



April 28, 2008

Subject: Support for House Bill 1676 – Funding the Game and Fish & Boat Commissions

To: Members of the House Finance Committee

From: Sarah Sargent
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On behalf of the 30,000 members of Audubon Pennsylvania, a state office of the National Audubon Society, I want to express our support for House Bill 1676 and developing a broader range of funding sources for the Game and Fish and Boat Commissions that manage Pennsylvania's aquatic and wildlife resources.

Diversified funding sources will enable these agencies to keep pace with the increasing demands on them in the face of the changing ways in which Pennsylvania residents enjoy wildlife and continue their strong outdoors heritage into the 21st century.

The demographic trends for hunting and fishing do not bode well for the financial health of the commissions if they continue to rely primarily on license fees for revenues.

The most recent survey on wildlife recreation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2006 (see <http://www.census.gov/prod/2008pubs/fhw06-nat.pdf>) shows the numbers of hunters and anglers are continuing to decline while the number of people who engage in other forms of wildlife-related recreation is increasing. Since the previous survey in 2001, 8 percent more people now participate in activities such as bird watching and wildlife photography ("wildlife watching"), while the number participating in hunting and angling has declined by 10 percent; both of these changes continue trends of the last 20 years.

Based on the survey, 4,165,000 people in Pennsylvania (43 percent of the population) participated in some form of wildlife-related recreation in 2006. Of these, 1.4 million hunted or fished, and 3.6 million engaged in wildlife watching. In 2001 it was 1.65 million and 3.5 million respectively. Thus, Pennsylvania is part of the national trend.

The good news is that a large proportion of Pennsylvanians care about our wildlife resources. On the other hand, they expect our state agencies to take care of the resources in a way that sustains them for the future, whether that be for wildlife-watching, direct consumption or simply protecting species such as the Bald Eagle.

Audubon Pennsylvania believes the funding sources for the agencies need to reflect the larger interest in wildlife on the part of Pennsylvanians, beyond the sportsmen's community, although certainly including sportsmen and women as primary stakeholders.

Audubon Pennsylvania's mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity. We believe House Bill 1676 will help the commissions fulfill their responsibilities as wildlife managers for all Pennsylvanians.

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