



News Release

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Increase Our Fees!

The Hunting, Fishing, and Sporting Community Seeks Increased Fees to Support Natural Resource Programs

Waunakee—Outdoor groups and sportsmen statewide are requesting a reinstatement of the fee increase on hunting and fishing licenses in the state budget. In the budget prepared by Governor Doyle fishing licenses were increased \$6, from \$14 to \$20, and deer hunting licenses from \$20 to \$32. The plan would have provided the Department of Natural Resources with an extra \$17 million to help offset the cuts made to the Department's budget. The Joint Finance Committee's (JFC) version of the budget reduced the increase to just \$3 for fishing and eliminated the increase altogether for hunting, causing an overall decrease of \$10 million to the DNR from the Governor's budget.

Ironically, what the members the JFC are touting as a "win for sportsmen" is seen as a real loss *by* sportsmen. "When the Joint Finance Committee bragged that they had done something great for sportsmen in the state budget, I guess that I expected to see that they had done something great for sportsmen in the state budget. Instead they pretty much guaranteed that the DNR won't have the funds it needs to manage and protect our fish and wildlife resources," said George Meyer, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation.

With the legislature facing the tightest state budget in history and the fact that fees haven't been increased in several years, hunters and anglers are confused by the JFC's decision to ignore their request. They argue that there is no reason to not heed the suggestions of those who *use* the outdoors when making decisions about *managing* the outdoors. They question who the Joint Finance Committee thinks they are helping by not listening to the countless outdoorsmen supporting a fee increase.

Certainly not themselves suggests Kathy Pielsticker, Executive Director of the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters, "Politically, this isn't the wisest move. There are more than 800,000 hunters and 1.4 million anglers in Wisconsin and as we saw with the recent constitutional amendment to hunt, fish and trap, Wisconsin's sports men and women DO vote. Come election time, outdoor enthusiasts aren't going to forget the legislators that vote to not increase the fees."

"As outdoor enthusiasts, we will be reminded of this poor decision each and every time we venture into Wisconsin's great outdoors and find that the pheasants and northern pike

aren't stocked, that the Customer Service Centers are closed, and that the jobs performed by wildlife biologists and technicians aren't being done," she continued.

"I would gladly pay what is basically the equivalent of a happy meal and a shake if that means the fish managers can continue to do their job and protect the quality of our lakes and streams," claimed Jon Christiansen, President of Wisconsin Trout Unlimited.

"It is the League's role to listen to the needs of Wisconsin's sports community and to be sure that their concerns are represented by state legislators. Right now we hear the sportsmen loud and clear and we see what the legislature is trying to pull. Rest assured that if the fee increases are not supported by certain decision makers, it *will* come back to haunt them," promised Pielsticker.

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