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The Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus

The Sportsmen's Best Friend in Annapolis

March 30, 2021

Re: Explanation and Request for Support – HB 1134

Dear Delegate -

We are writing to you today to share our support for Senate Bill 318 and its cross-file House Bill 1134, Natural Resources – Fishing and Hunting Rights, which we hope will be soon presented to you for a vote. The Caucus is hopeful to provide a clear explanation of why this legislation is so meaningful and critical to our State's sportsmen. Not many Marylanders understand the costs of fisheries and wildlife management are not derived from their tax dollars, but from those who fish and hunt in Maryland. These costs are in the tens of millions of dollars each year. Imagine the impact to the State's budget if all fisheries/wildlife management, research and habitat improvement costs became the sole responsibility of taxpayers?

For over 80 years, sportsmen have provided the principal source of funding through a "user-pays public benefits" structure in which those who use the resource pay for the privilege, and in some cases the right, to do so. The three pillars of the American System of Conservation Funding include: revenue from sporting licenses, stamps and excise tax revenue from both the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs. However, this model has not kept pace with the escalating costs of fisheries/wildlife management. To date, these costs exceed special fund revenue attainment, there has not been an increase in State hunting licenses in over 30 years. If not for sportsmen, who will bear these costs?

Maryland lawmakers might ask themselves what these companion bills do, for one, it would let Maryland join the ranks of the other 23 states which have recognized the rights of their citizens to fish and hunt. In the simplest of terms, it is legislative recognition of the highest kind which formally acknowledges the vital role played by sportsmen who do more for our coveted, yet finite, natural resources than any other segment of the populace.

Another way to answer the question is to understand few states can comparatively boast of Maryland's incredibly unique outdoor assets:

Maryland's Eastern Shore is known as "The Goose Hunting Capital of the World".

Ocean City is known as "The White Marlin Capital of the World".

Havre de Grace is known as "The Decoy Capital of the World".

Overhunting of canvasback ducks on Maryland's Susquehanna Flats led Congress to enact the *Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918* – an Act which ended market hunting of waterfowl and set daily harvest bag limits.

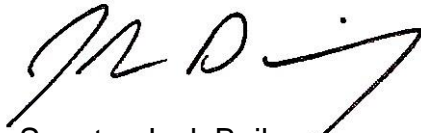
Maryland's portion of the Chesapeake Bay is the principal spawning grounds for the East Coast's entire striped bass population.

Michener's "Chesapeake" brought international attention to the wealth of fisheries/waterfowl from a Maryland perspective.

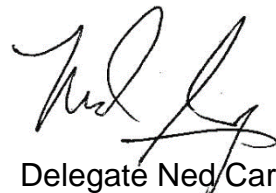
Maryland's State Seal portrays a fisherman.

In the final analysis, it is important to understand these companion bills – if enacted – will simply acknowledge the contributions made by the State's sportsmen community. We are incredibly appreciative of your consideration of the Caucus' position on this important legislation. Please contact us should you have any further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Senator Jack Bailey
Senate Chair



Delegate Ned Carey
House Chair