

EMendenhall_SB0258_testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Emily Mendenhall

Position: FAV

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.

SB0258_DNR_SUP_EEE_2-4-25.pdf

Uploaded by: Josh Kurtz

Position: FAV



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

February 4, 2025

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 258 – First Reader

SHORT TITLE: Natural Resources – Fishing Licenses and Stamps – Alterations

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: SUPPORT

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION

The Department supports Senate Bill 258. The additional revenue generated through fee increases will support existing nontidal fisheries management efforts as well as provide critical funding for additional projects and infrastructure needs related to non-tidal fisheries and hatcheries.

The Freshwater Fisheries and Hatcheries Division is focused primarily on the management of non-tidal freshwater fisheries, which includes impoundments (lakes, reservoirs, and ponds), coldwater streams, warm-water streams, and rivers. Essential functions carried out by the division and supported by fishing license revenue include enhancement of sport fish populations, protecting, restoring, and expanding the aquatic habitats they need, stocking to improve angling opportunities, management of invasive aquatic species, and maintenance and creation of public fishing access. These services provide ecological, recreational, social, and economic benefits to Maryland residents and visitors.

In the summer of 2024, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (department) established a workgroup that consisted of members from the Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission, Black Bass Advisory Committee, and the Coldwater Fishery Advisory Committee. Members of these advisory bodies represent the interests of Maryland’s freshwater angling constituency. The charge of the workgroup was to evaluate current nontidal recreational fishing license fees and make fair and reasonable fee recommendations based on information provided by the department (e.g., Fishing and Boating Services and Finance and Administrative Services), inflation over a specific time period, price benchmarking with fishing license fees of neighboring states, and current national/local average fees for comparable licenses and stamps. The fees recommended by the workgroup are in line with neighboring states with similar fishery resources that have recently adjusted their nontidal license fees (PA in 2023-24).

The division's aging trout hatchery infrastructure (e.g., Bear Creek Hatchery, 1928; Albert Powell Hatchery, 1949) is currently not capable of meeting production goals that satisfy constituent demand. Without additional revenue, not only are investments to improve production impossible, but production at existing facilities would have to be significantly reduced or eliminated, effectively

Contact: Dylan Behler, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services
dylan.behler@maryland.gov ♦ 410-260-8113 (office) ♦ 443-924-0891 (cell)

terminating very popular fishing programs such as the put and take trout stocking program, fingerling production that supports extremely popular trout resources, restoration of brook trout, and the Youth Rodeo Program. Revenue from the sale of fishing licenses and stamps provides the majority of the funding for these programs, as well as funding all other conservation, habitat protection, land management/access, and fishery restoration and management costs.

Without an increase in special fund revenue, the Freshwater Fisheries and Hatcheries Division will no longer be able to maintain services and programs, meeting the desires and expectations of the constituents that we serve.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The resident trout stamps fees were last changed in 1992 under Chapter 602, which also created the senior consolidated license and set the current license fee (this bill also made the 7-day nontidal license 5-days). The annual resident and non-resident nontidal licenses were changed in 2007 under SB 1012. HB 1345 changed the 5-day nontidal license to a 7-day and increased the non-resident trout stamp to \$10.

BILL EXPLANATION

The bill would increase nontidal recreational fishing license fees which go primarily to the Fisheries Management and Protection Fund under Natural Resources Article, Section 4-208.

SB 258

Uploaded by: Roger Trageser

Position: FAV

I'm Roger Trageser, former president and a current Region Director with the Maryland Bass Nation. The Nation is comprised of anglers with a passion for targeting Black Bass. There are two varieties of black bass in the state of Maryland, largemouth and smallmouth, and they are the most sought-after game fish in this state. Our black bass waters continue to receive national recognition. The Potomac and Upper Chesapeake are rated as two of the top black bass fisheries in the country. These are revenue generating engines, attracting tournament events and anglers from all over the country and the world.

Fisheries Service is charged with overseeing the quality of all black bass waters in the state, a task that comes at ever increasing costs.

In 2009 I received an appointment with the Maryland Sport Fish Advisory Commission, an appointment that I fortunately still maintain. As a Commission member I developed a close relationship with the people at Fisheries Service.

The sixteen-year relationship that I have with Fisheries Service has given me an opportunity that many anglers do not possess. An opportunity to observe the dedication and determination that these individuals put forth to deliver the best product possible.

When the Department was asking for volunteers from Sport Fish to sit on the fee assessment work group I jumped on board. I needed to be involved. To offer what advice I could and to become a source of detailed information to my fellow anglers regarding the need for these fee adjustments.

Eighteen years ago, I sat before House and Senate committees, campaigning for the same revenue need.

The Department has even more demand now. Increased fishing pressure, water quality and habitat issues, impact of climate change and maintaining successful stocking programs. The Department must focus on all the above to maintain and improve our world-class fisheries and all now at a much higher cost than eighteen years ago.

What did any of us purchase in 2007 that still costs the same now?

We had a favorable outcome with this legislation in 2007 and with this committee's support, seeking the same in 2025

Thank you,

Roger Trageser

SB 0258 Trout Unlimited Statement in SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: William Dwyer

Position: FAV



The Senate of Maryland
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Chair: Senator Brian Feldman Vice Chair: Cheryl Kagan
Hearing on Senate Bill 0258 (Natural Resources, Fishing license and Stamp Alterations)

Organization: Mid-Atlantic Council of Trout Unlimited
Presenter: William (Randy) Dwyer, Chair
Position: Support

To the Chair and Vice Chair of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee, members of the full committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

I am Randy Dwyer, and I reside in Senate District 22 and am represented by State Senator Alonzo Washington. As Chairman of the Mid-Atlantic Council of Trout Unlimited, I am here today representing 4,000 Trout Unlimited members across Maryland.

At the most recent Board of Directors meeting, the Mid-Atlantic Council of Trout Unlimited reviewed and discussed the proposed license fee increases and voted unanimously to support the fee increases found in SB0258.

As mentioned, the Mid-Atlantic Council and its 4,000 recreational anglers are avid outdoors enthusiasts, and we recognize the funding shortfalls before the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the need to maintain its programs.

The non-tidal fishing license fee has not increased since 2007 (17 years) and the trout stamp fee has not increased since 1992 (32 years). What does this mean to me personally?

As a recent retiree, I've been paying \$5 annually for the last several years. With the proposed fee increases, my future license will be a \$12 annual license plus a \$20 trout stamp for a total of \$32 annually.

This proposed annual fee (\$32) costs less than four (4) McDonald Happy Meals and it is a fee I am more than willing to pay as a retiree. It will also help keep the DNR's Freshwater Fisheries and Hatcheries Division in a strong operational position.

The Mid-Atlantic Council of TU is a conservation organization comprised of multiple local Trout Unlimited chapters across Maryland. This includes Maryland TU, Patapsco Valley TU, Potomac-

Patuxent TU in eastern, southern and central Maryland, Seneca Vally TU, National-Capitol TU in central and northern Maryland, and Youghiogheny TU in the western Maryland panhandle.

As mentioned, taken together our chapters represent 4,000 Trout Unlimited members across the state. These members are avid outdoorsmen and women who come from every walk of life. They volunteer thousands of hours annually in their communities and work on conservation projects along our ocean shorelines, in the Chesapeake Bay, on the Potomac River and in our cold-water rivers and streams found throughout our state.

The Mid-Atlantic Council and our local Trout Unlimited chapters have worked closely with the DNR in the past and will continue to do so in the future to improve cold-water conservation, protection of native and wild trout management and identifying cold-water habitats for protection.

The mission statement of Trout Unlimited is to “Restore, Reconnect and Recover.” We are proud of the work Trout Unlimited has underway throughout Maryland, including the TU “Priority Waters Initiative” in western Maryland to reconnect streams and tributaries, to remove barriers to fish passage and to reintroduce native trout wherever possible. These are projects often done in association with the DNR division of Freshwater Fisheries and we plan to continue this well into the future.

As a conservation organization, this committee must know that Trout Unlimited sees several environmental issues of grave concern on the immediate horizon, including the proposed Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP) which is before the Maryland Public Service Commission and could adversely impact critical environmental areas featuring critical cold-water fisheries. Please note that the Mid-Atlantic Council of TU has voted to oppose the routing path and believe additional studies are appropriate.

In closing, the Mid-Atlantic Council of Trout Unlimited supports the proposed fees found in Senate Bill 258 and urges its passage by this committee as well as by the full Senate.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to sit before you today.

Randy Dwyer

Chair, Mid-Atlantic Council for Trout Unlimited

SB 258

Uploaded by: Kenneth Pavol

Position: INFO

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB0258.

I have a personal connection to the MD DNR Fisheries Div who are currently requesting increases in fishing license fees. I worked for the division for 31 years retiring as the Western Regional Manager in 2005.

The last time the trout stamp fee was adjusted was 1992, 13 years before I retired in 2005. The last time fishing license fees were updated was 2007. Inflation has significantly eroded the buying power of the fees Fisheries Div requires to not only maintain the physical plant of their trout propagation facilities but also the funding they need to properly manage an abundance of trout waters in MD. It's an essential function of Fisheries Div to monitor wild trout populations, identify pollution sources, develop appropriate regulations to protect and enhance MD trout waters, and work to maintain the remarkable trout resources of MD.

A relatively small group of dedicated professionals work hard to meet the challenge. Their work produces environmental benefits but there is also significant economic benefits. For example a study conducted by the environmental consulting company Downstream Strategies in 2010 found that North Branch Potomac River trout fishery produced three million dollars in economic impact annually. That figure is no doubt much greater now because the North Branch supports much more guided float fishing every day of the season by eight professional guides.

Despite a warming climate which adversely impacts coldwater species like trout Md DNR Fisheries staff have continued to expand both wild trout fishing opportunities as well as angling opportunities in urban areas through their trout stocking programs.

The license fee schedule they have proposed was developed through an effort that included MD's trout fishing public. The increases are timely and certainly badly needed to support the efforts of Fisheries Div staff to provide and maintain outstanding trout fishing opportunities in MD.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Ken Pavol