

01/30/2023

Written testimony in support of HB 1538

Dear Energy and Natural Resource Committee,

I am writing to you today to oppose HB 1538 as it is currently written. This is a A Bill Relating to the powers of the director of the game and fish department; and to create and relating to fishing contests.

Currently the North Dakota Game and Fish receives a percentage of fishing contest entries or participation fees of 10% (from the gross proceeds). The previous policy used to have a \$5,000 cap for the larger fishing tournaments held within the state but this has since been removed. This new bill however reduces the Game and Fish allocation of entry funds to a one time application fee of only \$250.00 for any tournament(s) that exceed the maximum entrant criteria of 50 participants or 15 boats, or contests where entry fees less than \$50 are charged. The language does not specify per boat or per participant in regards to the \$50 fee however.

While I agree that, in some cases, the funds of 10% allocated back to the Game and Fish under the current rule is considered excessive, reducing it to \$250.00 per contest is considerably insufficient to help pay for the use of infrastructure and offset additional pressure to the resource that larger tournaments can bring. I believe that a common ground can be found that is beneficial for all parties involved, but limiting the fee to \$250.00 in a tournament that allows 260 team entrants is insignificant to help support future stocking efforts as well as the development and maintenance of boat ramps and public facilities managed by the Game and Fish that benefits all anglers.

Additionally, Page 2 line 21, subsection 4 states that the director may revoke a permit if: 5. A permittee shall submit a report to the director within thirty days after completion of the fishing contest. The report must include the number of contest participants, the quantity and species of fish taken in the contest, the gross and net proceeds for the tournament, and the percentage of the entry fees awarded to the participants as prizes. Failure to submit this report is justification for denial of future fishing contest permits...

This section does not clearly state that should a committee or sponsors fail to supply a report within 30 days, that they could be eligible to file for an application further down the road after reconciliation and delivery of a late report. In other words, the way this is written, if a tournament committee or sponsor fails to supply the document within 30 days of the tournament, this gives the Game and Fish director absolute authority to deny them any future permits to ever hold a tournament again, even if the document was completed and provided after the thirty day window. In the event of a lost report (mail), or a situation where a report could not be developed in due time, this could effectively "kill" a tournament and its "name" or "brand" here in North Dakota. Perhaps a late filing fee would be more appropriate?

These are my main concerns with the way this bill is written. I completely support organizations, non-profits and other institutions such as chambers of commerce to promote their cause and/or communities by utilizing our fishing resources, but I do not support the bill as written for the reasons

detailed above. I believe we can work to find a common ground, where all involved stake-holders can promote the resource and benefit from the opportunities and revenue it can generate, but I do not believe the way this bill is written is that common ground. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Matthew Williamson