

May 2, 2017

The Honorable John Kasich
Governor, State of Ohio
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Governor Kasich:

Each of the signees of this letter had the pleasure of serving as Chief of the Ohio Division of Wildlife, one of the nation's highest regarded fish and wildlife agencies. Dating back 1982, we had the honor of serving Ohio's hunters, anglers, trappers, recreational shooters, and other outdoor enthusiasts. We write today in full support of a modest increase in resident user fees.

We have become increasingly concerned at the financial challenges faced by Ohio Division of Wildlife because it is affecting the quality of hunting and fishing in Ohio. Unlike the majority of state government, the Division of Wildlife has no annual means to increase revenue to offset the annual increases in the cost of doing business, which has been roughly 3.2% in recent years.

To ensure the high quality of services the public expects, periodic fee increases have been approved by the Ohio General Assembly, intended to last a finite period of time before the agency would be forced to cut existing services and personnel. Normally a fee increase would last about ten years before this would occur. That was the intent in 2003, when the legislature approved the last fee increase on user fees. It has now been 14 years since, and the delay in a modest increase is creating problems that has noticed by the paying public.

Although the fees continue at 2003 levels, inflation has increased each and every year, eating further into the finances, and resulting in less product on the ground. Essential services including a visible law enforcement presence in every county, fish stocking, habitat enhancement, public land retention, shooting range development and maintenance have all suffered as a result of an overdue financial structure.

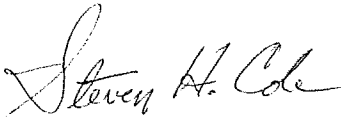
While the General Assembly should always be careful not to overcharge its users, the price of a license is not the number one reason people give up hunting, fishing or trapping. To understand this issue, it is important to listen to the paying customer. In research spanning back decades, the same messages are reinforced by American sportsmen and women including those in Ohio. Lack of access remains the top reason why people give up hunting, fishing and trapping. Access to quality land to hunt. Access to quality game. Access to waterways. Access to quality shooting ranges.

To address that concern, Ohio needs better managed public land, more educational programming to help people locate places to hunt and fish and trap, more boating access, and better stocked waterways. Unfortunately, Ohio is heading the other direction. Financial austerity is causing declining quality. While fiscal efficiency is important, maintaining quality service is even more so. Ohio used to be a Cadillac state when it came to access to quality hunting, fishing and trapping. Unless the General Assembly acts to shore up the finances that have been eroded by normal increases in business costs, Ohio will continue

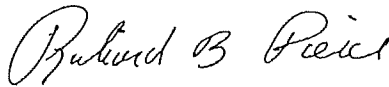
the path toward Chevette level quality. Put simply, the current trend is slowly starving out the Ohio Division of Wildlife, which if not corrected, will result in an irretrievable loss of customers and revenue. To date, the Division of Wildlife has been nearly completely funded without GRF dollars. It cannot remain that way if there are not periodic increases in user fees to address the cost of doing business.

The declining quality of programs and services by the Division of Wildlife requires cutting edge programming and solutions. Operating the Division of Wildlife on a 2003 budget will not permit that to happen. Ohio's conservation and sportsmen's community is behind this effort to increase user fees, and they will thank you for taking a step that is overdue. Thank you.

Respectfully:



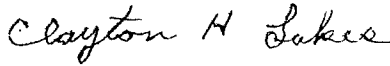
Steve Cole
Chief: 1982-1983



Dick Pierce
Chief: 1991-1995



Steve Gray
Chief: 2003-2007



Clayton Lakes
Chief: 1985-1991



Mike Budzik
Chief: 1995-2003



Dave Graham
Chief: 2007-2011

Cc: Members of the Ohio General Assembly