



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

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To: The Senate Resources and Environment Committee

Testimony of Virgil Moore, Idaho Department of Fish and Game
House Bill 230

Chairman Bair and Committee:

Thank-you for the opportunity to describe House Bill 230. This bill arose when Chairman Gibbs of the House Resources and Conservation Committee returned two RSs to the Fish and Game Commission in January without a print hearing and encouraged the Commission and the Department to address concern that our proposals did not do enough to address private land depredation by wildlife.

We believe House Bill 230 takes significant steps to both address the depredation concern and deliver important outcomes for sportsman and landowners.

You have my testimony in your folder as well as a brief overview of each of the 12 sections of the bill with a diagram.

House Bill 230 has four themes:

Theme 1: Dedicated revenue to compensate and prevent wildlife depredation on private land.

This bill raises new revenue in Section 6, page 13, via a license endorsement fee required to purchase an annual license. The fee is \$5.00 for resident adults, \$2.00 for other residents such as juniors and seniors, \$10 for non-resident adults and \$4.00 for other non-residents.

The money is deposited in the Fish and Game set-aside account to annually transfer \$500,000 into the expendable big game depredation account to pay wildlife damage claims.

The next allocation of \$500,000 is for pronghorn antelope, deer, and elk depredation prevention on private land and control of predators affecting these species.

I note the new \$500,000 for claims enhances the existing \$200,000 of our license funds that are already transferred each year plus about \$50,000 of interest from the nonexpendable big game depredation fund. That essentially triples the financial commitment of sportsman money for wildlife damage compensation claims.

The bill also increases from \$1.50 to \$3.50 the moneys from pronghorn antelope, deer, and elk tags directed to the fish and game set-aside account for the winterfeeding account, and for pronghorn antelope, deer, and elk depredation prevention on private land and control of predators affecting these species. There is a complementary change for the set-aside from the Sportsman's Pak in Sections 2, page 3, and Section 4, page 8. This is not new money; these changes do not affect current fees for the affected tags. This is just redistribution of an estimated \$498,000 of discretionary revenue to the set-aside account to consolidate the financial resources for these programs.

In addition, the threshold of the expendable big game depredation account balance for which transfer provisions for any unexpended and unencumbered balance applies is increased from \$750,000 to \$2.5 million. When that threshold is reached, the unused balance flows back into the set-aside account specifically for pronghorn antelope, deer, and elk depredation prevention on private land and control of predators affecting these species. Thus, sportsman money allocated to address depredation issues remains focused on depredation and is not directed to any other purpose. This is found in Section 3, pages 4 and 5.

I specifically note that the Commission proposed doubling the existing \$750,000 threshold to \$1.5 million, which the Commission thought ample based on the expenditure history of this fund. Recognizing that legislative processes to create policy involve reconciling a range of perspectives, the Commission believes a threshold of 2.5 million is excessive. We commit to annually review and report to the you about how this threshold performs.

Theme 2: Revisions to improve flexibility and responsiveness of the compensation claims program to landowner operations.

To address concerns that the compensation claim program is too burdensome for landowners, this bill revises several provisions identified as barriers found in Section 3, pages 4 thru 7, Section 8, pages 17 thru 19, and Section 9, page 21. I highlight one on page 18 – the requirement for written follow-up to verbal notification of wildlife damage to crops is increased from 10 to 20 days, which also increases from 10 to 20 days the period prior to the initial damage notification that the department is held liable or accountable for wildlife damage. The bill allows electronic means for written notice. This proposal arose from recommendation from the Fish and Game Advisory Committee of landowners and sportsmen. Another change – To continue to encourage hunting as a tool in the depredation toolbox, we amend the reasonable access language to be more flexible and responsive to individual landowner circumstances, noted in Section 8, page 18 lines 25, and 44-46.

Theme 3: New financial resources for sportsman access programs.

Sportsmen access programs for easements and access agreements are a high priority for hunters and anglers. To address this, the balance after the first \$1 million from license endorsement fees is dedicated to wildlife depredation compensation and prevention, remains in the Fish and Game

set-aside account for sportsman access programs specifically excluding purchase of private property, found in Section 2, page 3.

Complementary to this provision, moneys in the fish and game account from combination and fishing licenses, authorized for certain fishery functions such as fish hatchery and reservoir rehabilitation, are increased from \$2.00 to \$5.00. This increase supports these important functions and the addition of fishing access as an authorized use of these funds, found in Section 1, page 2. This earmarking of an additional \$793,000 from discretionary license revenue for these purposes does not affect license cost.

Theme 4: New revenue for the broader portfolio of fish and game programs.

New revenue tools are:

1. A resident fee increase of about 20% is included with some other fee increases such as nonresident daily fishing licenses and creation of a new control hunt application fee for moose, sheep, and goats. Resident fees have not been adjusted since 2005. This is Section 7, pages 13 thru 17.
2. Legislative direction is given to the Fish and Game Commission to implement a Price Lock discount order, which would provide a discount to 2016 fees for eligible sportsmen who purchase an annual license in 2017 and every year for at least five years and until legislative review is complete. I want to emphasize that for those who are "Price Locked" the discount extends to all license, tag, and permit products, not just the annual license. You don't have to buy the same thing every year to be Price Locked – If I buy a fishing license and salmon permit in 2017 and then purchase a combo license and a deer tag in 2018 – my 2018 products would still be discounted. This is in Section 10, pages 21 and 22.

New revenue from this approach is provided from sportsmen who have not traditionally bought a license every year – they will either buy a license intermittently at the higher price or they will buy every year to get the Price Lock discount.

The Price Lock fee increase would generate an estimated \$3 million in additional revenue to be used to restore inflationary losses in programs and to fund sportsman desired enhancements such as: modernize hatcheries and increase fish production, conduct more big game population surveys, spend more to improve and maintain public shooting ranges, and conduct more wildlife enforcement patrols.

The Price Lock fee increase would become effective with the sale of the 2018 Fish and Game licenses on December 1, 2018 – this gives our sportsmen time to decide about purchasing their 2017 annual license to be eligible for Price Lock.

All other sections of this bill would become effective May 1, 2017 to accelerate the outcomes from the new license endorsement revenue and the related depredation policy revisions. Effective dates and severability clause are Sections 11 and 12 on page 22.

One other note – Section 5, page 12 is a clean-up reference for the three year nonresident junior fishing license.

Mr. Chairman and Committee, the Fish and Game Commission supports this bill with the caveat I previously discussed. Our testimony demonstrates benefits of this bill to both sportsmen and also other stakeholders across the state. Let's move forward together. I ask for your Do Pass recommendation.