

Scio Sportsman Club

May 19, 2015

The Honorable Senator Joe Uecker, Chairman, Finance –corrections subcommittee

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

The Scio Sportsman Club firmly supports a moderate fee increase as proposed by the ODNR Division of Wildlife and contained in House Bill 64.

The Scio Sportsman recognizes the exceptional quality of the Ohio white tail deer population that attracts many out of state hunters to Ohio. Currently Ohio is near the bottom of the of the non-resident hunting license fees. The proposed increase will position Ohio in the mid-range for non-resident licensing fees. The relatively minute increase for non-residents will leave Ohio considerably lower in cost than any of the other top rated hunting destinations. Ohio will remain a best value for the superb white tail hunting available in our State.

The Sportsman Club places great importance on a well-funded ODNR division of Wildlife. The division is funded by sportsmen by 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 services (USFWS) for eligible project expenditures through the Pittman-Robertson (PR) and Dingell –Johnson (DJ) programs.

The amount of Federal dollars the Division receives is relevant upon the number of fishing and hunting licenses sold and the ability to provide matching funds. PR funding has dramatically increased over the past five years due to the increase sales of firearms and ammunition. The most current projection shows the potential for a fifty percent increase over the next five years. This equates to a bonus for the Division of Wildlife. Without matching funds , the federal funding will revert back to the USFWS.

Hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting are extremely popular in Ohio. Resident shooters in Ohio are paying the PR federal excise tax. Public shooting ranges operated by Division of Wildlife attract thousands of recreational shooters annually. The Division of Wildlife is committed to improving the existing shooting ranges. With the proper funding the Division of Wildlife will be able to implement new ranges to support the growing demand from the Ohio constituency. Ohio residents should be afforded safe and operational shooting ranges for recreational enjoyment.

The fee increase contained in House Bill 64 is critical to the Divisions ability to provide matching money for the federal PR projects, including range development. Without the fee increase the federal money and opportunity to serve Ohio residential gun owners may forever be lost.

The Scio Sportsman Club and its 238 members fully support House Bill 64 and the fee increase language contained in the Bill.

Respectfully

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