

April 13, 2021

To: Honorable Members of the Arkansas Senate and House of Representatives

Arkansas State Capitol

500 Woodlane St., Suite 350

Little Rock, AR 72201-1089

Re: SB670 – allowing AR resident game and fish license fees to be increased

Position: Support

Honorable Members of the Arkansas Senate and House of Representatives:

The undersigned organizations representing sportsmen/women and other conservation-minded individuals ask that you support Senate Bill 670 (SB 670). SB 670 would authorize the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) to consider a modest fee increase for resident hunting and fishing licenses. It also requires AGFC to report back to the Legislature on how these funds are used.

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission provides public lands and waters enjoyed by our sportsmen, women, citizenry, and visitors. Their work is important to fish and wildlife, the quality of life for Arkansans, as well as tourism. Investments from the passage of Amendment 75 (Conservation Sales Tax) in 1996, have led to the creation of educational programs and facilities that encourage an appreciation for our natural surroundings and an outdoor lifestyle that is synonymous with Arkansas. It also increased wildlife law enforcement to reduce poaching and protect fish and wildlife resources for future generations across all 75 counties and provided much desired public access to new Wildlife Management Areas and public waters in partnership with state and federal agencies, NGO's and landowners.

Today, there is an urgent need to reinvest in public infrastructure that supports hunting, fishing, conservation of fish and wildlife, and outdoor recreation, but the price tag for reinvestment, maintenance and costly repairs exceeds the revenue that the Conservation Sales Tax and other sources, including license sales, brings in. As labor, maintenance and operation, and infrastructure repair costs have increased, the cost of a resident license has remained the same for over 30 years. The sportsmen and conservation partners here value the investments made by AGFC and understand and support the need for identifying additional funding, including increasing license fees.

According to the most recent Outdoor Industry Report, 53% of Arkansans participate in outdoor recreation each year. This generates \$9.7 Billion in consumer spending annually and 96,000 direct jobs. Many of the public places that outdoor recreationists use today are managed by the AGFC. A recent citizen survey conducted by partners shows overwhelming support for the AGFC and conservation efforts in Arkansas. The passage of SB 670 would allow the agency to respond to urgent maintenance and repair of aging and failing infrastructure such as dams, levees, and hatcheries, and continue to

support new and emerging needs. Supporting SB 670 is important to wildlife, the state's outdoor economy, and the way of life for Arkansas citizens.

The partners signed to this letter and the AGFC have a long history of working together for conservation in Arkansas. We value AGFC's investments in wildlife, habitat conservation, and public access and appreciate the Arkansas Legislature being a trusted friend to conservation, outdoor recreation, and tourism. We respectfully ask for your support of SB 670 to continue Arkansas's legacy as the Natural State.

Arkansas Bass Team Trail – James Arnold and Keith Green, Owners

Arkansas Chapter Backcountry Hunters & Anglers - James Brandenburg, Chair

Arkansas Fly Fishers – Tillman Pittman, President

Arkansas Game and Fish Foundation – Deke Whitbeck, President

Arkansas Outdoor Society – Blake Pond, State Chairman

Arkansas Wildlife Federation – Charles S. (Trey) Buckner III, President

Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S.) - Gene Gilliland, Conservation Director

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation – Chris Horton, Senior Director Midwestern States and Fisheries Policy

Friends of Dale Bumpers White River National Wildlife Refuge – Jim Taylor, Director

National Deer Association – Torin Miller, Policy Director

National Wildlife Federation – GERALYN HOEY, Director of Conservation Partnerships

Quail Forever - Jim Inglis, Director of Legislative Affairs

TU Chapter 722 - Kim Dollins, Chair of the Diversity Initiative