



February 3, 2021

**RE: House Bill 1231; Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund**

**Position: Support**

Dear Members of the Mississippi House of Representatives,

As a lifelong Mississippian, I respectfully encourage you to support House Bill 1231 to establish the Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund. Investing in conservation benefits Mississippi's fish and wildlife resources and outdoor sporting heritage, and this legislation would enable the state to leverage additional private and federal matching funds for conservation work in the state by allocating a portion of the existing sales tax on sporting goods to dedicated conservation funding.

Founded in 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) has maintained a singleness of purpose that has guided the organization to become one of the most respected and trusted sportsmen's organization in the political arena. CSF's mission is to work with Congress, governors, and state legislatures to protect and advance hunting, angling, recreational shooting, and trapping. CSF has a strong track record in Mississippi, working with the Mississippi Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus and conservation partners to protect and advance the Magnolia State's sporting heritage by supporting pro-sportsmen legislation and state fish and wildlife management objectives.

Establishment of the Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund would enable Mississippi to increase the scale of conservation work on private and public lands across the state without creating a new sales tax or increasing the current sales tax rate. The legislation does not increase hunting and fishing license fees, and no amendment to the constitution would be required. By allocating a percentage of the existing sales tax on sporting goods to conservation purposes, Mississippians would benefit from projects that improve wildlife habitat; promote hunting, fishing, recreational shooting and other forms of outdoor recreation; enhance access to public lands; restore wetlands and other riparian areas important for clean water; and support fish and wildlife conservation on working forests and farms. By dedicating a percentage of the existing sales tax on sporting goods to conservation funding, Mississippi would significantly increase its ability to capitalize on matching private conservation dollars as well as federal funds through, among others, the Food Security Act (Farm Bill), Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson), Sport Fish Restoration Act (Dingell-Johnson), the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act.

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Investing in conservation is important for supporting Mississippi's 782,000 sportsmen and women who contribute more than \$3.02 billion to the state's economy, spend more than \$2.2 billion, and support more than 33,580 jobs. In 2019, Mississippi's sportsmen and women contributed \$35.52 million to conservation funding generated through hunting and fishing licenses and excise taxes on sporting-related goods, the "user-pays, public-benefits" structure known as the American System of Conservation Funding. While hunters and anglers are the primary funders of conservation in the state, we understand the need for and support increased investment in conservation that benefits all Mississippians.

In closing, CSF strongly supports HB 1231 to advance the conservation of Mississippi's lands, waters, and outdoor sporting traditions, and we strongly encourage you to support the legislation. Thank you for considering our comments, and please let us know if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,



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