

Testimony in support of: North Dakota House Bill 1538-A Bill for an Act to amend and reenact subsection 20 of section 20.1-02-05 of the North Dakota Century Code

Date: 1-31-2023

Submitted by: Cody Cerkoney

Address: 12428 25th St SW
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To: Representative Porter and Members of the North Dakota House Energy and Natural Resources Committee

As an avid angler and outdoorsman, I am writing to voice my support for your House Bill 1538. I work in the oilfield plus my wife and I ranch north of Belfield. I started tournament fishing with my Dad when I was about 10 years old. Fishing has taught me many life lessons as well as having great respect for our land and water. As a landowner and tournament angler, I am very respectful and a firm believer in conserving our resources in North Dakota, especially our fisheries.

I believe this Bill will not only help the fisheries in North Dakota but also bring in lots of revenue to small towns and communities. I know when I am chasing tournaments throughout the state, it can get very expensive between fuel, lodging, food, and equipment, but it is all going back to the communities. If North Dakota were to host a major national fishing tournament that brings in over 100 boats, there is revenue that goes back to our remarkable state. I was able to witness this when I honored to fish my first National Walleye Tour in North Dakota in 2020.

The other reason I support this Bill is that takes away the absurd 10% of all entry fees for each tournament for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department as there “Conservation Fee”. A conservation fee that was a greedy show of power. This “conservation fee” has made more challenges for the tournaments in ND to have lower payouts and less attendees. With lower payouts and the inflation in today’s economy, it makes things even tougher. I did not get into tournament fishing to make money. Many of us do fish the tournaments because of the competition and the comradery between anglers that share the passion as much as I do. However, a person has to draw the line when traveling to these events knowing that a lot of entry money has no chance of getting back to us. There are other financial resources for our fisheries; it should not be the sole responsibility of tournament anglers.

This Bill should take care of the high conservation fee by making it a flat rate for all permitted tournaments. It will also open the door for more student angling in the state, and nonprofit causes.

Sincerely,

Cody Cerkoney

Tournament Angler