



NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
1783 Buerkle Circle
St. Paul, MN 55110
(651) 773-2000
(651) 773-5000 FAX
(877) 773-2070 TOLL-FREE
www.PheasantsForever.org

Pheasants Forever Testimony on HB4313 – Pheasant Stamp Bill

Good afternoon, Chairman Howell and Natural Resources Committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill that is of great relevance to Pheasants Forever. My name is Dan McMaster and I am the Chair of the Michigan Pheasants Forever State Council. Our state director, Bill Vander Zouwen, is out of state today, and he asked me to give our organization's testimony.

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. We accomplish this mission through staff, volunteers, and by leading the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative Coalition of 11 agencies and conservation organizations.

We suggest that the Pheasant Stamp Bill not be advanced until the DNR completes the evaluation of this first year of stocking to see if the stocking program has its intended effect. The legislature provided DNR with the funds to do that evaluation on this pilot program.

We could only support the Pheasant Stamp bill if it were modified as follows:

- The stamp fee is no more than \$15,
- The stamp revenue is used 50% for pheasant stocking and 50% for habitat programs,
- The entire stamp revenue is ear-marked statutorily for the above purposes, and
- The stamp is not required of participants in agency or non-profit organization events that introduce youth and novice adult hunters to pheasant hunting.

Delayed Bill Advancement: The stocking program could have some of the same negative experiences that the last DNR stocking pheasant stocking program had. It might not recruit significant numbers of new pheasant hunters. That's why there is an evaluation component to the legislatively directed stocking program. We think it wise not to create a permanent funding system before more is known about the value of the outcome.

Stamp Fee: It is likely that a \$25 fee will result in less pheasant hunters, rather than more. A \$25 fee may only seem reasonable if the stamp is only required of those hunting the stocked state game areas. A \$25 fee for pheasant hunting will seem like a huge fee increase from the \$11 base license now

required of small game hunters. The fee will seem especially high for all the people who hunt wild pheasants on private or public land and all the people who buy their own pheasants to release on their land. In comparison, the deer license is \$20, duck stamp is \$12 and turkey license is \$15.

Both Stocking and Habitat: We ask that Pheasant Stamp revenue allocation honor all the efforts put into Michigan habitat programs by Pheasants Forever for so many years. If a stamp is required of all pheasant hunters, we believe a significant portion of the revenue should fund habitat programs that have wide-ranging benefits. For example, stamp revenue could be used to fund a portion of the cost of key positions at MUCC, the Landowner Cooperative Coordinator, and Pheasants Forever, the Adopt-A-Game-Area Coordinator. It could be used to promote federal farm conservation programs that now bring \$48 million to Michigan and could bring much more. It could be used to leverage federal and foundation grants for habitat programs. Even pheasant stocking programs require habitat restoration and maintenance on the stocked state game areas to have suitable hunting sites. We would only support all of the stamp funds going to a stocking program if the stamp is only required of those hunting on the stocked state properties.

Statutory Revenue Ear-Marking: We are concerned that any revenue that is not statutorily ear-marked for pheasant programs will be subject to reallocation in an agency that has significant wildlife division budget problems and an ever growing need to fund deer disease management and monitoring. If there is good reason to statutorily ear-mark the stocking portion of the revenue, there is equally good reason to statutorily ear-mark the habitat portion of the revenue.

Exemption for Agency and Organization Recruitment Events: We are very concerned that a stamp requirement will be a significant barrier to participation in youth and adult novice pheasant hunter recruitment events held by DNR and conservation organizations. Examples include the Allegan and Shiawassee State Game Area hunts planned for this fall and the Lake Hudson Outdoor Jamboree mentored hunt held each September on Grandparents Day.

We would be happy to sit down with a group of interested organizations and legislators to brain storm bill modifications that we can all live with.

Thanks again for the opportunity to provide Pheasants Forever testimony on this important bill. And, thanks for your interest in pheasants and pheasant hunting.