

Mike Strawser Testimony

House Sub-Committee on Finance

April 9th, 2019

Good morning Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. I am Mike Strowser. I live in Marion County. I am here today to ask the members of this committee to join Ohio sportsmen and women to take care of some long-standing problems that affect hunting and fishing in this state. Hunting has played an enormous role in my life. I have shared it with many others. Friends. Work buddies. Family. Young people. I've been a long-time volunteer for the National Wild Turkey Federation, and in 2006 was named president of the Ohio State Chapter. At our banquets we raise money for conservation, and for programs that introduce and take youngsters, women, veterans and the disabled on hunts.

I've introduced many people to hunting myself. As you can guess, a lot of that has been on wild turkey hunts. Turkey hunting is not like deer hunting or duck hunting where you have a good spot and set up and wait in a stand or a duck blind. To turkey hunt, you have to go with the birds are. You locate them by calling, and then creep in to set up close to try to call them into you. It's hair raising to hear a turkey gobble just out of your sight line!

But the key to turkey hunting is land. Because you have to chase the turkeys where they go, you need larger areas of land to be able to successfully turkey hunt. That's what makes our public land so important to a turkey hunter. Ohio's public land is precious to us. We don't have that much compared to most states. And for new hunters, public land is even more important. New hunters don't have the relationships with local farmers to ask for permission. They rely on public land, much like us turkey hunters do.

That's what makes this AEP property so important. Most hunters don't even know that this land is private, because they've been hunting it for their entire lives. And now with AEP selling it, we're in danger of losing the one thing you cannot replace. There is only so much land. And 60,000 acres will not come along often. Once that opportunity is gone it cannot be replaced.

I buy my licenses and permits every year. In return I expect good habitat. Good opportunities. A value for my money. No one wants to pay higher fees. But no one wants declining value either. I support the increase and the money set aside for AEP because I want the next generation to enjoy what I have been blessed to enjoy. From time to time we have to reinvest in our wildlife, just like you have to put a new roof on your house every ten years or so. We're asking you to meet us half way. Approve the fee increases we're asking for, and the money to secure the AEP grounds. We need to be good stewards of Ohio's wildlife as we've always been. But it can't be done without an investment from time to time. Now is the time. Thank you.