

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
Testimony on SB 2216

Chairman Patten, Vice Chairman Kessel, and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee,

My name is Preston Ripplinger, and I am submitting this testimony in opposition to SB 2216. While the intent behind this legislation is laudable, the bill as drafted imposes an inequitable financial burden on resident hunters and fails to optimize the revenue potential for waterfowl habitat improvements.

SB 2216 seeks to create and enact a new section within Chapter 20.1-03 of the North Dakota Century Code to establish a "waterfowl habitat improvement fund." This fund would be financed through the implementation of a "waterfowl habitat restoration stamp," with the costs borne by resident hunters. This approach raises significant concerns about fairness, fiscal responsibility, and missed opportunities for broader revenue generation.

As a committed advocate for conservation and an active participant in wildlife preservation efforts for over 25 years, I fully support initiatives to enhance waterfowl habitat and expand hunting programs. These efforts are essential for preserving North Dakota's natural resources and fostering the next generation of conservationists. However, while the goals of SB 2216 align with these values, the mechanism for achieving them is fundamentally flawed. It is imperative that any legislation aimed at conservation funding be both equitable and effective.

The fiscal note provided by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department estimates that SB 2216, as currently structured, would generate approximately \$264,000 per biennium. This amount is insufficient to meaningfully advance the stated objectives of the bill. Furthermore, the exclusive reliance on resident hunters to finance this fund is inherently inequitable.

A more comprehensive funding strategy, including contributions from resident combination license holders and non-resident hunters, could yield significantly greater revenue. Based on data from the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, such an approach could generate over \$2,000,000 per biennium. This adjustment would ensure that all beneficiaries of North Dakota's waterfowl habitat, including non-residents, share in the responsibility of its preservation.

From a policy perspective, SB 2216 raises questions about proportionality and fairness. The disproportionate financial burden placed on resident hunters could be construed as an arbitrary and capricious approach to conservation funding, potentially undermining public trust and support for similar initiatives in the future.

Additionally, by failing to include non-resident hunters in the funding framework, the bill overlooks a significant source of revenue and neglects an opportunity to align with broader principles of fiscal equity.

Given these concerns, I strongly recommend that the committee issue a "do not pass" recommendation for SB 2216 in its current form. I urge the committee to consider revising the bill to incorporate a more equitable and comprehensive funding model, ensuring that financial responsibility is appropriately distributed among all stakeholders. By doing so, we can achieve the dual objectives of robust conservation funding and equitable policy implementation.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Respectfully,  
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