

Testimony in support of SB 2216

March 6, 2025

By Paul H. Myerchin

Representative Porter, Chair of the House Energy & Natural Resources Committee and Members of this Committee:

I urge this Committee vote in favor of SB 2216 (a waterfowl habitat restoration stamp & youth hunting programs bill) with a **“DO PASS”** recommendation from this Committee **with amendments to improve SB 2216.**

I propose this Committee **restore the price of the stamp for resident waterfowl hunters back to \$10** as was originally proposed when this bill was first introduced.

There is an old adage in the hook and bullet crowd that **“Conservation without capital is just conversation.”** We are in desperate need to make a meaningful impact on waterfowl habitat restoration projects and youth hunting programs within the State. More money charged for this stamp will have that meaningful impact, especially on youth programs.

Additionally, I propose that whatever level this Committee decides to set for resident hunters, **the price for non-resident hunters must be an additional \$10 higher (i.e., resident stamp \$10 v. non-resident stamp \$20).** My testimony in favor of SB 2216 and the recommended amendments is supported below.

I am a lifelong North Dakota resident duck hunter having grown up in Grand Forks and now having lived in Bismarck for nearly the past 30 years. My written testimony here is my own personal views, and I am not speaking for anyone else.

First and foremost, I applaud the sponsors of SB 2216, Senator Cleary and Representatives Bosch and Porter. SB 2216 is the first step in the right direction to address the crises we presently have in North Dakota’s great outdoors: the loss of critical habitat and the recruitment of our youth into North Dakota’s strong tradition of hunting. An excellent summary of this crisis can be found on the ND Game & Fish’s website at [Habitat | North Dakota Game and Fish](#) . Please take special note on how the loss of CRP has caused a dramatic fall in the number of deer hunting license, the pheasant harvest to plummet, and the number of ducks counted each Spring by the Department to drop significantly.

Second, in order to have a meaningful impact, I recommend this Committee **amend SB 2216 to restore the minimum stamp fee for resident waterfowl hunters to \$10 as originally proposed when this bill was introduced.** I have been a proud duck

hunter for the last 37 hunting seasons, and, God willing, am able to enjoy many more. Duck hunters have a long tradition of “taxing ourselves” to support the waterfowl that are so near and dear to our hearts. Our predecessor duck hunters “taxed” themselves during the height of the Great Depression when they asked Congress to pass the federal duck stamp back in 1934. Also, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., was formed by a small group of duck hunters 88 years ago this week back in 1937, again during the Great Depression. I believe today’s duck hunters will again follow that tradition and gladly pay a few extra dollars to make a meaningful impact for habitat projects that benefit waterfowl and increase youth waterfowl hunting.

Additionally, I’m concerned that the \$5 price for the stamp is just “too little too late” for the much larger problem of habitat loss. Back in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) was a habitat blessing to North Dakota’s wildlife and our waterfowl flourished because of that habitat. However, we have been steadily losing habitat over the last 15 years and, in fact, **North Dakota now has less CRP acres than Iowa.** We need to turn the tide of habitat loss. One only needs to page through the Cabela’s hunting catalog to realize that there is not much you can buy in the sport of duck hunting for \$10. Heck, a quality box of shotgun shells is anywhere from \$20 to \$30/box. **A \$10 stamp fee is not going to prevent anyone from duck hunting.**

Another positive of this stamp fee is that it will go back to North Dakota’s rural landowners that want to voluntarily participate in habitat projects that benefit waterfowl. **This is a win-win-win piece of legislation.** Landowners win by being compensated for habitat projects on their land. Duck hunters win by having more ducks to chase. And the ducks and geese win by having more quality habitat available.

Third, I recommend that **SB 2216 also be amended to require non-resident duck and goose hunters purchase this stamp at a fee at least \$10 higher than the resident fee.** Throughout the country, no matter what jurisdiction a person hunts or fishes in (i.e., another country, another state, another Indian reservation) the non-resident fees are always higher. It is just the way the “game” is played. Again, an additional \$10 higher fee on a non-resident waterfowl stamp is not going to prevent any hunters from coming to North Dakota to hunt.

Finally, thank you for your consideration of my testimony, and, again, I urge a DO PASS on SB 2216 with the proposed amendments to improve this win-win-win piece of legislation.

Sincerely,
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