



Buckeye Firearms Association

May 13, 2015

The Honorable Senator Joe Uecker, Chair, Finance - Corrections Subcommittee

Subject: House Bill 64 - Main Operating Budget FY2016-FY2017

The Buckeye Firearms Association (BFA) supports the reasonable fee increase as proposed by the ODNR Division of Wildlife and contained in House Bill 64.

BFA recognizes the quality of the Ohio deer herd that attracts thousands of out-of-state deer hunters to Ohio. Currently Ohio is near the bottom in non-resident hunting license fees and is especially low for states considered as prime destination locations. The proposed increase will position Ohio in the mid-range of state non-resident license fees. The increase will leave Ohio over \$200 lower than the top four rated destination states. Ohio will remain a solid value for the non-resident deer hunter.

BFA recognizes the importance of a well-funded ODNR Division of Wildlife. The Division is self-funded by sportsmen through the sale of licenses, permits and fees on commercial wildlife related operations. The Division receives 75% federal reimbursement from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for eligible project expenditures through the Pittman-Robertson (PR) and Dingell-Johnson (DJ) programs.

The amount of federal dollars the Division receives depends upon the number of hunting and fishing licenses sold and the ability to provide matching funds. PR funding has dramatically increased over the last five years due to increased sales of firearms and ammunition. The most recent projection from the USFWS shows another potential fifty-percent increase. This amounts to a bonus for the Division of Wildlife. However, without the matching funds, the federal funding will revert back to the USFWS.

Hunting and the shooting sports are extremely popular in Ohio. Ohio's shooters are paying the PR federal excise taxes. The public ranges operated by the Division of Wildlife attract thousands of shooters annually. The Division of Wildlife is committed to improving the existing shooting ranges plus seeking opportunities to provide new ranges. Ohio shooters need and deserve affordable safe public ranges for recreational shooting. BFA strongly supports the mission of the Division of Wildlife to provide improved ranges and increased access.

The fee increase contained within House Bill 64 is critical to the Division's ability to provide matching money for the federal PR projects, including range development. Without this increase the federal money and an opportunity to serve Ohio's gun owners may be forever lost.

For these reasons, Buckeye Firearms Association urges the Ohio Senate ensure the fee increase language remains in House Bill 64.

Respectively submitted,



James Irvine, Chair, Buckeye Firearms Association

cc:

Senate President Keith Faber

Senator Chris Widener, Senate President Pro Tem

Senator Scott Oeslager, Chair, Finance Committee

James Zehringer, Director Ohio Department of Natural Resources

Scott Zody, Chief ODNR Division of Wildlife