

January 30th, 2023

House Energy and Natural Resources Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 1538 as it relates to fishing contests. Currently the ND Century code relating to fishing contests is outdated and is hurting North Dakota in a number of ways.

1. Student Angling is growing across the country and attempts to bring competitive student angling to ND have been impeded by the cost associated with running a tournament in ND due to the current regulations requiring 10% of the entry fees be paid back as a conservation fee.
 - a. There are many students wanting to participate in outdoor sports. Look at Archery and Clay Target Leagues growing around the state, Williston has the largest clay target league in the NATION!!! If we can get student fishing leagues started here in ND, there is no doubt it will grow into something great! I think we can all agree that getting students involved in extracurricular clubs and activities greatly benefits students. If we can get them involved in the outdoor sports, they can continue to pass them on for generations to come. But right now the administrative rules set by the NDGF do not allow these student angling events to happen.
2. Many North Dakotans are tournament anglers and want a chance to compete at the highest level, and with the current regulations, North Dakota has not been able to host a national level fishing tournament since 2020. As such North Dakota's anglers have not been able to have any type of "home-field advantage" in these events.
 - a. The AIM Weekend Walleye Series has been wanting to bring their National Shootout to ND for the past 2 years but has not due to the \$10,000 requirement that is currently stated in the NDGF Administrative Rules(30-03-05-03.) on tournaments that require no entry fee.
 - i. This spring myself and 9 other teams from ND are headed to eastern Wisconsin to fish for a boat totalling nearly \$100k! We will be spending money(lodging, gas, meals, bait, tackle, licenses) in Minnesota and Wisconsin along with 20 other teams. All of which could be here in ND.
3. The revenue these national level tournaments bring in is quite large, especially for communities that rely heavily on tourism dollars. Many of these tournaments have anglers in the area for at least a week and often more. That is alot of revenue for hotels, restaurants, bait shops, gas stations etc. In 2019 a study of the Devils Lake National Walleye Tour event indicated that over \$250,000 was brought into the community over the course of the event!
 - a. Not only do these events bring in money from the event itself, the marketing that comes with these events showcases the great fishing that we have in ND, creating more buzz around the country about coming to ND for a fishing trip. Which generates more tourism dollars!

4. Non-profit organizations are affected by the current regulations as well, the language only allows them to keep 15% of the monies that they raise, and if they want to get 10% more there is a long process to get it back, which is a waste of time and money.

This new proposal HB1538 is a great benefit to North Dakota, its residents and even nonresidents. Let us showcase the great outdoor opportunities here in ND, not set ourselves back even further by allowing this bill to fail and saying we don't want others to come visit
#LegendaryND

Sincerely,

Matthew Liebel

Matt Liebel
Tournament Angler
Owner of Liebel's Guide Service