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### **Pheasants Forever Testimony on HB4313 – Pheasant License Bill**

Good afternoon, Chairman Filler and Judiciary Committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill that is of great relevance to Pheasants Forever. My name is Bill Vander Zouwen. I am chair of the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative and State Director for Michigan Pheasants Forever. I previously served as Upland Gamebird Specialist and Wildlife Division Section Chief for Wisconsin DNR, where I was responsible for both wild and stocked pheasant programs and worked with the Governor's office to create a Wisconsin Pheasant Stamp.

Pheasants Forever has been actively serving Michigan for 36 years. We currently have 33 chapters and about 8000 members. Our mission is to provide habitat for pheasants and other wildlife and to recruit the next generation of hunter conservationists. Our efforts benefit other game species, songbirds, pollinators, monarch butterflies, and water quality as well.

We support a state pheasant stocking program and a Pheasant License, but we cannot support HB4313 unless a few modifications are made. Basically, we believe the proposed fee is too high and the proposed proportion of revenue going to habitat programs is too low and needs to be ear-marked in a pheasant subaccount like the stocked bird revenue portion. **If the License will be required of all pheasant hunters rather than just those hunting stocked properties, we propose that the fee be closer to the \$12 duck stamp and \$15 turkey license. If the stamp is required of all hunters rather than the less than 20% of pheasant hunters who hunt the stocked properties, then we propose that the proportion of revenue going to habitat programs be closer to 50%.**

#### **ISSUE: \$25 for a Pheasant License Price is TOO HIGH!**

- \$25 is a reasonable price only if the stamp is a user fee and only those hunting the stocked pheasants have to buy it.

- Approximately 83% of pheasant hunters did not hunt stocked properties in 2019; only an estimated 2,851 of the most recently estimated 16,433 pheasant hunters hunted the stocked properties in 2019.
- The majority of pheasant hunters, who won't benefit, are being asked to pay \$25 to purchase birds for the minority.
- Pheasant hunters already pay \$11 for a small game license; adding \$25 for those not hunting stocked properties is a relatively high new tax.
- Michigan Deer, Turkey and Waterfowl licenses and stamps are \$20, \$15 and \$12.
- Wisconsin Pheasant stamp is \$10 and South Dakota is passing a new stamp at \$10; Pennsylvania charges \$25 for their stamp, but hunters there just hunt state-stocked birds, so it is a user fee.
- DNR Wildlife Chief Russ Mason's first reaction to the bill on February 22, 2019 (email) was "At most, this stamp should be no more than a waterfowl or turkey license (\$10)." "I'm, convinced that an additional \$25 to hunt pheasants (on your own property as well as public land) will be the kiss of death for pheasant hunting in this state."

**Issue: 25% of stamp revenue for Habitat is TOO LOW!**

- Just 25% for habitat does not respect the 36 year contributions of the habitat organization Pheasants Forever or the 9-year contributions of the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative coalition.
- Most hunters don't hunt the stocked properties, so a higher portion of revenue should go to a broader pheasant conservation program that has broader hunter and society benefits.
- Stocked bird hunting programs require habitat restoration and maintenance for the hunting of released birds.
- Wisconsin Pheasant stamp revenue goes 40% for habitat and South Dakota's new stamp will be 100% for habitat.

**Compromise Scenario:** A \$15 license purchased by 16,400 pheasant hunters, with 60% going for stocked birds, still purchases over 9,500 birds at \$15.50 each for the less than 3,000 people who hunted the stocked properties, compared to 5,600 birds stocked in 2019 with the legislative budget allocation. The 40% for habitat could be leveraged to make significantly more impact through grants or federal farm bill funds, for example.

Most sincerely,



Bill Vander Zouwen, Pheasants Forever State Director