



February 27, 2026

The Honorable Ryan Williams  
Chairman, House Finance, Ways, and Means Subcommittee  
425 Rep. John Lewis Way N  
Suite 612 Cordell Hull Building  
Nashville, TN 37243

**Re: House Bill 2138; Funding the Wildlife Resources Agency**

**Position: Support**

Dear Chairman Williams and Honorable Members of the House Finance, Ways, and Means Subcommittee,

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, we are writing to express our support for House Bill 2138, which would allocate 10% of the Tennessee Valley Authority's (TVA) payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT) paid to the state to the wildlife resources fund.

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.

Tennessee's wildlife resource are key to the state's history and play an integral part in the lives of thousands of Tennesseans. Whether it's the suburbs of Nashville or the remoteness of the Great Smoky Mountains, the impact of wildlife in Tennessee reaches far and wide. These resources are held in the public trust, and every effort must be made to ensure the continued sustainable use of those resources.

Year after year, the cost of doing business has increased across the board in nearly every industry. Wildlife conservation is no exception. Since TWRA's last license fee increase in 2015, inflation has increased operating costs for the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) by over 30%. Additionally, TWRA has absorbed over \$18 million in unfunded mandates all while still relying primarily on funding from hunting and fishing license sales and matching federal funds. Without

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a long-term solution that does not include a significant increase in hunting, fishing, and other user license fees, the TWRA's core mission of delivering science-based wildlife management will continue to be hamstrung by financial limitations.

Not only do our shared outdoor traditions in Tennessee provide refuge from the ins and outs of everyday life for thousands of people, they are also a major economic engine for the state. Outdoor recreation generates nearly \$5.8 billion in income annually, supports 214,000 jobs, and produces \$1.8 billion in state and local tax revenue each year. <sup>1</sup> These staggering numbers rely on healthy fish and wildlife populations, which are carefully managed by the TWRA, and are currently funded primarily by hunters and anglers through the "user pays – public benefits" structure of the American System of Conservation Funding. Through the revenue from sporting license sales and manufacturer-level excise tax revenue on hunting, fishing, and shooting equipment from the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration programs, sportsmen and women pay their way and then some when it comes to the use of our public trust resources. In Tennessee specifically, hunters and anglers currently fund approximately 81% of TWRA's operating budget. License fees are the lifeblood of the Agency, but without appropriate increases, TWRA must receive additional revenue to keep up with operating costs.

House Bill 2183 would provide a much-needed source of dedicated and stable conservation funding for the TWRA without passing any additional cost to taxpayers, hunters and anglers, or TVA customers. The impact of a well-funded wildlife agency would reach every corner of the state, especially in rural areas, and continue to propel our time-honored traditions into the next generation and beyond.

In closing we respectfully encourage you to support House Bill 2183 which is an investment in professional, science-based management and, in turn, a win for all Tennesseans. Thank you for considering our comments, and please let us know if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,



Conner Barker  
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Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
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<sup>1</sup> [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/twra/documents/annual-reports/TWRA\\_Economic-Impact\\_0226.pdf](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/twra/documents/annual-reports/TWRA_Economic-Impact_0226.pdf)

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