



**House  
Legislative  
Analysis  
Section**

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## CHECK-OFFS FOR ANTI-POACHING PROGRAMS

House Bill 5628 as introduced  
First Analysis (4-9-90)

**RECEIVED**

**MAY 16 1990**

Sponsor: Rep. Roland G. Niederstadt  
Committee: Tourism, Fisheries & Wildlife

### **THE APPARENT PROBLEM:**

Michigan has one of the most comprehensive anti-poaching programs in the nation. According to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the 800 hotline number to report poaching receives 10,000 calls per year, which is the highest number of calls to an anti-poaching program in the United States. The Wildlife Resource Protection Fund is used to fund anti-poaching programs and rewards for information leading to the arrest of poachers. Some people have voiced concerns to legislators and the department about the programs and their effectiveness. Some feel that the department should respond more quickly to reports about problems concerning poaching and should initiate more investigations. In addition, they feel that the educational instruction provided about the anti-poaching programs is outdated. However, the people that have complained about the program have also noted that the department is operating under tight financial constraints. These people have proposed that a donation check-off on hunting and fishing licenses and stamps would provide them with a convenient means of contributing to the fund in order to provide money to help implement the enhancement of the program.

Sometimes, because of fiscal constraints, emergencies, or other problems, money that is designated to a fund is used for purposes other than those for which the fund was intended. Some people are concerned that money in the Wildlife Resource Protection Fund may not be used for the purposes for which the fund is intended. Although no specific examples of abuse have been reported, some believe that transferring the fund from the DNR to the Department of Treasury would help ensure the integrity of the fund.

### **THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:**

The revenue credited to Wildlife Resource Protection Fund is used for anti-poaching programs and rewards for information leading to the arrest of poachers. Under the bill, a person could make a voluntary contribution to the fund in any amount at the time the person purchased a license or stamp under the Hunting and Fishing License Act. The bill would amend the act to provide that applications for a license or stamp include a check-off box for contributing to the Wildlife Resource Protection Fund. A person who wished to make a contribution would indicate that intention by marking the designated box with the amount of the contribution and making payment to the vendor issuing the license or stamp.

Currently, the fund exists within the Department of Natural Resources. The bill would transfer the fund from the department to the state treasury and require the treasurer to credit money received from the department to the Wildlife Resource Protection Fund.

MCL 316.501 and 316.604

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The Department of Natural Resources expects that the bill would result in an increase in revenue to the fund, but the exact amount of the increase cannot be determined at this time. (4-5-90)

### **ARGUMENTS:**

#### **For:**

Michigan's anti-poaching programs are among the best in the U.S. However, some of the programs could use improvement, such as the updating of the educational programs and the addition of officers to shifts for answering the 800 poaching hotline number. According to the DNR, 35 cents from the sale of each hunting and fishing license and stamp is allocated to the Wildlife Resource Protection Fund. The bill would provide citizens with a convenient means of donating more money to the fund.

#### **For:**

During fiscal years when the amount of revenue generated is low, funds are sometimes used for purposes other than those for which they were intended. Transferring a fund to a department that does not administer the programs for which the fund is intended may help to ensure that the fund will be used as it is supposed to be used and to ensure accountability concerning the use of the fund, because the administering department does not directly benefit from money appropriated to the fund. The bill will help to ensure the integrity of the Wildlife Resource Protection Fund by transferring the fund from the DNR to the Department of Treasury.

**Response:** The DNR does not feel that the fund has, in any way, been abused or used for purposes other than those for which it was intended. In addition, the department notes that there are several provisions within the Hunting and Fishing License Act that specify how the fund is to be used. Further, the act also requires the director of the department to annually report to the legislature about expenditures from the fund.

### **POSITIONS:**

The Department of Natural Resources supports the bill. (4-5-90)

The Michigan United Conservation Clubs supports the bill. (4-5-90)

H.B. 5628 (4-9-90)