

COALITION OF CONNECTICUT SPORTSMEN

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Testimony presented to the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

ON S.B. No. 207 AN ACT CONCERNING RECENT INCREASES IN HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSES AND AMENDING CERTAIN MOTOR VEHICLE FINES.

by Robert T. Crook, Director

March 8, 2010

We urge you to Support Substitute language submitted to you by e-mail

We OPPOSE the Bill Language – it again raises Marine Fishing Resident to \$30 (line 28) which impacts many other combination licenses, Does not allow flexibility in the Pheasant program, increases previous 2009 fees by only 20%, and reduces some commercial fees. SUPPORT Concept of Lowering Fees. SUPPORT Substitute Language Reducing Fees to 25% over previous 2009 fees - accepted by sportsmen, additional Supersport, and other new licenses. We urge you to review the CCS website under “Hot Issues” for Substitute language and other data <http://www.ctsportsmen.com> relating to this testimony.

The 100% increase in ALL Licenses/Fees impacts the public differently: (1) Business fees are a pass through to the consumer. 2) One time fees (Birth certificates, death, Court costs, Drivers licenses, etc.) are legal necessities. (3) Sportsmen’s Fees are Recreational and are voluntary discretionary income purchases.

The 100% fees are not competitive/balanced with surrounding/regional state fees (Tables on CCS Website), and will promote many CT sportsmen to hunt/fish in adjoining states and reduce to a virtual zero CT non-resident licenses. The result: a loss in both resident and tourism revenue impacting small businesses, sales tax revenue, corporate taxes, diminish CT as a friendly state, and most important, reduce fish and wildlife management. There will be a serious CT retention loss and no appreciable recruitment.

Junior licenses, this bill, are reduced to a reasonable fee and will benefit recreation and program recruitment.

A table on the CCS website Fishing & Hunting License Sales 1989-2008 demonstrates attrition rates under the normal 10 year cycle (last fee increase 2003, @ 40%) and a dramatic 20 year attrition rate. The 100% increase will cause significantly higher participation losses. Increased fees promote attrition and will impact fishing Boat purchases and registration, a revenue loss in sales and gas taxes, and marina sales/repair. Fewer hunters and fishermen also impact aquaculture commercial trout hatcheries and pheasant farms located in the state. Many Small business owners retailing to Hunting, Fishing, Boating, and related activities, anticipating the impact of sales reductions/nonparticipation/reduced recruitment, have concluded their businesses will not survive.

A major concern is enforcement. ENCON Police are staffed in the 40s of which 10 are in leadership or administrative positions. 30+ are available for state-wide field enforcement 24/7 minus sick, vacation, certification, and administrative time. Sportsmen are firm believers in adherence to the law, but some on the margin may tilt to inappropriate behavior by not purchasing licenses due to inadequate enforcement.

Sportsmen recognize the fiscal problem the state is facing. We promoted a 25% increase in 2009, broke the 10 year fee cycle, and thought that reasonable and a compromise. Expecting sportsmen will pay the 100% fees is optimistic and those with modest financial means will no longer participate. Many, who previously purchased a broad spectrum of licenses, supporting conservation, will limit licenses to Only those actually needed and used.

The 100% fees are well above virtually all other states, and will prompt many to participate elsewhere. The doubling of fees may have a short term positive revenue impact, but will incur a long term negative to the state and particularly to the DEP. Thank you.