

Dear House committee members,

I oppose HB 1538 as it is not a win for fishing conservation and education. I do agree the current policy on conservation dollars paid by fishing tournament permittees needs to be changed. However, removing the conservation dollars entirely, in favor of a standalone permit fee paid to the NDGF, is simple not the answer.

I am a current board member for a fishing conservation organization that puts on tournaments and we put our conservation dollars towards our own college scholarship that supports kids who want to get a college education in wildlife or fisheries related areas. The current policy is not a problem for our organization. However, it is a problem for tournaments that are ran as business such as the National Walleye Tour, Master Walleye Circuit or Anglers insight marketing. Since the cap on conservation fees was removed in 2020, these tournaments have pretty much pulled out of the state. As a tournament angler myself, I want these tournaments in my home state to showcase the work that our state agency does, the work that our local conservation clubs do, and the beauty of North Dakota. I want the communities that they are held in to benefit from the tourism and the opportunity for individuals in those communities to show what North Dakota nice is. I don't want conservation to be lost in our way to accomplishing those objects though.

To hold a tournament in the surrounding states, you don't have to give any money towards conservation. Minnesota is a application fee ranging between \$70-\$560 that is paid to the DNR, South Dakota you don't have to pay anything, Montana charges a fee of \$3 per participant, that is paid to FWP, if the tournament will be using a FWP access site or state park. Thats exactly \$0 towards fishing conservation and education. This is speculation but I would guess if you asked anyone who works for or fishes a NWT, MWC, or AIM event if they support fishing conservation and education, the answer would be yes.

I would support putting a cap back on conservation fees or having a lower percentage to begin with. Prior to 2020, we had the bigger tournaments in our state and that meant \$5000 towards conservation per tournament. That put North Dakota as a leader in fishing and education conservation dollars rasied, compared to surrounding states, and also worked for running a business. I don't want to see conservation lose in this.

Thanks,

Alex McInnes