Testimony on Senate Government Oversight & Reform Committee
Division of Wildlife Occupational Licenses
Provided by Division of Wildlife Program Administrator Leighland Arehart
April 15, 2026

Good morning Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee. My name is Leighland Arehart, and I am a Law Enforcement Program Administrator in the Division of Wildlife for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Thank you for the opportunity to present information today regarding the licensing responsibilities of the Ohio Division of Wildlife.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources ensures a balance between wise use and protection of our natural resources for the benefit of all. The Division of Wildlife's mission is to conserve and improve fish and wildlife resources and their habitats for sustainable use and appreciation by all. The Division safeguards our wildlife resources by managing diverse habitats, regulating hunting and fishing for sustainability, and enforcing laws that limit the spread or introduction of invasive species and diseases. The division manages or cooperates in managing over 750,000 acres of diverse wildlife lands throughout the state, plus the fisheries of 124,000 acres of inland water, 7,000 miles of streams, 2 1/4 million acres of Lake Erie, and Ohio's portion of 481 miles of the Ohio River.

The Division of Wildlife programs and projects are primarily supported by license fees and permits for hunting, fishing and trapping in Ohio. Programs also receive support from federal aid (Sport Fish Restoration (Dingell-Johnson Act) and Wildlife Restoration (Pittman-Robertson Act)). The balance of support, about 10%, is derived from fines, donations to the Wildlife Diversity Fund, motor vehicle fuel tax and other sources, including approximately $2 million per year from the General Revenue Fund.

The purpose of the occupational licenses issued by the Division is generally to ensure the proper use and maintenance of wildlife species and habitats across the state, and to prevent the proliferation of disease and invasive species, while balancing the economic and recreational value of wildlife. Licenses that the Division oversees include:

Permit/License	ORC	Federal Requirement
Aquaculture	1533.632	
Bait Dealer	1533.40	
Captive White-tailed Deer Propagator	1533.71	
Commercial Bird Shooting Preserve	1533.72, 1533.73	
Commercial Fishing	1533.34, 1533.35	
Commercial Nuisance Wild Animal Control Operator	1531.40	
Commercial Nuisance Wild Animal Control Operator Employee	1531.40	
Commercial Propagator	1533.71	
Commercial Raptor Propagator	1533.05, 1533.051	Yes
Fishing Guide	1533.51	
Fish Transportation	1533.301	
Fish Wholesaler	1533.631	

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Fur Dealer	1533.23	
Ginseng Dealer	1533.881	Yes
Noncommercial Propagator	1533.71	
Ohio Hunter Education Instructor	1533.10	
Ohio Trapper Education Instructor	1533.11	
White Amur	1533.31	
Wild Animal Hunting Preserve	1533.721, 1533.731	

The House-passed version of House Bill 59 included some changes to the Division's Nuisance Wild Animal Control licenses, along with fee reductions for both the Commercial bird shooting preserve license and fish wholesaler permit. While these changes will result in less revenue for Division, we are confident we will have enough funding to ensure proper oversight of these programs. The Division of Wildlife remains committed to providing fish and wildlife resources for public use and enjoyment while protecting them from overexploitation.

Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you again for giving me the opportunity to provide testimony today. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time.