

American Woodcock Society, Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, National Deer Association, National Wild Turkey Federation, Oklahoma B.A.S.S. Nation, Oklahoma Station Chapter SCI, Pheasants Forever, Quail Forever, Safari Club International

February 8, 2021

To: **Honorable Members of the Senate Agriculture and Wildlife Committee**
Oklahoma Senate
2300 N Lincoln Blvd.,
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Re: **SB 774** – Game and fish; requiring license, permit or stamp to hunt or fish;
establishing licenses by rule.

Position: **Support**

Honorable Members of the Oklahoma Senate Agriculture and Wildlife Committee:

The undersigned organizations ask that you support Senate Bill 774 (SB 774), a bill that grants the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission authority over Oklahoma’s hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps and their associated fees. In doing so, SB 774 would allow the Commission to make necessary adjustments to Oklahoma’s hunting and fishing license framework, which will benefit both their conservation efforts and Oklahoma’s sportsmen and women, without requiring these changes to go through the full legislative process.

Currently, authority over the creation of, or amendments to, Oklahoma’s hunting and fishing licenses is vested in the state legislature. While the Oklahoma Legislature is comprised of several engaged sportsmen who have helped create a system that is largely supported by the sportsmen’s community, amending hunting and fishing license requirements and fees through the legislative process has also created a complex system that has, at times, led to confusion among license buyers. Oklahoma’s current licensing system consists of over 150 separate licenses, permits, and stamps that hunters and anglers must understand in order to ensure that they are legally licensed to participate in their outdoor pursuits. SB 774 would allow the Commission to overhaul and simplify this licensing system without needing to amend each individual statute. Such authority will ease the burden currently placed on the legislature and allow the Commission to efficiently address the concerns and confusion often experienced by Oklahoma’s hunters and anglers.

While considering this bill, it is also important to understand the manner by which the conservation efforts of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) are funded. Like many state fish and wildlife agencies, ODWC is solely funded through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and federal excise tax revenue generated through the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Acts. Collectively, these funding mechanisms are referred to as the American System of Conservation Funding (for more information on the ASCF, please refer to the attached issue brief document). With the agency’s funding relying so heavily on this system, it is critical that the

Commission is able to enact necessary license and fee changes to best serve the sportsmen and women who ultimately support the agency through the purchase of these licenses.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the provisions of SB 774 do not completely remove the legislature from the approval process regarding any changes to Oklahoma's hunting or fishing license structure. All license and fee changes approved by the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission, as is the case with all rule changes approved by the Commission, would still be subject to approval by the Oklahoma Legislature. As such, members of the legislature would still have an opportunity to weigh in on any license or fee changes without compromising the efficiency of this process.

In conclusion, the undersigned organizations ask the Committee to support SB 774 and help grant the authority over Oklahoma's hunting and fishing licenses to the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. Doing so will eliminate this administrative burden that is currently placed on the Oklahoma Legislature while equipping the Commission with the ability to efficiently address the needs of the hunting and angling conservation community.

Sincerely,

American Woodcock Society
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Ducks Unlimited
National Deer Association
National Wild Turkey Federation
Oklahoma B.A.S.S. Nation
Oklahoma Station Chapter SCI
Pheasants Forever
Quail Forever
Safari Club International

Attachment:

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, 2021, American System of Conservation Funding.
<http://congressionalsportsmen.org/policies/state/ascf>.