



## NORTH DAKOTA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

**Testimony of John Bradley**  
**North Dakota Wildlife Federation**  
**House Bill 1538**  
**Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee**  
**March 3, 2023**

Chairman Patten and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee:

For the record, I am John Bradley, executive director of the North Dakota Wildlife Federation. I'm here today representing our thousands of members in 15 affiliated wildlife and sportsmen's clubs across North Dakota that make up the North Dakota Wildlife Federation.

NDWF opposes HB 1538. The Wildlife Federation has a strong track record of working to protect North Dakota's world class fishery. NDWF worked on SB 2293 in 2019 which created the ANS Fund. Most recently, NDWF held a fundraising raffle with the profits from the raffle to help fund mobile ANS cleaning stations in the state.

We believe that HB 1538 would be detrimental to the long-term prosperity of North Dakota's fisheries. Our biggest concern with the bill, besides poking a bear that had finally fallen asleep after years of stakeholder meetings, is the removal of the conservation fee. NDWF believes that the conservation fee requirement should be in place for all future for-profit fishing tournaments in the state. North Dakota non-tournament resident anglers believe the same. Over 90% of those non-tournament anglers surveyed overwhelmingly support the 10% minimum conservation fee with no exceptions\*.

We truly believe that North Dakota resident anglers are happy enough to share our cherished resources with tournament anglers and other user groups, as long as the resource is being looked after and those users give back to the resource and facilities. The money from conservation fees go to boat ramp maintenance, fishing cleaning stations, and other local projects that make our lakes and rivers more accessible and enjoyable to the residents of North Dakota.

As proud supporters of youth outdoor activities, NDWF welcomes a discussion on how we can bring youth fishing leagues to the state. We believe that the law as currently written gives Game & Fish the tools to allow these types of events that bring more youth into fishing, but we would be supportive of codifying exemptions for youth leagues and tournaments in statute.

We urge a Do Not Pass on HB 1538.

\*Results based on responses from 1468 individuals surveyed by the North Dakota Game & Fish Department

