

I am here to speak as a resident and citizen of Maryland, as a multi-year license holder of the MDNR non-tidal fisheries and trout stamps, and as an active beneficiary of the work from the MDNR that the funds raised by these licenses enable. We understand that our support of this bill and its sister bill in the House means that we and the other anglers recreating in Maryland's non-tidal waters will be paying more for the licenses to do so. We are fully in support of that increase and believe that our fellow anglers and potential anglers who benefit from the multitude of services those license fees pay for, should be and will be also. We all would certainly feel the loss if we decided not to support this bill and lost those services in our state.

Marylanders and visiting anglers alike benefit from the MDNR's efforts in environmental review, research, population surveys, water quality assessment, management/control of invasive species, population restoration, technical guidance, education and outreach, and fishing access maintenance. It is this work that provides for the continued health of our non-tidal waterways and their surrounding ecosystems and allows us to fish there.

Up to this point, it's, frankly, impressive that we've continued to receive such quality benefits from the MDNR team on the budget of licenses that have not been adjusted for continuous needs or inflation for 18 years (license) and 33 years (trout stamp). That is correct. MD license holders have not seen an increase since 2007 and 1992. The costs of this work have, like the costs of everything in our lives, increased over the last 33 years, and in order for us to continue to receive the services throughout our non-tidal fisheries, we need to properly fund them with licenses priced accordingly.

While the sustenance and health of our non-tidal fisheries and their surrounding ecosystems is important of its own merit, not simply as a space for recreation and fishing, it is through these angling licenses that the work is funded and supported, so we'll focus on that aspect of the constituency primarily.

Averaged over the past three years, more than 220,000 freshwater fishing licenses were sold annually in our state, with the overwhelming majority of them sold to Maryland residents. Those fishing in our non-tidal waters access streams, rivers, lakes, etc. in each and every county across our wonderful state that are monitored, maintained, and overseen by the MDNR and paid for via the funds raised from these licenses. And, it must be said, even those NOT fishing benefit from this work as they have healthy waters to kayak and wade in, accessible, clean ecosystems to walk and hike through, and access to scientific research and monitoring protections to rely on.

These non-tidal waters, fisheries, and ecosystems are a treasured resource for all Marylanders and visitors to our state. We support their continued health and maintenance and that of the work of the MDNR through this bill. Thank you for your time.