



November 29, 2024

Mr. Jimmy Granberry
Chairman, Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission
5107 Edmonson Pike
Ellington Agricultural Center
Nashville, TN 37211

Re: 1660-01-28; Rules and Regulations Governing License and Permit Fees

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Granberry,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission's (TFWC) proposed amendment on license and permit fees, which would be the first fee adjustment in ten years. These modest license and permit fee adjustments would address agency deficits caused largely by inflation to better equip the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) to manage the state's fish and wildlife resources.

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.

License sales and excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, archery equipment, fishing equipment, motorboat fuel and other sporting-related goods account for the largest source of conservation funding in the United States. This "user pays – public benefits" approach known as the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF) provides critical annual funding for the TWRA to manage fish, wildlife, and other public trust resources for all Tennesseans.

It has been ten years since license and permit fees have been increased in Tennessee, while other southern states, such as Mississippi in 2016, Kentucky in 2018, Louisiana in 2021, and North

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Carolina in 2024 have modernized their fee structures. With the dramatic inflation during this time period, a license fee increase in accordance with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) would help the TWRA keep up with the rising costs of conducting operations. Specifically, funding generated from an increase in license fees could be utilized to increase employee salaries as mandated by the state, attract, recruit, and train new staff, fund new positions and improve infrastructure, purchase and maintain equipment, complete backlogged projects, and fund other rapidly increasing operating expenses.

The current funding structure does not provide many options to increase revenue to keep up with rising operating costs, with license fees and associated matching federal funds constituting most of TWRA's budget. For example, only 0.4% of the TWRA's FY26 budget consists of general fund dollars reinforcing the critical role that sportsmen-generated dollars play in enabling the TWRA to successfully execute their mission. Furthermore, the current lack of diversification in TWRA'S funding model opens the door to future conversations around the vast positive impact and financial relief that a dedicated conservation funding mechanism could bring to the TWRA and Tennesseans alike.

In closing, CSF strongly supports the proposed license fee adjustment. Revenue generated from the proposed adjustments will directly support the TWRA and its mission to conduct science-based fish and wildlife management and protect Tennessee's sporting heritage.

Thank you for considering our comments. Please let us know if you have questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,



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