



April 9, 2024

Representative Brett Geymann
Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment
900 North 3rd Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Re: HB 795 – Reimbursement for Free and Discounted Hunting and Fishing Licenses

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Geymann and Honorable Members of the House Natural Resources and Environment Committee,

We respectfully encourage you to support HB 795, which would require that the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) be reimbursed from the state general fund for any lost revenue resulting from the issuance of free or discounted hunting and fishing licenses provided by the legislature enacted on or after July 1, 2024.

Founded in 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation (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.

Through the “user pay – public benefits” structure of the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF), which includes revenue generated from sporting licenses sold and manufacturer-level excise tax revenue from the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR), hunting and angling in Louisiana generate over \$40 million annually for state-based conservation.¹ This funding is critical to the success of LDWF’s mission to conserve and enhance Louisiana's fish and wildlife resources.

¹ https://s3.amazonaws.com/cdn.congressionalsportsmen.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/17201227/Louisiana_ASCF_Fact_Sheet_2021.pdf

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While some free or discounted licenses result in what could be considered a minor impact on license revenue, the loss becomes more significant when considering the loss of additional funds that would otherwise have been apportioned through WSFR. To determine Louisiana's apportionment through this federal program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) uses a formula that, in part, considers the number of certified hunting and fishing licenses sold in the state. To be certified, each license sale must generate a net revenue of \$2.00 otherwise the state receives no federal funds for that license sale. Free and discounted hunting and fishing licenses that do not meet the USFWS guidelines cost LDWF not only the direct revenue from the free or discount license but also the 3:1 federal match from WSFR.

While certain groups absolutely deserve recognition for their contributions to society, doing so without a reimbursement mechanism in place would negatively impact the entity charged with conserving resources held in the public trust. If passed, this legislation would bring Louisiana alongside Michigan, New Jersey, and Tennessee where state fish and wildlife agency funding is protected from impacts resulting from the passage of free or discounted licenses. It is also important to note that the legislation is not retroactive. No free or discounted hunting and fishing licenses, or other discounted fees provided by LDWF, that were passed prior to the effective date of HB 795 would be affected.

In closing, CSF strongly supports HB 795 to protect conservation funding in the Sportsman's Paradise, and we ask that you join us in protecting fish and wildlife conservation funding into the future. Thank you for considering our comments, and please let us know if you would like any additional information.

Sincerely,



Mark Lance
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