



To: House Game and Fisheries Committee
State Capitol
Room 523, Irvis Office
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: House Bill 1409 – Amending Title 30 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Further Providing for Power to Set Fees

Position: Support

Date: June 28, 2023

Honorable Members of the House Game and Fisheries Committee:

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 House Bill 1409 (H. 1409). CSF has long advocated for legislation to grant 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; however, this authority is set to expire in 2025. Through the enactment of H. 1409, the PFBC would have the ability to set license fees through the regulatory process until 2035, thereby extending this power for more than a decade. The PFBC has done a fantastic job with enacting rules and regulations that promote healthy populations of fish while providing sustainable access for hunters and anglers. These services carry a high price tag and granting the PFBC with the necessary authority through H. 1409 will ensure that it remains financially solvent while enhancing the services the agency provides to all Pennsylvanians, our fisheries resources, and their habitats.

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 legislation 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, which ultimately became law and granted the PFBC with the regulatory authority to set license, permit, and tag fees. In the time since, the agency has proven to wield this new power responsibly, as it was anticipated that they would, and it is with this in mind that CSF supports legislation expanding this power until 2035. The PFBC would be able to set prices that are reflective of the current costs of the goods and services necessary to deliver the important fisheries

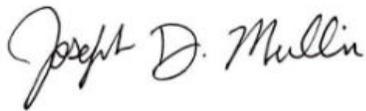
conservation work of the agency while remaining flexible in reacting to changed or unanticipated market conditions (i.e., the recent COVID-19 pandemic) and adjust prices accordingly to ensure participation remains strong. For this reason, CSF strongly supports H. 1409.

Should HB 1409 be enacted, that doesn't mean that the legislature will be completely eliminated from the process. The General Assembly will retain its oversight authority on proposed license fee adjustments, and the process will continue to have ample opportunity for public comment. Likewise, the Senate and House Fish and Game Committees will retain their veto power over any fee adjustments. The PFBC has previously committed to only carrying out incremental increases that will support the agency's budget while holding down costs for anglers and boaters – something that we have seen in practice over the past three years, and which CSF has supported.

Extending the PFBC's ability to set license fees through the regulatory process will ensure that smaller adjustments are made over a gradual period, avoiding the sticker shock that is often associated when increases that are made through one legislative effort after decades of the prices remaining stagnant. In 2022, Pennsylvania had 1,146,972 certified paid fishing license holders, and avoiding significant, single-instance price alterations by allowing the PFBC to make multiple minor modifications will aid in angler retention. Additionally, fee adjustments are not necessarily always increases. The ability to react in real-time and set prices through the regulatory process is likewise beneficial in the development of reduced-price and incentive-based license structures aimed at improving angler participation, thereby recruiting and retaining anglers and increasing conservation funding in the long run. As is already available in Pennsylvania, selling multi-year licenses at a reduced cost/year has actually been shown to improve overall participation rates while increase total revenue despite taking a hit on the annual license cost per individual. Multi-year fishing licenses first became available in 2013, and in the PFBC's 2013 Annual Report, it states that "Customers who bought multi-year licenses saved money by not having to pay transaction and processing fees each year. For example, a customer who bought a 5-year license with a trout/salmon permit saved \$13.60."^[1] Former PFBC Executive Director John Arway also stated that "the multi-year licenses also may enable the agency to hold onto those anglers who for various reasons otherwise might buy a license only every other year or every third or fifth year."^[2]

In closing, I would like to reiterate our strong support for H. 1409. 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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^[1] "2013 Annual Report." Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Accessed on June 28, 2023. Available at: https://www.fishandboat.com/About-Us/Reports/Documents/2013ann_rpt.pdf.

^[2] "Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission to Sell Multi-Year Fishing Licenses." PennLive Patriot-News. Accessed on June 28, 2023. Available at: https://www.pennlive.com/pa-sportsman/2012/10/pennsylvania_fish_boat_commission_to_sell_multi-year_fishing_licenses.html.