

Fee Increases by MAC before Maryland General Assem

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Position: FAV



Maryland General Assembly
Environment and Transportation Committee
Chair Delegate Marc Korman & Vice Chair Delegate Regina Boyce
Hearing on House Bill 40

Organization: Mid-Atlantic Council of Trout Unlimited
Presenter: William (Randy) Dwyer, Chair
Position: Support

To the Chair and Vice Chair of the Environment and Transportation Committee, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

I am Randy Dwyer and I reside in District 22 and am represented by Delegates Ashanti Martinez, Nicole Williams and Anne Healey. I'd like to recognize Delegate Healey for her hard work on this committee and each of the Delegates representing the communities of the 22nd District.

I serve as the Chair of the Mid-Atlantic Council of Trout Unlimited (MAC). I also hold a seat on the Coldwater Fisheries Advisory Committee to DNR and speak to you tonight as the chair of Mid-Atlantic Council of Trout Unlimited. The Mid-Atlantic Council of TU is a conservation organization comprised of multiple local Trout Unlimited chapter across Maryland. This includes Maryland TU, Patapsco Valley TU, Potomac-Patuxent TU in eastern, southern and central Maryland, Seneca Vally TU, National-Capitol TU in central and northern Maryland, and Youghiogheny TU in the western Maryland panhandle.

Taken together our chapters represent 4,000 Trout Unlimited members across the state. These members are avid outdoorsmen and women who come from every walk of life. They volunteer thousands of hours annually in their communities and work on conservation projects along our ocean shorelines, in the Chesapeake Bay, on the Potomac River and in our cold-water rivers and streams found throughout our state.

At the most recent Board of Directors meeting, the Mid-Atlantic Council of Trout Unlimited reviewed and discussed the proposed license fee increases and voted unanimously to support the proposed fee increases found in HB0040.

The Mid-Atlantic Council is comprised of recreational anglers who are avid outdoors enthusiasts, and we recognize the funding shortfalls before the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the need to maintain its programs.

The non-tidal fishing license fee has not increased since 2007 (17 years) and the trout stamp fee has not increased since 1992 (32 years). What does this mean to me personally?

As a recent retiree, I've been paying \$5 annually for the last several years. With the proposed fee increases, my future annual license will be a \$12 annual license plus a \$20 trout stamp for a total of \$32 annually. This is a recreational fishing fee I am more than willing to pay. It will also help keep the DNR's Freshwater Fisheries and Hatcheries Division in a strong operational position.

The Mid-Atlantic Council and our local Trout Unlimited chapters have worked closely with the DNR in the past and will continue to do so in the future to improve cold-water conservation, protection of native and wild trout management and identifying cold-water habitats for protection.

The mission statement of Trout Unlimited is to “Restore, Reconnect and Recover.” We are proud of the work Trout Unlimited has underway throughout Maryland, including the TU “Priority Waters Initiative” in western Maryland to reconnect streams and tributaries, to remove barriers to fish passage and to reintroduce native trout wherever possible. These are projects often done in association with the DNR division of Freshwater Fisheries and we plan to continue this well into the future.

As a conservation organization, this committee must know that Trout Unlimited sees several environmental issues of grave concern on the immediate horizon, including the proposed Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP) which is before the Maryland Public Service Commission and could adversely impact critical environmental areas featuring critical cold-water fisheries. Please note that the Mid-Atlantic Council of TU has voted to oppose the routing path and believe additional studies are appropriate.

In closing, the Mid-Atlantic Council of Trout Unlimited supports the proposed fees found in House Bill 40 and urges its passage by this committee as well as by the full House of Delegates.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to sit before you today.

Randy Dwyer

Chair, Mid-Atlantic Council for Trout Unlimited