved.

By enrolling this new area into the Special Permit Hunt Opportunity Program for deer, bear, and turkey, the agency is limiting the chances of negative interactions between hunters and homeowners, while also offering high-quality hunting opportunities for successful applicants. Additionally, an increased user presence may provide increased revenue for local businesses. There is no way to quantify this impact.

### **15A NCAC 10D .0232 GULL ROCK GAME LAND IN HYDE COUNTY (pg. 12)**

Distinguish the two waterfowl impoundments on the Gull Rock Game Land. Name the impoundment on the Outfall Canal Tract, the E. Merle Edwards/Loop Road Waterfowl Impoundment, and name the impoundment on the new Willow Point Tract (aka Spencer Bay), the Willow Point Waterfowl Impoundment. Hunting on the Willow Point Impoundment will be by permit only.

To reduce confusion, aid in enforcement, and to maintain the hunting framework on the impoundment on the Outfall Canal Tract, the proposal seeks to name the E. Merle Edwards/Loop Road Waterfowl Impoundment on the Outfall Canal Tract in rule. The impoundment is already named on WRC maps.

The Willow Point Tract is a new acquisition with a 214-acre waterfowl impoundment to be incorporated into the Gull Rock Game Land and is proposed to be permit only. The impoundment lies within a marsh peninsula between the confluence of the Pungo and Pamlico rivers, and Spencer Bay. The impoundment is a featureless expansion subject to overhunting if open to the framework established for the E. Merle Edwards/Loop Road Waterfowl Impoundment on the Outfall Canal Tract of Gull Rock Game Land. Permitting access to this impoundment will limit disturbances while promoting a higher quality waterfowl hunting experience.

## Fiscal Impact

### *State Impact*

#### Cost

The proposed addition is anticipated to have an estimated one-time cost to the agency of approximately \$8,850. This will include boundary survey and markings (\$7,050) and a kiosk (\$1,800).

Renaming the impoundment on the Outfall Canal Tract, the E. Merle Edwards/Loop Road Waterfowl Impoundment, is anticipated to have an estimated cost of \$0.90 (\$0.90/sign x 1 sign). Conservation technicians will put up signage as part of their regular duties.

#### Benefit

The Willow Point Tract will provide revenue through permit hunts. Permit applications cost hunters \$8 plus a transaction fee (transaction fees vary from \$0 to \$4 depending on the sales channel). Though expected revenue can vary greatly in any given year, as many factors can influence the number of hunts and the interest in those hunts, based on similar game lands, the agency can likely anticipate at least \$500 ( $\$8/\text{permit} \times 50 \text{ applications} = \$400$ ) (average  $\$2/\text{transaction} \times 50 \text{ applications} = \$100$ ) ( $\$400 + 100 = \$500$ ) in permit and transaction fees for permit hunts at this new addition.

### *Local Impact*

Adding additional permit hunt opportunities will likely increase the number of people visiting local businesses, which may result in an increase in the purchase of goods and services as they relate to needs of this user group (e.g., food, gas, camping supplies, etc.). This anticipated benefit cannot be quantified.

### *Private Impact*

#### Cost

The proposed amendment will impact hunters that choose to hunt in these areas, as they will have to purchase a permit for the hunt opportunity. Permit applications cost \$8 plus transaction fee (up to \$4).

#### Benefit

With the expansion of the Gull Rock Game Land, waterfowl hunters will have increased opportunities for quality waterfowl hunts.

## **15A NCAC 10D .0239 JOHNS RIVER GAME LAND IN BURKE COUNTY (pg. 13)**

The proposed amendment will restrict the use of bicycles during the open days of the seasons for game birds and game animals on Johns River Game Land in Burke County. The limitation will not apply to hunters engaged in the act of hunting during open days of the applicable seasons.

Johns River Game Land offers quality hunting experiences by permit only, and disabled and youth hunts also occur here throughout the season. Most blinds and wildlife openings are located along interior access roads which increases accessibility. However, it is along these same roads where bicycling occurs and is allowed 7 days per week. The game land has proximity to several large municipalities, numerous access roads, and gentle topography, making it a convenient destination for hikers, bicyclists, dog walkers, and other non-licensed users. An increase in this type of use is starting to generate conflict among user groups and compromise user experience.

Restricting bicycles during the open seasons will increase public safety, prevent the harassment of wildlife, and alleviate user conflicts.

### Fiscal Impact

#### *State Impact*

The proposed amendment may benefit the agency by reducing staff time required to address conflicts related to bikers using trails during hunting seasons. The Commission does not have data on how much time is spent by staff on this game land, so there is no way to quantify this benefit.

#### *Local Impact*

The proposed amendment has no anticipated local government impact.

#### *Private Impact*

##### Cost

The proposed amendment will impact bike riders currently using this game land during open hunting seasons, as they will need to find new locations to recreate. However, the Wilderness Gateway State Trail has plans for a section of trail to be built on Johns River Game Land, and the Pisgah National Forest, Lake James State Park, Catawba River Greenway, Oak Hill Community Park, Valdese Lakeside Park, and other public areas nearby offer numerous bicycling opportunities.

##### Benefit

The proposed amendment will benefit permit hunters, to include youth and disabled hunters, who are negatively impacted by bikers using trails during open hunting seasons with less interference.

### **15A NCAC 10D .0244 LANTERN ACRES GAME LAND IN TYRRELL AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES (pg. 14)**

The proposed amendment will restrict access on the Lantern Acres Game Land posted waterfowl

impoundments to permitted hunters only, to reduce disturbance to waterfowl during open waterfowl hunting seasons.

In 2007, two waterfowl impoundments were created to provide habitat for waterfowl, waterbirds, and for the public waterfowl hunting opportunities. To provide for quality hunts, turkey hunting, and waterfowl hunting on the posted waterfowl impoundments is by permit only. Hunting outside of the impoundments does not require a special hunt permit.

The posted waterfowl impoundments offer excellent turkey and quail nesting habitat in spring and summer. Both turkey hunters and deer hunters hunt the impoundments prior to flooding for the waterfowl season. Once the impoundments are flooded, deer and bear hunters primarily stay on the dikes and trails.

In contrast to the limited disturbances deer and bear hunters have on waterfowl, woodcock and snipe hunting have a tremendous negative impact on waterfowl use. Most waterfowl species do not tolerate human presence and will flee the area when disturbed.

The current rule allows all hunters to access the impoundments 6-days per week. This unrestricted use occurs on days prior to and during the permitted waterfowl hunts. This flushes waterfowl from the impoundments and is in opposition to the quality waterfowl hunting experience that the WRC wants to offer.

### Fiscal Impact

#### *State Impact*

The proposed amendment will align with the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant guidelines, which is a major funding source for the impoundment, and the management of the waterfowl impoundments.

#### *Local Impact*

The proposed amendment has no anticipated local government impact.

#### *Private Impact*

The proposed amendment should increase waterfowl use and in turn, waterfowl hunter satisfaction. The restriction to waterfowl hunting between October 1 to February 14 will reduce the amount of disturbance to waterfowl. Other hunters without a permit will have to obtain a permit to hunt snipe and woodcock.

### **15A NCAC 10D .0263 LITTLE FORK STATE FOREST GAME LAND IN WILKES COUNTY (pg. 15)**

The proposed amendment will expand the Little Fork State Forest Game Land in Wilkes County from a Three Days per Week Area to a Six Days per Week Area.

The North Carolina Forest Service requested the expansion of the game land from a Three Days per Week to a Six Days per Week Area due to its proximity to the educational forest.

### Fiscal Impact

#### *State Impact*

This proposed amendment is expected to provide better alignment with CWD monitoring efforts within the primary surveillance area.

#### *Local Impact*

Adding additional hunting days will likely increase the number of visits to local businesses, which may result in an increase in the purchase of goods and services as they relate to needs of this user group (e.g., food, gas, camping supplies, etc.). This anticipated benefit cannot be quantified.

#### *Private Impact*

The proposed amendment will allow for more opportunities to hunt on the Little Fork State Forest Game Land.

## **SUMMARY**

### **Quantifiable Impacts**

#### *State*

The following quantifiable costs to the State are anticipated:

- Use of Game Lands
  - Cold Mountain Game Land
    - One-time signage change = \$0.90 + negligible staff time
  - Goose Creek Game Land
    - Bates-Bay River Tract
      - One-time boundary survey and markings = \$7,392
      - One-time access gates = \$750
      - One-time parking areas = \$10,000
  - Gull Rock Game Land
    - E. Merle Edwards/Loop Road Waterfowl Impoundment
      - One-time signage change = \$0.90 + negligible staff time
    - Willow Point Waterfowl Impoundment
      - One-time boundary survey and markings = \$7,050
      - One-time kiosks = \$1,800



The following quantifiable benefits to the State are anticipated:

- Use of Game Lands
  - Cold Mountain Game Land
    - Clean-up savings = \$816/year
  - Goose Creek Game Land
    - Bates-Bay River Tract
      - Increase in license sales = at least \$1,000
  - Gull Rock Game Land
    - Willow Point Waterfowl Impoundment
      - Increase in license sales = at least \$500

The total quantifiable cost to the State is estimated to be approximately \$26,993 in year one, and the total quantifiable benefit to the State is estimated to be approximately \$2,316 annually.

### **Unquantifiable Impacts**

The following unquantifiable costs were identified for the proposed rule changes:

#### *Private*

- Prohibiting target shooting on Cold Mountain Game Land may increase the distance target shooters will have to travel to target shoot at nearby ranges.

The following unquantifiable benefits were identified for the proposed rule changes:

#### *State*

- Prohibiting target shooting on Cold Mountain Game Land may help eliminate damage caused to live trees being used as targets.
- Adding the Bates-Bay Tract to the Goose Creek Game Land and opening it to hunting by permit will increase agency revenue and bring more hunters to the land.
- Adding the Willow Point Tract to the Gull Rock Game Land and opening it to hunting by permit will increase agency revenue and bring more hunters to the land.
- Restricting the use of bicycles during the open hunting season, except for hunters engaged in the act of hunting game birds and game animals on Johns River Game Land will benefit permit hunters, to include youth and disable hunters, who are negatively impacted by bikers using trails during open hunting seasons with less interference.

#### *Private*

- Prohibiting target shooting on Cold Mountain Game Land will improve the safety for users of the game land.
- Adding the Bates-Bay River Tract to the Goose Creek Game Land will provide additional

- opportunities for hunting and outdoor recreation.
- Adding the Willow Point Tract to the Gull Rock Game Land will provide additional opportunities for hunting and outdoor recreation.

*Local*

- Adding the Bates-Bay River Tract to the Goose Creek Game Land and the Willow Point Tract to the Gull Rock Game Land as well adding hunting days to the Little Fork State Forest Game Land will provide additional opportunities for hunting and outdoor recreation. Adding additional hunting and recreational opportunities will likely increase the number of visits to local businesses, which may result in an increase in the purchase of goods and services as they relate to needs of these user groups (e.g., food, gas, camping supplies, etc.).

While many of the potential impacts of the proposed amendments are unquantifiable, the Commission believes that benefits to both the State and local government, and private entities will outweigh the costs.

1 **15A NCAC 10D .0219 COLD MOUNTAIN GAME LAND IN HAYWOOD COUNTY**

2 Cold Mountain game land is a Seven Days per Week Area, in which the following applies:

- 3 (1) Horseback riding is prohibited except on designated trails May 16 through August 31 and all  
4 horseback riding is prohibited from September 1 through May 15.
- 5 (2) Deer of either sex may be taken the first open Saturday of the applicable Deer With Visible Antlers  
6 Season.
- 7 (3) Target shooting is prohibited.

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9 *History Note: Authority G.S. 113-134; 113-264; 113-291.2; 113-291.5; 113-296; 113-305;*

10 *Eff. October 1, 2022.*

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1 **15A NCAC 10D .0229 GOOSE CREEK GAME LAND IN BEAUFORT AND PAMLICO COUNTIES**

2 Goose Creek game land is a Seven Days per Week Area, in which the following applies:

- 3 (1) Deer of either sex may be taken on all the open days of the applicable Deer With Visible Antlers  
4 Season.
- 5 (2) Except as provided in 15A NCAC 10D .0103(d)(2), waterfowl in posted waterfowl impoundments  
6 shall be taken only on the following days:  
7 (a) the opening and closing days of the applicable waterfowl seasons;  
8 (b) Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Days; and  
9 (c) Tuesdays and Saturdays of the applicable waterfowl seasons.
- 10 (3) Beginning on the first open waterfowl season day in October through the end of all waterfowl  
11 seasons, waterfowl hunting is by permit only on the following waterfowl impoundments: Pamlico  
12 Point, Campbell Creek, Hunting Creek, Spring Creek, Smith Creek, and Hobucken.
- 13 (4) On Spring Lake, Pamlico Point, and Campbell Creek Waterfowl Impoundments, all activities,  
14 except waterfowl hunting on designated waterfowl hunting days and trapping during the trapping  
15 season, are restricted to the posted Scouting-only Zone during the period November 1 through  
16 March 15.
- 17 (5) Camping is restricted to September 1 through the last day of February and March 31 through May  
18 14 in areas both designated and posted as camping areas.
- 19 (6) Hunting and vehicular access on the Parker Farm Tract is restricted from September 1 through  
20 January 1 and April 1 through May 15 to individuals that possess a valid hunting opportunity permit.
- 21 (7) Pursuing or chasing deer or bear with dogs for the purposes of training or hunting is prohibited on  
22 the Beaufort County portion north of NC 33 except for that portion east of Smith Creek and south  
23 of Campbell Creek.
- 24 (8) Bear shall not be harvested on Sunday.
- 25 (9) Hunting for deer, bear, and turkey on the Bates-Bay Tract is by permit only.

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27 *History Note: Authority G.S. 113-134; 113-264; 113-291.2; 113-291.5; 113-296; 113-305;*  
28 *Temporary Adoption Eff. December 1, 2022;*  
29 *Eff. March 15, 2023.*

1 **15A NCAC 10D .0232 GULL ROCK GAME LAND IN HYDE COUNTY**

2 Gull Rock is a Seven Days per Week Area, in which the following applies:

- 3 (1) Deer of either sex may be taken all the open days of the applicable Deer With Visible Antlers  
4 Season.
- 5 (2) Waterfowl on ~~posted waterfowl impoundments~~ the E. Merle Edwards/Loop Road Impoundment  
6 shall be taken only on the following days:  
7 (a) the opening and closing days of the applicable waterfowl seasons;  
8 (b) Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Days; and  
9 (c) Tuesdays and Saturdays of the applicable waterfowl season.
- 10 (3) Camping is restricted to September 1 through the last day of February and March 31 through May  
11 14 in areas designated and posted as camping areas.
- 12 (4) Bear may only be taken the first Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday of the November Bear Season and  
13 the second Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday of the December Bear Season.
- 14 (5) Waterfowl hunting on posted waterfowl impoundments on the Willow Point tract is by permit only.

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16 *History Note: Authority G.S. 113-134; 113-264; 113-291.2; 113-291.5; 113-296; 113-305;*  
17 *Eff. October 1, 2022;*  
18 *Temporary Amendment Eff. December 1, 2022;*  
19 *Amended Eff. June 1, 2023.*  
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1 **15A NCAC 10D .0239 JOHNS RIVER GAME LAND IN BURKE COUNTY**

2 Johns River game land is hunting by permit only. The following shall apply:

- 3 (1) During permitted deer hunts, antlered or antlerless deer may be taken by permit holders.
- 4 (2) The construction of permanent hunting blinds is prohibited.
- 5 (3) Camping is restricted to August 31 through the last day of February and March 31 through May 14.
- 6 (4) Target shooting is prohibited.
- 7 (5) The use of bicycles is restricted to hunters engaged in the act of hunting during the open days of the
- 8 seasons for game birds and game animals.

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10 *History Note: Authority G.S. 113-134; 113-264; 113-291.2; 113-291.5; 113-296; 113-305;*  
11 *Eff. October 1, 2022;*  
12 *Amended Eff. August 1, 2023.*  
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1 **15A NCAC 10D .0244 LANTERN ACRES GAME LAND IN TYRRELL AND WASHINGTON**  
2 **COUNTIES**

3 Lantern Acres game land is a Six Days per Week Area, in which the following applies:

- 4 (1) Deer of either sex may be taken on all the open days of the applicable Deer With Visible Antlers  
5 Season.
- 6 (2) Wild turkey hunting is by permit only.
- 7 (3) The use of dogs for hunting deer on the Godley Tract is prohibited.
- 8 ~~(4) Waterfowl hunting on posted waterfowl impoundments is by permit only.~~
- 9 (4) Hunting on posted waterfowl impoundments from October 1 through February 14 is by permit only.

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11 *History Note: Authority G.S. 113-134; 113-264; 113-291.2; 113-291.5; 113-296; 113-305;*  
12 *Eff. November 1, 2022.*

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1 **15A NCAC 10D .0263 LITTLE FORK STATE FOREST GAME LAND IN WILKES COUNTY**

2 Little Fork State Forest game land is a ~~Three~~ Six Days per Week Area, in which the following applies:

- 3 (1) Deer of either sex may be taken the first open day of the applicable Deer With Visible Antlers  
4 Season through the ~~second Wednesday~~ first Friday thereafter.  
5 (2) Bear hunting is prohibited.

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7 *History Note: Authority G.S. 113-134; 113-264; 113-291.2; 113-291.5; 113-296; 113-305;*  
8 *Eff. November 1, 2022;*  
9 *Amended Eff. August 1, 2023.*

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