



Sleep Inn & Suites
1413 Highway 2
Devils Lake, ND 58301
701.544.1111
SleepInn.com

Dream Better Here®

Testimony in **SUPPORT of House Bill 1538**

Date: February 1, 2023

Submitted by: Jeff Schooler

1413 Hwy 2 E, Devils Lake ND 58301

To: Representative Porter and Members of the North Dakota House Energy and Natural Resources Committee

For the reasons below, I support and as for a **DO PASS** on **HB1538**.

I am the General Manager at the Sleep Inn & Suites in Devils Lake, North Dakota. Our community thrives on the tourism industry and the visitors that come to spend their time and money at the businesses in the "Lake Region." A large portion of these visitors come to participate in fishing tournaments, or they come because of a large tournament that put us on the map to fishing enthusiasts.

We are already noticing a decrease in tournaments, especially the large national tournaments that help put Devils Lake on the radar to the rest of the nation. The largest national tournaments are less willing to come to Devils Lake because of the \$10,000 - \$20,000 "conservation fee" being charged. This "conservation fee" essentially doubled or tripled in the summer of 2020 when the NDGF Department removed the \$5000 cap that had been in effect since 1984.

Despite multiple meetings and discussions between NDGF, anglers and destination marketing professionals who supported keeping the 10% conservation fee, the cap has remained and is now has become a deterrent to the tournaments.

Lodging, restaurants, sporting goods have been impacted negatively since 2019. The National Walleye Tour is planning to be here in September 2023 pending permit approval. The \$250,000 of direct expenditures INTO our county during a tournament of this magnitude.



The faster way to rewards. Sign up today at ChoicePrivileges.com.



Sleep Inn & Suites
1413 Highway 2
Devils Lake, ND 58301
701.544.1111
SleepInn.com

Dream Better Here®

Influential national anglers that have a voice and following on social media who come to our lake, pay huge "conservation fees" to fish a tournament do have an enormous effect on future visitors. If we can't get the tournaments in, we won't have the influencers we want. That means that interest and tourism will diminish, and not just fishing.

In summary, the financial burden placed on tournaments are much too prohibitive to sustainably market tourism to Devils Lake. These factors damage our state's reputation to out-of-state travelers who are considering visiting our natural resources. Our marketing reach and effectiveness is shrinking because of these extreme "conservation fees." Fees that don't do any good if the tournaments won't come in. The economic climate we are in necessitates, more than ever, the need to promote and build this revenue stream for our communities.

This is my written testimony and request a **DO PASS** on **HB1538**.

Respectfully,

Jeffery D. Schooler, GM

Sleep Inn & Suites – Devils Lake



The faster way to rewards. Sign up today at ChoicePrivileges.com.