

**House Finance Committee Hearing
House Bill 1676
United Bowhunters Of Pennsylvania
April 29, 2008**

Good Morning Chairman Levdansky, Chairman Nickol, members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to address this committee this morning. My name is Ed Wentzler, I am from Lycoming County, and I am the Legislative Director for the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania, a position I have held under all but one UBP president and for a period of fifteen years now. Our organization presently has slightly more than four thousand avid members across the state, with a significant percentage of them in your district Chairman Levdansky, and also in yours, Chairman Nickol.

I served on the first Governor's Sportsmen's Advisory Council and I served on the first Deer Management Working Group in 1999-2000. I have represented the UBP as a member of the Sportsmen's Coalition since 1996. I am extremely proud of the enjoyable working relationships our organization has developed and maintains with nearly all of the other sportsmens' organizations in the Commonwealth, and with the entire PGC staff and the presently serving PGC Board of Commissioners. The UBP feels it is quite important for members of this committee to understand that we constantly monitor every aspect of the PGC's operations and policies to assure they satisfy our own organization's mandate of "Resource First". Suffice it to say, we are presently quite well satisfied. In addition, members of this committee, and all members of the General Assembly for that matter, need to know the UBP believes that affairs of government which affect our Commonwealth's priceless natural resources and thus, also, the rich heritages of our outdoor pursuits, should always be a bi-partisan effort of support.

As I am sure most of you are well aware, the Fish and Wildlife Services of nearly every State in the Nation, whether or not they are encompassed by the State Government or are independent Agencies such as our own, are suffering severe financial difficulties. Most have been forced to cut back on services and programs that serve our fish and wildlife habitats, and in Pennsylvania alone the welfare of 467

species of birds and mammals, speaking from the PGC side of the issue, which is our sole arena of activities.

Perhaps one of the best-known examples of the counterpoint possibilities inherent in good funding structure is the State of Missouri. Many states' fish and wildlife services, and their sportsmen and non-hunting populations alike, observe Missouri with some degree of envy, as Missouri is not cutting back on programs and services, but enhancing them instead. They seem to have the funding available to them to enhance their public information and education efforts and even to advertise the many diverse opportunities available to sportsmen coming to Missouri. They seem to have a rare potential for habitat improvement and restoration, and the amount of good new scientific data coming out of Missouri would certainly indicate they have the funding to support research in field. In a nutshell, one who has their ear to the wind, doesn't hear much in way of sportsmen's complaints coming from Missouri. A precursory examination of Missouri's funding structure reveals a percentage of their state sales tax supports fish, wildlife, and habitat efforts there.

The UBP has the luxury of an extremely fast, extremely accurate sampling mechanism. When we were invited to address this committee a little less than two weeks ago, we initiated a membership survey. Our membership is nearly eighty percent in favor of the provisions and concept of House Bill 1676. Additionally, when members who participate in our surveys have called in on this topic with specific questions or reasons of non-support, the information supplied them has resulted nearly unanimously with a change of position to support for the Bill. These calls have also illustrated the concerns of the UBP's membership and leadership for such legislation.

We strongly urge that no restraints, assignments, earmarks, or designations attach to funds appropriated to our respective Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Monies should go directly into the respective General Game, and General Fish Funds. Such funding as proposed by HB 1676, among the many other benefits, would definitely offset future concerns for hunting and fishing license increases, which all of us in this room know are both unavoidable and imminent. The UBP urges you to

make this piece of Legislation a priority, bi-partisan effort, and you have our organization's full support.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address this committee this morning. The UBP is always available to answer any questions members of the General Assembly might ask.