



FOUNDATION
WILDLIFE | FISHERIES | PARKS | MARINE



January 29, 2025

Representative John Read
Chairman, Appropriations A Committee
400 High Street
Jackson, MS 39201

RE: HB 1103 – Reimbursement for Free and Discounted Hunting and Fishing Licenses

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Read and Honorable Members of the Appropriations A Committee,

On behalf of the undersigned conservation organizations, we respectfully encourage you to support HB 1103, which would require that the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) be reimbursed for any lost revenue resulting from the issuance of free or discounted hunting and fishing licenses, admission to state parks, and other fees provided by the MDWFP through the State General Fund. This legislation is not retroactive. Therefore, no free or discounted licenses, or other discounted fees provided by MDWFP, that were passed prior to the effective date of HB 1103 would be affected.

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 Mississippi generate over \$40 million annually for state-based conservation.¹ This funding is critical to the success of MDWFP’s mission to conserve and enhance Mississippi's wildlife, fisheries, and parks, provide quality outdoor recreation, and engage the public in natural resource conservation. In addition to conservation funding, Mississippi’s hunters spent \$1.5 billion on hunting related purchases in 2020. This significant economic driver supports over 18,000 jobs and generates \$109 million in state and local taxes.²

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 Mississippi’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

¹ <https://s3.amazonaws.com/cdn.congressionalsportsmen.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/11143312/Mississippi-ASCF-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

² <https://sportsmensalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Mississippi-State.pdf>

for that license sale. Free and discounted hunting and fishing licenses that do not meet the USFWS guidelines cost MDWFP not only the direct revenue from the free or discount license but also the 3:1 federal match from WSFR.

Since 2019, there have been no fewer than a dozen bills introduced intended to provide certain groups with free or heavily discounted hunting and fishing licenses in Mississippi. 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 Mississippi alongside Louisiana, 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.

In closing, our organizations, who collectively represent Mississippi's hunters, anglers, and other wildlife enthusiasts, support HB 1103 to protect conservation funding in the Magnolia State, and we respectfully 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,

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Delta Waterfowl
Delta Wildlife
Ducks Unlimited
Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries, Parks, and Marine Foundation
National Deer Association
Pheasants Forever / Quail Forever
Safari Club International
Wildlife Mississippi