March 5, 2009

To: Senator Jim Esgar
Chairman, Agricultural, Natural Resources and Energy Committee

From; Eddie Kochman, eddiekochman@msn.com 303-457-1532

Please consider these two proposed amendments to SB 235 concerning reauthorization of the Colorado Wildlife Habitat Stamp. This consideration may include the need for additional analysis of past expenditures from stamp revenue, language in the existing legislation and the past allocation and expenditure of operating funds for access and habitat projects on all properties controlled by the Division of Wildlife.

Thank you.

Copied to all Members

March 5, 2009

Proposed amendments to Senate Bill 235, Reauthorization of Colorado Wildlife Habitat Stamp

Proposal 1: *The director will implement a statewide outreach effort designed to inform and encourage broad public participation in creating access and protection of wildlife habitat through allocations of stamp revenue. This outreach will include emphasis on creating access opportunities for youth to participate in angling and hunting opportunities, as well as enhancing and maintaining wildlife habitat.* Add to page 5, beginning after line 13.

Note: the term "public" is intended to include private landowners, federal and state agencies, cities, counties, municipalities, businesses, private organizations and others

Justification Both hunting and fishing participation continues to fall and poses the real risk that at some point in the future license revenue will no longer be adequate to support the operations of the Division of Wildlife. While efforts are being made on a number of levels to reverse this trend, success is marginal. Using a portion of stamp revenue to address this issue has great potential to create important youth opportunities, especially for youth in high population and metropolitan areas. While youth recruitment would be a primary objective, such access and habitat initiatives would also benefit adult anglers, hunters and others.

The position of the Division is that the option to make such requests already exists and to state it in the proposed reauthorization legislation is redundant. Yes the option does exist. My question is that why in the last four years has there has not been one dollar of stamp revenue allocated to an access or habitat projects within the immediate Denver-Metropolitan corridor? It is because of the lack of effective outreach, especially to cities, counties and municipalities, including others. The current Fishing Is Fun Program, which I helped administer for over 10 years, does allow such projects to be funded, but allocation of stamp revenue will expand opportunities, especially in these hard economic times.

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Proposed amendments to Senate Bill 235, reauthorization of Colorado Wildlife Habitat Stamp.

Proposal 2: line 10, page 6, habitat or access to wildlife habitat on lands *currently controlled for public access by the Division*, including costs associated with the operation and maintenance of lands under the Colorado Wildlife Habitat Protection Program administered by the Division.

Note: The proposed amendment would allow the Division the *option* to use stamp revenue on existing lands for the purpose of funding projects associated with improved access, protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat.

Justification: I believe there is a current and growing backlog of access and habitat projects on the total acreage of properties now under the control of the Division. This includes selected State Land Board lands. The exact amount of this backlog seems to be unknown. Apparently allocation of operating funds from wildlife cash and other sources is not adequate to effectively reduce this backlog, which will likely expand in the future. Some feel severance taxes may offer a solution. This is an issue similar to the need for expanded highway funding, but on a smaller scale. This issue is one reason there remains opposition against the Division acquiring new lands whether in fee title, or by other means. "Take care of what you have first" is the feeling of many.

It is my opinion that this issue was part of the early discussions that created the existing legislation that is subject to reauthorization. I am also of the opinion that the existing legislation *does not prohibit* the Division from using stamp revenue for projects that *benefit access and habitat on existing properties*. The Divison has chosen not to use stamp revenue for this purpose at any time in the past four years. The mandatory 60% stamp revenue expenditure for big game may have been a factor, as well as a belief they would be criticized by members of the Legislature and public who believed that operating funds in the overall budget should be the source to address the issue. If I am wrong, I stand to be corrected. I strongly support the option of using stamp revenue on properties obtained with stamp revenue, but other properties should also be an option.

Submitted by Eddie Kochman, eddiekochman@msn.com 303-457-153