



To: **Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission**
Attn: Timothy Schaeffer, Executive Director
P.O. Box 67000
Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000

Re: **Proposed Fishing License Fee Increases**

Position: **Support**

Date: **May 11, 2023**

Executive Director Timothy Schaeffer:

My name is Joseph Mullin, and I am the Northeastern States Manager for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF). As a Pennsylvania resident and avid sportsman, I would like to express my strong support for proposed rulemaking under 58 Pa. Code § 63.57 regarding fishing license fees. CSF has long advocated for legislation authorizing the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) with the regulatory power to set license, permit, and tag fees – something that was ultimately passed in 2020. The sportsmen's community has a tenured history of rallying to support conservation through a variety of self-imposed mechanisms (i.e., license fees and taxes) and advocating for rules and regulations that promote healthy populations of fish and wildlife while providing sustainable access for hunters and anglers. Thus, this enables the affected state agencies to better conserve fish, wildlife, and their habitats. It is for this reason the CSF lends its support to these proposed license fee increases.

Founded in 1989, CSF is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

The proposal that you have before you is not the first instance of this occurrence in Pennsylvania. In 2020, members of the Pennsylvania Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus co-sponsored House Bill 808 – legislation that was ultimately signed into law by Governors Sportsmen's Caucus member Governor Tom Wolf, granting the PFBC with the regulatory authority to set license, permit, and tag fees. CSF was heavily engaged throughout the process, lending its support to House Bill 808. It is with this in mind that CSF supports this equally crucial opportunity currently before you. This proposed rulemaking offers

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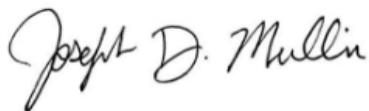
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anglers an additional chance to step up and pay license fees that are reflective of current costs of the goods and services necessary to deliver the important fisheries conservation work of the agency. This is emphasized by the PFBC's statement that "If new revenues are not in place for the 2024 license year, the Commission will not be able to maintain adequate levels of services to this Commonwealth's anglers, let alone respond to anglers' desires for expanded efforts in many program areas." For this reason, CSF strongly supports the proposed fishing license fee increases.

During the turn of the 20th century, the unregulated and unchecked harvest of animals by market hunters, coupled with severe habitat degradation, left many of our nation's game populations in a dire position. Some of America's most iconic species, such as elk, turkey, and white-tailed deer, were experiencing precipitous population declines and in some cases were extirpated from portions of their historical range. Realizing the grim threat of losing our sporting heritage, sportsmen and women banded together to enact rules and regulations governing the harvest of wildlife. Early conservationists recognized that unregulated market hunting and continued habitat loss, combined with an increasingly urban, non-agrarian society largely out of touch with wildlife in wild places, would ultimately result in negative consequences for much of the nation's wildlife. Their efforts to implement wildlife management policies in the United States ultimately led to the development of our state fish and wildlife agencies, as well as the enactment of many critically important bills such as the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson Act) and the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act (Dingell-Johnson Act) which set up a system in which excise taxes collected from sporting goods purchases are funneled back into conservation. Additionally, the Wallop-Breaux Act expanded the list of taxable items to nearly all sportfishing products and captured the federal motorboat fuel taxes that were paid by boaters and anglers. 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 – a unique "user pays – public benefits" structure in which those that consumptively use public resources pay for the privilege, and in some cases the right, to do so, while benefitting the public at large. For over 85 years, sportsmen and women have played a crucial role in funding conservation efforts in the United States through this System, which serves as a case study for how sportsmen and women have a long history of rising to the occasion and financially supporting their state's fish and wildlife agencies.

In closing, I would like to reiterate my support for the proposed rulemaking under 58 Pa. Code § 63.57 regarding fishing license fees. Should you require any additional information on this, or any other sportsmen-related topic, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,



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