



# Jeff Mursau

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 36<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage  
AB 1036- Changes to Certain Nonresident Hunting, Trapping, and Fishing Approval Fees  
February 7, 2024

Chairperson Pronschinske and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 1036, which makes changes to certain nonresident hunting, trapping, and fishing approval fees.

Hunting and fishing are traditions that several generations of Wisconsinites participate in every year. These traditions are so important to who we are that in 2003, Wisconsin voters passed a constitutional amendment that guarantees, “the right to fish, hunt, trap, and take game...” The amendment passed with eighty-two percent support from voters.

Unfortunately, the Wisconsin’s Fish and Wildlife account, which is the primary funding source for DNR’s Fisheries and Wildlife Management, as well as Law Enforcement Programs, is operating in a structural deficit. These programs comprise about 2/3rd of the spending draws on the account.

Going into the 2023-2025 Biennial Budget there was a structural deficit in the account. This was attributed to less hunter and angler participation rates, no substantial fee increases since the 2005-07 budget, and (like with everything else) inflation. To help offset the deficit, \$25 million was transferred from the surplus in the Forestry account. The budget also increased certain non-resident hunting and fishing licenses to raise roughly an additional \$2.2 million.

Beginning in July 2025 there will again be an expected structural deficit of nearly \$16 million per fiscal year in the Fish and Wildlife account. To help address this, we are introducing Assembly Bill 1036 to change the fees for 26 different non-resident hunting and fishing licenses that weren’t included in the current budget.

The bill draft also includes a \$2 decrease in the nonresident five-day small game hunting license to keep all fee adjustments proportional over time. For a complete list of the proposed fee changes, please see the attached chart.

This proposal won’t fix the problem in the account, but it will help. We’ve included an effective date of March of this year so that we can start collecting the increase in fees now and not wait another 15 months for when the next budget is signed into law.

Once again, thank you for holding a public hearing on this important piece of legislation. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Statute	Statutory License	Current	Change	Proposed
29.563(2)(b)2.	Nonresident 5-Day Small Game Hunting License	\$57.25	(\$2.00)	\$55.25
29.563(2)(b)3m.	Nonresident Elk Hunting License	\$248.25	\$63.00	\$311.25
29.563(2)(b)4.	Nonresident Bear Hunting License	\$248.25	\$63.00	\$311.25
29.563(2)(b)6.	Nonresident Archer Deer Hunting License	\$162.25	\$35.00	\$197.25
29.563(2)(b)6m.	Nonresident Crossbow Deer Hunting License	\$162.25	\$35.00	\$197.25
29.563(2)(b)7.	Nonresident Fur-bearing Animal Hunting License	\$162.25	\$35.00	\$197.25
29.563(2)(b)8.	Nonresident Wild Turkey Hunting License	\$62.25	\$35.00	\$97.25
29.563(2)(d)1.	Nonresident Bonus Deer Hunting Permit - Outside CWD Areas	\$19.25	\$11.00	\$30.25
29.563(2)(g)	Nonresident Additional Wild Turkey Hunting Authorization	\$14.75	\$9.00	\$23.75
29.563(3)(b)6.	Nonresident Two-Day Sports Fishing License	\$9.25	\$1.00	\$10.25
29.563(3)(b)7.	Nonresident Sturgeon Spearing Fishing License	\$64.25	\$6.00	\$70.25
29.563(3)(cm)2.	Nonresident Sturgeon Hook and Line Fishing Tag	\$49.75	\$5.00	\$54.75
29.563(4)(b)1.	Nonresident Sports Hunting and Fishing Combination License	\$292.25	\$27.00	\$319.25
29.563(4)(b)1m.	Nonresident Youth Sports Hunting and Fishing Combination License	\$33.25	\$5.00	\$38.25
29.563(4)(b)2.	Nonresident Conservation Patron Hunting, Fishing & Trapping Combination License	\$615.25	\$100.00	\$715.25
29.563(4)(b)2m.	Nonresident Youth Conservation Patron Hunting, Fishing & Trapping Combination License	\$72.25	\$14.00	\$86.25
29.563(4)(b)3.	Nonresident Wolf Harvesting License	\$250.25	\$63.00	\$313.25
29.563(5)(b)1.	Nonresident Fishing Guide License	\$99.25	\$120.00	\$219.25
29.563(5)(b)2.	Nonresident Lake Michigan and Green Bay Sport Trolling Fishing License	\$400.00	\$1,600.00	\$2,000.00
29.563(5)(b)3.	Nonresident Lake Superior Sport Trolling Fishing License	\$400.00	\$1,600.00	\$2,000.00
29.563(6)(am)	Nonresident Trapping License	\$149.25	\$38.00	\$187.25
29.563(6)(b)1.	Nonresident Itinerant Fur Buyer License	\$200.00	\$400.00	\$600.00
29.563(6)(d)	Nonresident Taxidermist License	\$100.00	\$175.00	\$275.00
29.563(7)(b)1.	Nonresident Outlying Waters Commercial Fishing License - With Boats	\$6,499.25	\$5,750.25	\$12,249.50
29.563(7)(b)2.	Nonresident Outlying Waters Commercial Fishing License - Without Boats	\$6,499.25	\$5,750.25	\$12,249.50
29.563(10)(b)2.	Nonresident Wild Ginseng Harvest License	\$30.00	\$30.00	\$60.00
29.563(10)(b)6.	Nonresident Ginseng Dealer License	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00



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# HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

**February 7, 2024**

**Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage  
Testimony on Assembly Bill 1036**

Good Morning!

Thank you Chair Pronschinske and committee members for hearing Assembly Bill 1036 (AB 1036) that makes changes to certain nonresident hunting, trapping, and fishing approval fees.

AB 1036 would change the fees for 26 different non-resident hunting and fishing licenses. Many of these licenses haven't seen a fee increase since 2005-06 and some haven't changed in decades.

Wisconsin's Fish and Wildlife account is the primary funding source for DNR's Fisheries and Wildlife Management, as well as Law Enforcement Programs. These programs comprise about two-thirds of the spending draws on the account. Going into the 2023-2025 Biennial Budget there was a structural deficit in the account. This can be attributed to less hunter and angler participation rates, no substantial fee increases since the 2005-07 budget, and inflation. To help offset the deficit, \$25 million was transferred from the surplus in the Forestry Account. The budget also increased certain non-resident hunting and fishing licenses to raise roughly an additional \$2.2 million.

Beginning in July 2025 there will again be an expected structural deficit of nearly \$16 million/fiscal year in the Fish and Wildlife account. These adjustments are largely building upon the non-resident fee increases the Joint Committee on Finance included in the 2023-25 Biennial Budget.

Increasing these fees will not only bring additional non-resident fees into alignment with the fee changes by the Joint Committee on Finance, they will also help ensure the department's Fish and Wildlife Account remains solvent. The bill also includes a \$2 decrease in the nonresident five-day small game hunting license to keep all fee adjustments proportional over time.

On the second page of my testimony, you will see a full list of the proposed fee changes.

Thank you again for hearing AB 1036, and your timely action on this proposal.

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## Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage

### *2023 Assembly Bill 1036*

### *Changes to Nonresident Hunting, Trapping and Fishing Approval Fees*

*February 7, 2024*

Good morning, Chair Pronschinske and members of the Committee. My name is Tim Gary, I am a budget and policy analyst for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Joining me today to help answer questions is Scott Loomans, the department's fish, wildlife and parks policy advisor. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, in support of Assembly Bill 1036 (AB 1036) related to nonresident hunting, trapping, and fishing fees.

The department is grateful to Representative Mursau and Senator Marklein for introducing this legislation as a trailer to action taken in the biennial budget in the spring and summer of 2023. We are also grateful to the chair and Senator Quinn for Assembly Bill 799 (AB 799) addressing deer licenses.

As you may be aware, the Fish and Wildlife Account is in a structural deficit and has been for some time now. However, there was a \$27 million balance within the account that was strategically used over the past six fiscal years to delay the need for new revenue from hunting, fishing, trapping, or other fees. To manage the structural deficit over the past six years, the department relied on:

- Drawing down the above-referenced \$27 million balance;
- Implementing cost saving measures;
- Relying more heavily on federal funds;
- Relying more heavily on stamp funds for eligible expenses; and
- Continuing our recruitment, retention, and reactivation efforts with hunters and anglers.

In 2023 Act 19, the biennial budget, the legislature and Governor Evers approved two provisions to partially address the structural deficit within the account:

- A one-time \$25 million transfer from the forestry account to the fish & wildlife account; and
- An ongoing increase for a subset of nonresident hunting, fishing, and trapping fees.

The department is grateful that these provisions have afforded us more time to develop a more-wholistic and ongoing approach to eliminate the current structural deficit with revenue streams that meet the demands from Wisconsin citizens for fish, wildlife, and habitat conservation. However, an estimated \$16 million structural deficit will reappear in FY 2025-26 as one-time funding expires.

In the meantime, the department reviewed all nonresident license fee increases in context of their history and ratios. The suggested fee changes within AB 1036 are designed within the framework established by the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) on May 18, 2023: nonresident licenses only.

This bill would restore balance among all nonresident fees based on both their statutory histories and based on the increases approved in Act 19.

### **Nonresident Deer Licenses**

From 1991 to 2023 a standard bow-hunting deer license price has been identical to a standard gun-hunting deer license. When the crossbow-hunting license was created in 2013, it was set at the same price. Act 19 created a non-traditional disparity by increasing the gun license by \$40 while the bow and crossbow licenses only increased \$5. There is a price-per-day value disparity that is inherent within the traditional pricing structure and this \$35 difference exacerbates it even further. AB 1036 would restore the traditional pricing structure, much the same as the chair's own legislation AB 799.

### **Nonresident Sports Licenses**

A *standard annual sports license* comes with three authorizations, an: 1) Annual fishing license; 2) Annual small game license; 3) Gun deer license.

Act 19 increased the individual components bought separately by \$5, \$5, and \$40, respectively: \$50. However, Act 19 increased the sports license by only \$20. This is a \$30 gap. Prior to Act 19, there was a \$16.50 price discount to buy a sports license. Adding in an additional \$30 exacerbates that discount when the statutes have traditionally emphasized other discounts rather than the sports license. AB 1036 would re-establish the historical discount of approximately 5.75 percent.

*Annual youth sports licenses* were not addressed in Act 19. These licenses cost \$33.25, a \$255.50 discount on the books since 2003-04. The total price has always been less than any of its three components purchased individually. While this fee could be recalculated in the future, AB 1036 would re-establish the historic 88 percent discount.

### **Nonresident Small Game**

*Five-day small game licenses* were increased \$5, the same as a standard sports license. However, this increase surpassed historic prices that have ranged from 41 percent - 63.5 percent of a standard annual small game license. Act 19 increased it to 65.6 percent. AB 1036 restores the price *back down* within range at 63.3 percent.

### **Nonresident Conservation Patron Licenses**

Historically, the nonresident conservation patron license has been about 31 percent - 34 percent of the normal product total. 33 percent of the current product total is ~\$715.25, \$100 more than provided in Act 19.

### **Nonresident Elk Licenses**

State statute prohibits issuing nonresident elk hunting licenses until such time as the department has more than 100 licenses to issue; while the bill raises the nonresident elk license fee, the department does not anticipate issuing such licenses at this time.

### **Nonresident Commercial Licenses**

The prices proposed are inflationary increases from the date they were last set through 2022.

**Fiscal Effect**

AB 1036 would generate about \$800,000 per year in revenue for the Fish & Wildlife Account. This is a good starting point and would signify to the public that the State is committed to finding sustainable and ongoing revenues for fish, wildlife, and habitat conservation in Wisconsin.

On behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, we would like to thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



Wisconsin Trout Unlimited remains neutral on AB 1036 as written. While we appreciate the efforts of the authors to start looking for solutions to the Fish and Wildlife Account funding gap, we don't believe the problem can be solved solely on the backs of out of state hunting and fishing tourists. Our members would like to be a part of the solution and we would encourage the committee to consider adding a \$5 Inland Trout Stamp adjustment to the bill.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to public service.

Sincerely,

Mike Kuhr, Wisconsin Trout Unlimited – Advocacy Chair  
[mikek.trout@yahoo.com](mailto:mikek.trout@yahoo.com) (414) 588-4281

*Table 3. Expenditure of IWTS and SEG funds supporting trout habitat work in the fiscal years 2019-2021*

	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021
Permanent Salaries	\$ 416,357.63	\$ 417,074.18	\$ 545,260.81
LTE Salaries	\$ 235,965.10	\$ 267,870.72	\$ 267,402.37
Fringe Benefits	\$ 273,441.72	\$ 281,298.78	\$ 361,196.38
Supplies/Services	\$ 805,452.44	\$ 813,664.59	\$ 1,112,413.48
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 1,731,216.89</b>	<b>\$ 1,779,908.27</b>	<b>\$ 2,286,273.04</b>

	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021
Trout Stamp	\$ 1,367,400.00	\$ 1,445,849.47	\$ 1,690,162.72
SEG*	\$ 363,816.89	\$ 334,058.80	\$ 596,110.32
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 1,731,216.89</b>	<b>\$ 1,779,908.27</b>	<b>\$ 2,286,273.04</b>

\*During FY2019-2021, inland trout activities were also funded by Segregated Fish and Wildlife Account (SEG) funds. Gift donations were also used to fund some inland trout activities but are not captured in this report.

Table is from Page 8 of the WDNR Inland Water Trout Stamp Expenditures Report Fiscal Years 2019 – 2021.

<https://widnr.widen.net/s/xxhd8psbrw/expendituresinlandwatertroutstamprevenues20192021>

*The Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited ("WITU") is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization which consists of approximately 6,500 volunteer members in 21 chapters in Wisconsin working to ensure that future generations have access to cold, clean, fishable water. In a typical year, WITU and its Chapters report over 50,000 volunteer hours, working on conservation projects, education and outreach events, and operating Service Partnership programs to support veterans and first responders.*





wicouncil.tu.org

February 07, 2024

TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage

**RE: AB 1036 and Consideration of including a \$5 Inland Trout Stamp Adjustment**

Thank you Members of the Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage.

My name is Mike Kuhr, I live in Monona, where I'm a husband, father, small business owner, and volunteer leader for Wisconsin Trout Unlimited. I'm currently serving as our Advocacy Chair. Trout Unlimited is our Nation's leading cold water conservation organization. Here in Wisconsin, we're home to over 6,500 members and 21 local chapters dedicated to ensuring future generations' access to cold, clean, fishable water.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on AB 1036, which would increase certain hunting and fishing fees to fill a gap in the State Fish and Wildlife Account. Wisconsin Trout Unlimited is aware of the funding issues associated with this account as we were part of a broad coalition of sporting organizations who started raising the issue several years ago. We'd like to thank the bill's authors for their work in coming up with solutions to start addressing the problem.

The Fish and Wildlife Account provides critical funding for Conservation Wardens, Wildlife Biologists, Fisheries Biologists and Field Technicians. These are the people hunters, anglers, and trappers interact with most while out recreating in Wisconsin's woods and waters.

According to a recently published Inland Waters Trout Stamp Expenditures Report (covering Fiscal Years 2019 – 2021) Segregated Fish and Wildlife Account Funds accounted for 21% of Trout Program Expenditures in 2019, 19% of Trout Program Expenditures in 2020, and 26% of Trout Program Expenditures in 2021. That's an average of \$431,000 per year from the Fish and Wildlife account being used to support Trout Stamp work.

Both Resident and Non-Resident trout anglers have been benefiting from the Inland Trout Stamp program since its inception in 1978. It's the classic user fee that makes trout fishing in Wisconsin better year after year. The Inland Trout Stamp hasn't been adjusted since 2006 and trout anglers are ready for a \$5 increase. We want to be part of the solution and make sure that Wisconsin's storied trout fishing heritage continues to improve.

A \$5 increase in the Inland Trout Stamp Fee would bring in an additional \$800,000 to the program, which according to the most recent report would exceed any of the yearly totals used from the Fish and Wildlife Account to support trout habitat management.

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Feb 7, 2024

To: Members of the Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage

RE: AB 1036 – Non-resident fee increases

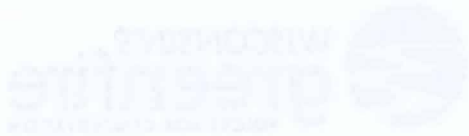
Dear Committee Members:

**Wisconsin's Green Fire supports Assembly Bill 1036 and thanks Representative Mursau and Senator Marklein for introducing it.**

This bill does two very important things that will benefit the interests of Wisconsin hunters and fishers.

First, the bill, if enacted, will increase revenues to the Fish and Wildlife Account. Without corrective action in the FY25-27 Biennial Budget, the Fish and Wildlife Account is projected to close FY26 at a deficit of nearly \$16 million. **Passage of AB 1036 will reduce the projected deficit and is a step toward long term stability in the fund.** The Fish and Wildlife Account is the main funding source for the Fisheries, Wildlife and Law Enforcement programs that Wisconsin's outdoor enthusiasts count on.

Second, it treats all non-resident hunters and fishers fairly by increasing each license proportionately. Quick passage of the bill will allow DNR to start rebuilding the Fish and Wildlife Account as soon as



possible.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments and we look forward to your passage of this important legislation.

*Tom Hauge*

Tom Hauge,  
Co-chair, Wildlife Work Group  
**Wisconsin's Green Fire**