

Game and Fish Fund Budgetary Oversight Committee

—As authorized under Minnesota Statutes Section 97A.055 Subd. 4b and continued administratively since July 1, 2010—

Joe Duggan, BOC Chair

Subcommittee Chairs:

John Schneider—Fisheries Operations Subcommittee

John Lenczewski—Trout and Salmon Stamp Subcommittee

John Hunt—Ecological Resources Subcommittee

Scott Nagel—Big Game Subcommittee

Randy Goetsch—Enforcement and Operations Support Subcommittee

Terry Johnson—Wildlife Operations Subcommittee

Scott Roemhildt—Pheasant Stamp Subcommittee

Brad Nylin—Waterfowl Stamp Subcommittee

Dennis Fuchs—Wild Turkey Management Subcommittee

January 12, 2011

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Subject: Budget Recommendations for the Game and Fish Fund

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are writing to you on behalf of the 48 citizens who serve on Minnesota's Game and Fish Fund Budgetary Oversight Committee (BOC). Our committee serves an important role by annually reviewing Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Game and Fish Fund expenditures, recommending how Game and Fish Fund dollars are spent, and providing guidance to the Commissioner and the State Legislature on budget and policy issues related to these matters.

For the past few months committee members have met with the DNR to review current spending levels and anticipated needs. Based on these discussions we recommended in the recent BOC Annual report that DNR should review and revamp its licensing and pricing system.

As you develop recommendations for the upcoming legislative session, our committee wants you to be well aware of three things.

One, hunting and angling are critically important to Minnesota's outdoor recreation economy. Nearly 3 million anglers and 700,000 hunters support 55,700 Minnesota jobs through \$3.6 billion in direct annual expenditures. This underscores how hunting and angling are widely embraced by the citizens of the state and that these activities are a significant component of our economy based on a renewable natural resource.

Two, the Game and Fish Fund is projected to go into the red by 2015. This is a serious concern because this fund is the fiscal foundation for the majority of conservation work done by the DNR's fisheries, wildlife and enforcement staffs. While the DNR receives funding from a variety of sources, the fund that is most important to managing fish and wildlife and therefore maintaining high-quality hunting and fishing is the Game and Fish Fund.

Three, it has been 10 years since the last general hunting and fishing license fee increase in Minnesota. It's time to revisit this issue.

Because of the facts stated above, the Budgetary Oversight Committee encourages you and the administration and state legislators to work together to:

- Ensure the solvency of the Game and Fish Fund through fiscal year 2019, enabling the agency to make strategic decisions based on a known financial horizon.
- Balance fishing and hunting revenues with expenditures. For several years fishing expenditures have exceeded fishing license revenues resulting in the transfer of hunting license (wildlife management) revenue to cover the shortfall. The difference has been paid for by hunting license revenues and the gap is worsening.
- Develop licensing and fee structures that are affordable, customer-friendly, yet able to recruit the next generation and retain hunters and anglers.
- Maintain the agency's ability to leverage other revenue sources. For instance federal aid reimbursements from the US Fish and Wildlife Service under the Dingell - Johnson and Pittman Robertson Acts provide matching dollars for each license sold.

Although the BOC does not have specific recommendations at this time, we look forward to seeing and learning from the results of the department's analysis and surveys regarding the fishing and hunting license fee structure. Finally it is important the legislature work with the DNR, license buyers and others to develop a hunting and fishing license and fee structure that will ensure the health of

Minnesota' fish and wildlife populations, their habitat and of the outdoor recreation and tourism economy that relies on it.

Yours truly,



Joe Duggan
Budgetary Oversight Committee Chair



John Hunt
Ecological Resources Subcommittee Chair



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