



To: Honorable Members of the Natural Resources Subcommittee
Re: House File 21 – Fishing Privileges of Disabled Veterans
Position: Proposed Amendment
Date: January 23, 2025

Honorable Members of the Natural Resources Subcommittee,

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation (CSF), I respectfully urge you to consider amendments to House File 21 (HF 21) that are designed to protect the integrity of the “user pays – public benefits” American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF). While CSF appreciates opportunities to show support for those who have served our nation as members of the armed forces, there are considerations associated with the provision of no-cost fishing licenses, such as those made in HF 21, that must be taken into account to ensure the future success of hunters and angler supported conservation in Iowa.

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.

Funded by the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, along with revenue generated from self-imposed manufacturer-level excise taxes through the Pittman-Robertson Act and Dingell-Johnson Act with Wallop-Breaux Amendments, the ASCF serves as one of the primary sources of revenue for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR) fish and wildlife conservation efforts. While the funding implications of discounted licenses or no-cost licenses are obvious, what is less known is the impact of these discounts on the ability of the DNR to fully claim their portion of revenue made available through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (Pittman-Robertson) and Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration (Dingell-Johnson) Acts. In making apportionments of Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Funds, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service uses a formula¹ that, in part, considers the number of eligible hunting (Pittman-Robertson) and fishing (Dingell-Johnson) licenses sold. To be counted, licenses not only need to be obtained by each

¹ Congressional Research Service April 5, 2019. Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act Understanding Apportionments for States and Territories. Accessed: January 16, 2024. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R45667.pdf>

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hunter or angler but must also result in revenue collected by the state fish and wildlife agency (i.e., DNR).

While CSF understands and shares the desire to provide for veterans, such as those described in HF 21, we respectfully ask the Committee to consider amending the bill to also include specific language that creates a reimbursement² to the DNR from the state general fund for any license or permit revenue forgone as a result of this and any other free or discounted license or permit provided by the Legislature going forward. In doing so, the Legislature will retain the opportunity to provide these incentives or rewards to deserving demographics without threatening the ability of the DNR to receive the funding necessary to continue their work of managing Iowa's public trust resources for the benefit of all Iowans. Examples of this framework already exist in other states, such as Tennessee, (see example below). Louisiana replicated the Tennessee model just last year, and several other states are considering legislation to adopt it this year. Given the DNR's reliance on the ASCF, we believe that the adoption of the model through amendments to HF 21 would be a valuable addition in the Hawkeye State.

As noted above, potential language to guide such an amendment can be found in Tennessee Title 70, Chapter 2 § 70-2-104: "The agency shall be reimbursed for lost revenue resulting from the issuance of free or partially discounted combination hunting and fishing licenses created by statute on or after January 1, 2017, in an amount equal to the discounts received."

To conclude, CSF recognizes the sacrifices made by those who served in our nation's armed forces. However, we maintain that no-cost licenses carry potentially significant negative impacts for the DNR and, as a result, sportsmen and women (including these veterans). Should the Legislature determine that the issuance of no-cost licenses be necessary, we recommend amending HF 21 to include the aforementioned reimbursement language to ensure the integrity of the ASCF is maintained. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this issue. Should you require additional information on this, or other sportsmen-related topics, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

Jake Gould

² Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation. 2024. Reimbursement to Fish and Wildlife Agencies for Free and Discounted Licenses. Accessed: January 16, 2024. <https://congressionalsportsmen.org/policy/reimbursement-to-fish-and-wildlife-agencies-for-free-and-discounted-licenses/>



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