



Game and Fish



## Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Testimony on HB 1538

North Dakota Game and Fish Department

Greg Power, Fisheries Division Chief

March 16, 2023

Chairman Patten and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Greg Power, Fisheries Division Chief for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (Department). I am testifying today in opposition of HB 1538.

The Department continues to support the fisheries conservation fee for most tournaments versus an application fee as provided in this bill. The tournament conservation fee has existed for nearly 40 years (since 1984) with strong public support. Fees generated from tournaments have provided some funding assistance for local entities throughout the state which they reinvest into improving their respective local fishing resources. And the mere existence of a conservation fee has resulted in overall goodwill, lessening conflicts between tournament and non-tournament anglers.

Although the Department believes there is common ground on some issues, we continue to support the inclusion of the conservation project fee.

The Department has permitted well over 3000 fishing tournaments since 1984. Except for a few high entry fee, high payout tournaments, the Department has received essentially no negative, unsolicited comments about the conservation fees.

Boat ramps, courtesy docks, fish cleaning stations and other infrastructure have been enhanced considerably over four decades using tournament conservation fees. In addition to boat ramp infrastructure, youth fishing and education events have also benefitted.

It must be re-stated that all (100%) monies collected from fishing tournaments go back to a North Dakota fishery resource. No tournament conservation monies are used by the Department to administer fishing tournaments or other programs.

Lastly, the Department reiterates the need for all fishing events that have 15 or more boats OR 50 or more participants to be permitted. This requirement costs the tournament nothing, but a simple permitting process greatly reduces complaints and conflicts between non-tournament and tournament anglers (especially after traveling great

distances to a given lake/boat ramp only to find a non-permitted tournament ongoing). The permitting process greatly improves the communication lines between all, as every permitted tournament can be found on the Department website. This site is widely used (more than 5000 hits annually) by both tournament and non-tournament anglers for planning of their respective fishing outings.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you.