



Game and Fisheries Committee

Agenda

Thursday, April 7, 2016

10:00a.m.

205 Ryan Office Building

Hearing on the Issue of Hunting and Fishing License Fees

Opening Remarks:

Majority Chairman Keith Gillespie

Minority Chairman Ted Harhai

Testimony:

Rich Palmer, Deputy Director of Field Operations, PA Game Commission.

Questions and Answers

Testimony:

John Arway, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Questions and Answers

Closing Remarks

Adjournment

SENATE BILL 1168

Testimony of the Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited Pennsylvania House of Representatives Game & Fisheries Committee

April 7, 2016

Majority Chairman Gillespie, Democratic Chairman Harhai and distinguished members of the House Game and Fisheries Committee, my name is Charlie Charlesworth and I am the President of the Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited (PATU). On behalf of Trout Unlimited and PATU, I hereby submit this testimony on Senate Bill 1168, *Authority to Establish Fees—Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC)*, and offer the following comments and organizational position. Thank you for considering this important legislation and for the opportunity to submit testimony to this committee.

Trout Unlimited is the nation's largest coldwater conservation organization working to conserve, protect and restore North America's trout and salmon fisheries and their watersheds. In Pennsylvania, we have over 13,000 members organized into 48 chapters who spend significant amounts of time restoring aquatic habitat in streams, monitoring streams, planting streamside plants and trees, teaching kids how to fish and helping veterans recover from the wounds of war by way of angling. Last year, PATU members donated 71,632 hours to these efforts, complementing the work that is being done by eight professional TU staff to restore streams damaged by abandoned mine drainage, assess and remove barriers to fish passage, educate youth, train citizens to conduct watershed monitoring and provide technical services to watershed partners. Our primary goal is to improve Pennsylvania's trout habitat and as a result, make fishing better for today's anglers and for future generations.

In addition to hours and dollars donated to native and wild trout habitat restoration and education, PATU members contribute to Pennsylvania's fishing economy and support the PFBC each year by paying fishing license and permit fees. We do so knowing that, in order for the PFBC to fulfill its mission of protecting, conserving and enhancing aquatic resources and the habitats on which game and non-game

fish species rely and providing fishing and boating opportunities, the agency needs consistent and adequate funding to operate. Importantly, the PFBC currently receives no General Fund revenue and 70 percent of the agency's annual Fish Fund revenue is generated from license fees and permits—paid for by Pennsylvania's anglers.

Unfortunately, fees for fishing licenses, the trout/salmon permit and various combination permits have not been raised since 2005 and have not kept with the pace of inflation, affecting the PFBC's current and future ability to fulfill its mission. As you know, presently, each time the PFBC proposes an increase to the fishing license or trout permit fee, the agency must receive approval, via legislation, from the General Assembly. This structure has resulted in fewer, but much larger, fee increases, hitting anglers and boaters with significant hikes in fees every few decades to make up for lost time. Senate Bill 1168 would allow the PFBC to ensure that revenue matches operating expenses on an annual basis, by allowing for smaller, incremental fee increases as needed. Fee increases would be proposed through the agency's rulemaking procedures, affording TU members and other anglers an opportunity to provide comment for agency consideration prior to enactment.

PATU believes that sufficient checks and balances currently exist with current General Assembly procedures without the need to require legislative approval to increase license/permit fees, including annual reports to this committee, a fiscal performance audit every three years, and Senate approval of commission members.

In recent years, revenue generated from the trout/salmon permit has not been sufficient to cover the cost of operating the state's hatchery operations and revenue from license sales have been used to fill the funding gap, leaving other agency programs without adequate funding and staff resources to fully operate. Yet, there is a new awareness and increased attention on the need for native and wild trout conservation and enhancement in Pennsylvania. For example:

- PFBC has developed a new trout management plan, and has incorporated goals and objectives outlined in the Pennsylvania Brook Trout Conservation Strategies as measurable outcomes in the new plan.
- One of the goals of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement is to restore and sustain naturally reproducing brook trout populations in Chesapeake headwater streams with an eight percent increase in occupied habitat by 2025.
- Trout Unlimited's science team released a *State of Trout* report in June 2015, describing the many and varied threats facing native and wild trout in this country and in particular Pennsylvania's coldwater fisheries. Threats have evolved over time, from agriculture and mining practices of the past to a new suite of problems related to four primary issues: energy development, introduction of non-native species, increasing water use and demand, and climate change. Legacy problems remain in many areas and their impacts are compounded by these emerging challenges. Increased resources are needed to conserve and sustain the Pennsylvania's coldwater fisheries and habitat.

It is abundantly clear that additional revenue is needed to fulfill the PFBC's new and current goals for native and wild trout conservation and enhancement while maintaining other programs. PATU recognizes the need for the PFBC to generate additional revenue to keep up with the costs of inflation, to support all of its programs, to ensure a robust staff complement, and to advance new and existing programs focused on native and wild trout enhancement and conservation.

Conclusion

Pennsylvania has a long history of fishing. Over the last century, the state's trout streams have attracted anglers from across the East, bringing in economic revenue for local sporting shops, restaurants, hotels, and travel-related businesses. Today, 1.1 million anglers flock to Pennsylvania's waterways each year, spending \$485 million on fishing-related activities in the commonwealth, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's biennial survey. Trout fishing accounts for approximately 47 percent of all fishing done in Pennsylvania, with more than 4.5 million fishing days each year. Specifically, on wild trout

streams, it is estimated that \$7.16 million dollars was contributed to the state's economy during the 2004 trout season, the last season for which this data is available; calculated for inflation, that impact would be \$9 million this year. To preserve Pennsylvania's fishing heritage and to ensure that fishing continues to support the state and local economies, the PFBC must be able to determine its own license and permit fees, to make sure it has the necessary resources on an annual basis to fulfill its mission and provide abundant, world-class fishing opportunities.

In conclusion, PATU supports Senate Bill 1168, which would allow the PFBC to set its own license and permit fees, as outlined in the legislation, through the agency's rulemaking procedures with opportunities for public input. PATU generally supports increases in fees for licenses, the trout permit and various combination permits with the understanding that the PFBC will direct an adequate part of the funding generated from the license fee permit increases into native and wild trout enhancement and conservation.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charlie Charlesworth".

Charlie Charlesworth, President
Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited
P.O. Box 5148
Bellefonte, PA 16823



Shooting Straight for April 7, 2016 Better Bowhunting

Testimony of the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania

To

Game & Fisheries Committee, PA House of Representatives

Chairman Gillespie, Chairman Harhai, Members of the House Game and Fisheries Committee, my name is Wes Waldron and I represent the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania. The UBP was founded in 1985 and has adopted a mission statement that is solidly based upon the support of the wise management of our wildlife and habitat resources utilizing scientific and biologically sound management precepts. We currently have approximately 2800 members bolstered by 52 supporting sportsmen's clubs, and 32 business sponsors. In addition the UBP is a voting member organization of the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsman's Clubs. Our organization makes every effort to represent the best interests of Pennsylvania bow hunters while at the same time promoting and protecting the sport of bow hunting.

The UBP considers funding for the Pennsylvania Game Commission to be an issue of the greatest priority, especially when considering that this agency is responsible for the perpetuation and protection of the game and non-game species of the Commonwealth. We are quite cognizant of the fact that the PGC far too frequently suffers from lack of revenue, and that legislation necessary to remedy that situation is in itself far too *infrequent*. While insufficient revenue is generally thought only to affect the agency, in truth it affects almost every citizen of Pennsylvania.

Lack of revenue affects every facet of our state wildlife agency, in staff, manpower, educational outreach, infrastructure, wildlife management and law enforcement; and this eventually results in a loss or reduction of services for not only license buyers, but non-license buyers as well. The UBP has always supported a fully functional agency un-constricted by a lack of revenue, and we have defended increases to license and permit fees even when the cost of the archery license topped the list of increase percentages. The UBP has also supported the concept of supplemental funding for both the PGC and PA Fish & Boat Commission, such as that provided by several other states that earmark a percentage of their state sales tax for their state wildlife agencies.

Not long ago, a bill was introduced in the Legislature that would have created a "tipping fee" to be paid by out-of-state waste haulers dumping in Pennsylvania landfills. Portions of that revenue were to be directed to the PGC and the PF&BC, amongst others. Unfortunately that piece of legislation barely left the starting gate, and once again the specter of a revenue crisis for both agencies crept upon the horizon. As a sportsmen's organization supportive of our game and fish agencies, as well as supportive of those agencies having sufficient funds to properly and effectively fulfill their individual mandates, the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania are of the opinion that the General Assembly is and well should be, on the threshold of ensuring that the Commonwealths game and fish agencies will see an end to underfunding.





Shooting Straight for Better Bowhunting

With the introduction of, and first passing of Senate Bill 1166 that would give the PGC the power to set their own license and permit fees, the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania applaud the bi-partisanship of the Senate Game & Fisheries Committee regarding this piece of legislation. We trust that the Senate will act quickly and provide full approval of this bill and that this Committee, and the House of Representative, will act in kind when SB 1166 arrives on their table.

Despite the initial grouching, grumbling, and lamentations that accompany every hunting license increase, those reactions differ little from those heard in the wake of increases to the cost of other recreational endeavors, or food, fuel, and modes and methods of transportation. In our opinion, hunters and non-hunters alike should eventually recognize the advantages of continuing PGC services without the predictable reductions and losses of service that increased costs and diminishing revenue always bring about. We doubt that anyone will miss the prolonged wait for license increase legislation to be drafted, introduced, cussed and discussed, tabled, re-introduced, and who knows for how long. All of that while the coffers of the PGC continue to dwindle to levels that only an exorbitant increase could hope to address for the long-term. Current legislation that would address the PGC's financial needs are the first since 1999, a sixteen year period that the UBP and many others find incomprehensible given the responsibility that the Agency has to our wildlife resources, and the sportsmen and women of Pennsylvania

Although the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania are fully supportive of allowing the Pennsylvania Game Commission to set their own fees, we also believe that the PGC cannot hope to continue to obtain sufficient funding through license fees alone. At some point the cost of license and permit fees will fail to provide the Agency with the majority of revenue required to maintain infrastructure, and fulfill their mandate, and in our organizations opinion we are at that point already. The Agency needs a dependable source of funding or the cost of licenses and permits will indeed become unaffordable for some.

The answer to the issue of supplemental funding for both our fish and game agencies lies directly in the hands of the General Assembly, and while there are more than several options it is ultimately their decision as to where that funding may be secured. The question here is two-fold, can that funding be found, and is there a desire to see our fish and wildlife agencies provided with sufficient sustainable revenue to effectively manage the species they are charged with? The United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania feel that the answer to both questions should be a resounding, YES!

Respectfully,

S. Wesley Waldron, Chairman, Legislative Committee

United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania

Rick Conley, President





Shooting Straight for Better Bowhunting

March 17, 2016

Gregory L. Raffensperger, Executive Director
Game & Fisheries Committee (R)
House of Representatives
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3040

Executive Director Raffensperger,

The United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania (UBP) have always based our support of the management of Pennsylvania's wildlife and wildlife habitat resources on the best scientific and biological practices. In that regard we feel that the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) has, and continues to, follow those precepts in the management of both game and non-game species, as well as the natural environment necessary to their survival and well-being.

The UBP strongly feels that those efforts are often hampered by a shortage of revenue and that periodic increases in revenue are necessary in order for that agency to properly and effectively address their mandate. Our organization recognizes that it has been sixteen years since the General Assembly has approved an increase for the PGC, in our opinion, far too long.

Therefore, we wish the Members of the House Game and Fisheries to know that the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania fully support a license increase package for the Pennsylvania Game Commission. In addition, the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania could also very easily support legislation that would empower the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, to set their own fee's for licenses and permits.

Respectfully,

S. Wesley Waldron, Chairman
Legislative Committee
United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania
826 Kellyburg Road
Trout Run, PA 17771

Rick Conley, President
United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania
400 Doe Run Road
Manheim, PA 17545





Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs

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Providing leadership and advocacy for the enhancement of our fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all hunters, trappers, anglers and conservationists. Protecting our 2nd Amendment Rights.

House Game & Fisheries Committee Hearing on Legislation to Increase License Fees/Set Own Fees April 7, 2016

Chairman Gillespie, Chairman Harhai, Members of the Committee:

The Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs (PFSC), the largest and oldest organization of hunters, anglers, trappers, conservationists and second amendment advocates, was founded in 1932 by conservation legends of this state. The PFSC represents the interest of Pennsylvania's sportsmen and sportswomen, and works with the commonwealth's resource agencies that are charged with managing wildlife, waterways, fish, game and related conservation matters. PFSC's membership of clubs, individuals and statewide organizations represents over 70,000 sportsmen and women.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide testimony regarding legislative proposals to increase license fees and/or allow the Game Commission and the Fish and Boat Commission to set their own fees relative to hunting, trapping fishing and boating.

Historically, the PFSC has been supportive of license fee increases. This is due to several factors. First, Federation members understand the agencies do not receive General Fund revenue and a large portion of their operating budgets comes from license fees. Second, the mission of these agencies is very important to our members' activities and interests. Without the necessary revenue, crucial programs, field personnel and staff would need to be cut. Finally, we recognize the agencies have received legislative approval for license fee increases at sporadic intervals, spanning lengthy periods of time, often long beyond planned budget time frames, making it difficult for them to make long-term plans or fulfill their strategic plans.

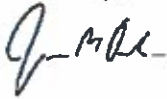
Both the Game Commission and the Fish and Boat Commission have demonstrated compelling cases to our members justifying a dire need for increased funding. After discussing these proposals with our delegates and officers, this letter is to advise you and your committee members the PFSC supports the efforts to increase license fees for both agencies, and we support going one step farther and allowing the agencies to have the authority to set their own fees.

We feel this is absolutely necessary and appropriate so our resource agencies are able to maintain sound fiscal management practices that fulfill their missions. Both Commissions submit annual reports to the Senate and House Game & Fisheries Committees, and are subject to periodic audits by the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, so there will still be adequate legislative oversight.

We do not agree with the comments from the naysayers about the agencies becoming greedy and over pricing licenses. Both agencies understand doing so would do more harm than good, and essentially price themselves out of business. While we understand and support the "sunset" provision in the legislation, we would recommend it be extended to five years. We do not feel three years will provide adequate evaluation data.

We appreciate the ability to have input during this process. Please contact John Kline, our Director of Government Affairs, if you have any additional questions as these proposals work their way through the legislative process. We stand ready to play an active role in helping to advance this most important issue expediently.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Ord".

John Ord, President

cc: Senate Game & Fisheries Committee Members
Executive Director John Arway, PFBC
Executive Director Matt Hough, PGC

Unified Sportsmen of Pennsylvania



"The largest statewide individual membership sporting advocacy organization in the Commonwealth"

Conservation supported through thousands of voices for hunting, fishing, trapping and our second amendment gun rights

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March 30, 2016

Hunting and Fishing License Fee Increases "A Tale of Two Agencies"

Pennsylvania has a strong traditional sporting heritage in both Hunting and Fishing. It is no secret there is unequivocally a large difference in sportsman satisfaction of agency management between these two entities. It has been made very clear from many legislators that any license increase for the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) can only follow a more responsive and substantive change in deer management and other issues across the commonwealth. There is no denying the PGC license increase has been held "hostage" per say by legislators as a tool to achieve cooperation from this agency. There are no "trout wars" only "deer wars" in Pennsylvania, as continually identified in our state's most prominent sporting publications. The Unified Sportsman of Pennsylvania has diligently worked to improve PGC deer management to include stronger social and economic parameters, and to recognize the vast difference between public and private land deer management..... with marginal success. Our Whitetail resource is our state animal and #1 game animal, so proper management is paramount.

Still today, shortcomings and poor responsiveness in many laws and regulations hinder our sport's ability to keep pace with national hunting excitement. As mentioned, the largest problem is poor deer management, and it continues to be recognized by some of our top legislators in a bipartisan manner. Just this past Sunday 3/20/2016 at our USP membership meeting, Representative Mike Hanna revealed a new bill that finally brings the long missing deer management parameters mentioned prior, into a legislative bill that will not ignore science, but will end many proven oversights by the PGC. Until these problems are rectified, we **do not support a license increase for the PGC!** Furthermore 2 million dollars have been spent in the last two years by the PGC to advertise and promote hunting, current 2015-2016 license sales totals will likely again realize a flat to declining trend at the end of the license year in June. Other than a few insignificant blips of increase in the past 15 years, perhaps indicating the last gasps of interest by exiting hunters, there has been a steady atypical hunting license sales decline followed by stagnation. In Pennsylvania it is clear the catalyst that started the license sales drop, was deer reduction started in the early 2000s and not some national trend as proclaimed.

Past and continuing practices:

The PGC boasts a 4% deer harvest increase this season. The truth is the number is only actually 3.8% and more significantly this increase is still behind the 2013-14 harvest by 11.7%. and the lowest since 2009-10 season.

The recent PGC advertising program proves as we predicted, would not stop falling license sales and further shows how sporting dollars are wasted on another fallacious endeavor. Bring back game and you will bring back hunters. Increasing game sightings and other direct hunting upgrades will prove far more beneficial in increasing license sales.

PGC Donations using sportsman's money like those given a few years ago to Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, and The Ned Smith Center for the Arts totaling \$500,000.00 from the previous executive director's authority is another prime example. Do you as an elected official of the people have the latitude or authority to issue these types of contributions unilaterally, in these magnitudes?

Payments made for land purchases above limits outlined in Title 34 game law are regularly being done.

Money put into escrow accounts rather than the game fund thru manipulations of revenue identification like recreational impacts or bonus payments. The Game News annual game fund pie chart report, identifies only 150,000.00 is spent for land purchases, when in fact tens of millions are being diverted and spent that should have been put into the game fund.

Highly questionable decisions from a game management agency like introducing viscous predators like the Fisher Cat from Vermont back into our declining habitat situation.

The Unified Sportsmen of Pennsylvania strongly believes the PGC must comply with the above, before a license increase is granted, or it will be business as usual, and the factual cancerous decline in game numbers, hunters and their fiscal decline will continue.

Conversely supporting an agency that manages its affairs properly and provides a quality product for its customers can be validated with few words. The Unified Sportsmen of Pennsylvania prides our organization as being strongly in tune with a large cross section of hunters and fishermen, trappers and shooters in the Commonwealth. We feel our determinations are based on objective analysis, and to validate that claim, we hold a positive overall opinion of The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC). Their open door policies... satisfaction by the majority of fishermen... and constant monitoring and management of our waterways is evident. We also recognize the PFBC revenue generating potential is far below that of the PGC and they work hard to keep their fiscal house in order with limited resources. Once again there are no "fish wars" and there are strong inferences that can be drawn from such a simple statement. When problematic aquatic circumstances arise, any curative PFBC reaction always includes putting fishing impacts in front of the curve as decisions are made. I personally have witnessed the PFBC commissioner meeting format being more friendly to fisherman input, and have seen the PFBC evaluate and implement changes from contacts they receive from as few as 25 fishermen. The Unified Sportsmen of Pennsylvania, for these reasons and others, supports current legislation to allow the PFBC license increase as identified in SB 1168.

Respectfully,

Randy Santucci

Chairman of the Board
Unified Sportsmen of PA



QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 160 • 170 Whitetail Way • Bogart, GA 30622
PHONE: 800.209.3337 • FAX: 706.353.0223 • www.QDMA.com

House Game & Fisheries Committee Hearing on Legislation to Increase License Fees/Set Own Fees 7 April 2016

Chairman Gillespie, Chairman Harhai, Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide testimony regarding legislative proposals to increase license fees and/or allow the Game Commission to set their own fees relative to hunting and trapping. The QDMA is a national nonprofit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to ensuring the future of white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat and our hunting heritage. The QDMA has over 60,000 members nationwide and our membership includes hunters, landowners and natural resource professionals. The QDMA supports revision of the general hunting and furtaking license fees.

Hunting license sales and the associated Pittman-Robertson funds that accompany them are the lifeblood of state wildlife agencies. Since these funds are so important to management programs we recently surveyed state wildlife agencies to determine the last year they increased the price of their resident hunting license. Overall the years ranged from 1984 (Kansas) to 2016 (Maine). Thirty-two states provided the year, and 72 percent of them have increased their license fees since Pennsylvania last did in 1999. This includes nearly every other state in the northeastern U.S. You can find this state-by-state data on page 27 of our *2016 Whitetail Report* at <https://www.qdma.com/corporate/whitetail-report>.

What does it cost to spend a day at your favorite sporting or entertainment event? Far more than it does for an annual hunting license. We realize that no one wants to spend more for a hunting license, however license sales provide the bulk of funding for our state wildlife agencies, and Pennsylvania's licenses are well below the cost of living increases since their price was last raised. Thanks for your leadership on this matter and for your commitment to Pennsylvania's natural resources.

Respectfully,

Kip Adams

Kip Adams
Director of Education and Outreach



*Dedicated to the Conservation of the Wild Turkey
and the Preservation of Our Hunting Heritage*

April 6th, 2016

To The Honorable,
Representative Keith Gillespie
Chair, Game and Fisheries Committee
Pennsylvania State House of Representatives
45 East Wing
PO Box 202047
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2047

Reference: SB 1166, Legislation allowing the PA Game Commission to set its own license fees

Dear Chairman Gillespie,

On behalf of the more than 10,000 adult members of the Pennsylvania State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, I am writing today to express our support for SB 1166 which gives authority to the Pennsylvania Game Commission to set its own license fee schedule.

The National Wild Turkey Federation is a private, non-profit conservation organization that has partnered with the Pennsylvania Game Commission and other partners since 1975. We have raised greater than 3 million dollars to deliver over 250,000 acres of habitat work and have introduced thousands of Pennsylvania residents to the outdoors. Our mission is the "Conservation of the Wild Turkey and the Preservation of our Hunting Heritage."

The Pennsylvania Game Commission is an independent state agency, not supported by the general tax paying population, and has not received a license increase since 1999. Hunting and furbearer license sales are the primary and largest revenue source for the agency. The agency's inability to set its own fee structure compromises their ability to respond to inflation and growing agency and wildlife needs.

Without a license increase, Pennsylvania sportsmen and wildlife will suffer the impacts of expected annual budget deficits. Budget deficits will result in cuts to important programs such as: fewer habitat projects, elimination of the pheasant propagation program, and the cancellation of wildlife conservation officer classes. Most importantly, budget deficits will compromise the agency's ability to maximize Federal Pittman-Robertson Grant Funds, which directly fund wildlife conservation and management, matching the state dollars 3:1.

Again the NWTf supports SB 1166, and we respectfully request that your committee take quick action to send the Bill to the full House for a vote. We stand ready to assist in any way that we can.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ralph Martone
President - Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation





To: **Honorable Members of the Pennsylvania House Committee on Game and Fisheries**
501 North 3rd Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Re: **Senate Bills 1166 and 1168 - Relating to the Powers of the Pennsylvania Game Commission and Fish and Boat Commission**

Position: **Support**

Date: **April 7, 2016**

Members of the Pennsylvania House Committee on Game and Fisheries:

I write today to express the strong support of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation for Senate Bills 1166 and 1168 (SB 1166 & SB 1168), legislation that would provide the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) and Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) the power to establish license and permit fees.

Through the American System of Conservation Funding, a "user-pays, public-benefits" program, Pennsylvania's sportsmen and women are the lifeblood of conservation funding for the two state agencies (PGC & PFBC) that are tasked with managing Pennsylvania's fish and wildlife resources and their habitat. Seventy-nine years ago, the hunting community initiated this System with the passage of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson Act) which directed excise taxes on firearms and ammunition to a dedicated fund to be used specifically for conservation purposes. Further, revenue from sportsmen's licenses was permanently linked to conservation through the establishment of this program, laying the foundation for what is now the American System of Conservation Funding. Through time, this System has expanded and now includes the fishing and boating communities with the passage of the Federal Aid in Sportfish Restoration Act (also known as the Dingell-Johnson Act, and the subsequent Wallop-Breaux Amendment) as well as the archery community.

The critical conservation dollars generated through this System fund a variety of efforts in Pennsylvania, including: enhanced fish and wildlife habitat and populations, recreational access to

public and private lands, shooting ranges and boat access facilities, wetlands protection and its associated water filtration and flood retention functions, and improved soil and water conservation. As such, all Pennsylvanian's benefit from this System, not just hunters and anglers.

The ability to price hunting and fishing licenses at an appropriate amount and to properly adjust for changing economic conditions is critical to the conservation of fish and wildlife resources and their habitat. In recent years, political roadblocks have, unfortunately, hindered the ability of hunting and fishing license fees to keep pace with inflation – hunting licenses fees have remained the same price since 1999, and fishing licenses since 2005.

Beyond ensuring that license fees keep pace with changing economic conditions, providing the state agencies the regulatory authority to adjust fees will allow them to more nimbly implement hunter and angler recruitment and retention programs to ensure that tomorrow's funders of state-level conservation are brought into the field and onto the water.

In closing, CSF supports granting authority to the PGC and PFBC to set license and permit fees through their rulemaking process, which will help to ensure that Pennsylvania's fish and wildlife populations continue to be managed by sound, science-based management for the benefit of all of Pennsylvania's citizens for generations to come. We urge a favorable vote for Senate Bills 1166 and 1168.

Sincerely,



Alana Barricks

Mid-Atlantic States Coordinator
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
110 North Carolina Ave. SE
Washington, DC 20003

CC: Governor Tom Wolf
Robb Miller
Executive Director John Arway
Executive Director Matt Hough
Director Tim Schaeffer
Director Wayne Laroche

Kent A. Adams, East Region Director
Pheasants Forever, Inc. and Quail Forever
993 Klinger Road
Millersburg, PA 17061
(717) 319-5575



To: Honorable Members of the Pennsylvania House Committee on Game and Fisheries

501 North 3rd Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Rc: Senate Bill 1166 - Relating to the Powers of the Pennsylvania Game Commission

Date: April 7, 2016

Members of the Pennsylvania House Committee on Game and Fisheries:

On behalf of Pheasants Forever's 13 chapters, 260 grassroots volunteers, and over 2,600 members in Pennsylvania, I am writing to express strong support for Senate Bill 1166 (SB 1166). This historic legislation would provide the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) the authority to set license and permit fees, the primary funding source of this self-funded agency. All Pennsylvanians benefit from the PGC's mission to manage Pennsylvania's wild birds, wild mammals and their habitats for current and future generations. The conservation efforts of the PGC and its partners not only impact a few dozen game species but also hundreds of non-game species. Furthermore, the habitat conservation efforts for these species contribute to clean water, clean air, healthy forests and farms, and recreation for many Pennsylvanians and nonresidents alike.

Currently, the agency's ability to carry out their important mission is being crippled by budgetary shortfalls as a result of 17 years without a license increase. Wildlife and habitat conservation is too important to be subjected to long funding gaps and challenging political climates. In order to carry out the strategic, long-term plans that successful wildlife management requires, the PGC needs the ability to price hunting licenses appropriately and properly adjust for changing economic conditions, while keeping pace with inflation. SB 1166 would empower the PGC to make incremental funding adjustments over time, with relatively low financial impacts to hunters paying the fees. Additionally, providing the PGC with the regulatory authority to adjust fees will provide even more incentive and capability to implement innovative hunter recruitment and retention programs to ensure the future of conservation funding and perpetuate Pennsylvania's rich hunting heritage.

The unique model of North American conservation funding is based on user fees paid by sportsmen and women, an approach conceived and endorsed by hunters and anglers when the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (i.e. Pittman-Robertson Act) was passed in 1937. Through excise taxes on firearms and ammunition, Pittman-Robertson generates dedicated conservation funding and matches

state hunting license revenue at a 3:1 ratio. An inadequately funded PGC could result in returning Pennsylvania's fair share of Pittman-Robertson funding back to Washington D.C. if the required 25% match cannot be met.

In conclusion, Pheasants Forever supports granting authority to the PGC to set license and permit fees through their rulemaking process. This change will ensure sound, science-based wildlife and habitat management for the benefit of all current and future generations of Pennsylvania citizens. We urge a favorable vote for SB 1166. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this critical legislation. I would be happy to meet with any Committee members for further discussion or clarification on our position.

Sincerely,



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East Region Director
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kadams@pheasantsforever.org
(717) 319-5575

CC: Executive Director Matt Hough, PGC
Robb Miller, Governor's Advisory Council for Hunting Fishing and Conservation