

## **Sportsmen's Alliance Testimony on House Bill 96**

**By Rob Sexton**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the House Natural Resources Committee, I am testifying on behalf of the Sportsmen's Alliance, which fights for the rights of American anglers, hunters, trappers and target shooters. Founded in 1978 right here in Columbus, Ohio, the Alliance has member clubs and organizations throughout the state.

Governor Mike DeWine has an exemplary record benefitting conservation and the people who have enjoyed the outdoors, including our sportsmen and women. The H2Ohio program is notable among those accomplishments.

House Bill 96 contains two other areas that the Sportsmen's Alliance must speak to:

### **Oil and Gas**

In 2012, the Ohio General Assembly enacted, and Governor John Kasich signed legislation permitting the issuance of leases on state property for the extraction of oil and natural gas. As part of the legislative proceedings, the Governor and members of the General Assembly sought support from Ohio's hunters, anglers, and trappers who fund the bulk of fish and wildlife conservation and habitat preservation in the state.

Ohio's sportsmen's and women have purchased and maintained state wildlife lands with their hunting licenses and fees and the special taxes paid on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment. Our hunters and trappers heavily utilize the state wildlife lands that they have bought, and that's why their support was crucial to the enabling legislation House Bill 315 of the 129th General Assembly and subsequent legislation that pertained to this issue in both 2021 and 2022 during the 134<sup>th</sup> GA.

The key to that public support was an assurance that funds that come from the extraction of oil and gas on lands (Wildlife lands) owned and or managed by ODNR-DOW be disbursed back to that specific agency. The General Assembly and Governors Kasich and DeWine agreed with these concerns and addressed the issue plainly in chapter 131.50 of the Ohio Revised Code.

*Section 131.50 | State land royalty fund.*

*Ohio Revised Code/Title 1 State Government/Chapter 131 Revenues and Funds*

*(A) There is hereby created in the state treasury the state land royalty fund consisting of money credited to it under section 155.33 of the Revised Code. Any investment proceeds earned on money in the fund shall be credited to the fund.*

*(B)(1) A state agency is entitled to receive from the fund the amount that the state agency contributed and a share of the investment earnings of the fund in an amount that is equivalent to the proportionate share of contributions made by the state agency to the fund. Regarding the department of natural resources, each division within the department is entitled to receive from the department's proportionate share all amounts received by the department that are attributable to the state-owned land controlled by that division.*

*(2) The treasurer of state, in consultation with the director of budget and management, shall disburse money from the state land royalty fund to the appropriate fund designated by the state agency not later than thirty days after the deposit of any money into the state land royalty fund. If the state agency is the department of natural resources, the treasurer of state, in consultation with the director of budget and management and the director of natural resources, shall disburse the money to the appropriate fund designated by the applicable division within the department.*

*(3) A state agency or, as applicable, a division of the department of natural resources, may use the money for any costs and expenses the agency determines are necessary.*

*(C) As used in this section, "state agency" has the same meaning as in section 155.30 of the Revised Code.*

House Bill 96 would remove the 30-day requirement that the funds be transferred to the Division where the extraction took place. Further, HB 96 removes one of the sections that requires the funds be transferred to the Division where the extraction took place at all.

Further, the Federal Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson) mandates that states are only eligible to receive funds from the excise taxes on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment if the agency that manages Wildlife lands have direct management control over funds that are derived from these lands. These excise taxes are paid by Ohioans for the benefit of wildlife conservation. The language in HB 96 could result in Ohio being out of compliance and cost the Division of Wildlife more than \$20 million annually, which benefits wildlife conservation and the places we hunt and trap. Otherwise, those excise taxes paid by Ohioans could be utilized for the benefit of sportsmen and women in other states.

Ohio's sportsmen and women strongly oppose these changes and rightly view them as the state going back on the very agreement that permitted extraction on the lands purchased with our money. We request the Ohio House of Representatives remove these changes in HB 96 to chapter 131.50.

### **Non-resident Fees to Hunt and Fish**

HB 96 increases non-resident hunting and fishing fees to be in line with other states. Ohio is the premier destination for walleye fishing as thousands come to Lake Erie each year. And Ohio is a top five state to find trophy whitetail deer. Only Illinois, Iowa, Kansas and Kentucky rival the Buckeye State when it comes to big bucks.

And yet when Ohioans deer hunt in other states they pay substantially higher prices as non-residents. In Kansas, for example, Ohio hunters would pay more than \$600. Right now, Ohio is the bargain player when it comes to this notable resource. Ohio hunters believe our prices for non-residents should be in line with other high quality deer states. Making sure out of state hunters and anglers pay their share will help keep resident hunting and fishing license fees down.

That is why Ohio sportsmen and women support these provisions in House Bill 96.

### **Summary**

Ohio sportsmen and women create billions in economic impact in Ohio when we hunt, fish, trap and go to the shooting range. As a result, thousands are employed, and taxes are generated. But key to that investment is high quality wildlife habitat and fisheries and attractive shooting ranges. The funds generated by our licenses and taxes we pay on our own firearms; archery equipment and fishing gear need to be protected to keep this user pay system operating. We hope the Ohio House of Representatives will keep this commitment to Ohioans who spend their lives enjoying the outdoors. Thank you for your time and consideration.