

**U.S. House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, & Fisheries  
Hearing: Electronic Duck Stamp Legislative Hearing, May 10th, 2023– 10am EST**

**Written Testimony of Bryan McClinton, Undersecretary, Louisiana Department  
of Wildlife and Fisheries**

Chairman Bentz, Ranking Member Huffman, and members of the subcommittee. My name is Bryan McClinton, and I am the Undersecretary for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf of our customers and constituents, the hundreds of thousands of sportsmen and women of Louisiana. I also thank the Chairman and Ranking Member for the invitation to be here today to share the view of State Fish and Wildlife Agencies regarding H.R. 2872, which would amend the Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2013. This bill will allow states to use the most current technology to improve the user experience while maintaining the conservation legacy of the federal duck stamp program.

For a little bit of background, in the early 1930's our country experienced our most devastating drought in history, not only wreaking havoc on our nation's Midwest farmers and ranchers but also turning vital wetlands into barren wastelands and decimating waterfowl populations. Fortunately, waterfowl hunters rallied behind the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, which created what is commonly known as the "Federal Duck Stamp". Signed into law by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1934, the duck stamp provided a crucial, permanent source of funding for purchasing and restoring wetlands across the country. With the proceeds from this stamp, we began to turn the tide in favor of waterfowl conservation, along with the invaluable benefits that healthy wetlands provide for the nation. Since that first stamp, sales have raised more than \$950 million to help filter surface and ground water, aid in flood control, reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities for both waterfowl hunters and the general public.

I know some of you are familiar with the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, which among other tenants, holds our fish and wildlife in public trust, ensures that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in hunting and fishing, and that fish and wildlife conservation must be based on sound science. What is perhaps lesser appreciated is that the model is primarily

supported by hunters and anglers through what is known as the American System of Conservation Funding. Hunting and fishing license sales, and various permits and stamps, including the Federal Duck Stamp, combined with excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, archery equipment, fishing tackle, trolling motors, and motorboat and small engine fuels, provides the bulk of funding for state fish and wildlife agencies. This system of funding is unlike any other program in the world and is the primary source of fish and wildlife conservation funding in the country. It is a “user pay – public benefit” system, and since the inception of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, has been funded and supported by our licensed hunters and anglers to the benefit of all Louisianans who enjoy our abundant fish and wildlife resources. Our dedicated hunters and anglers believe in this proven model, gladly bear the financial burden for fish and wildlife conservation, and remain the reason we are still here today.

This legislation is our opportunity to do something for them. Technology has improved the ability of hunters and anglers to have success in the field or water. It stands to reason that we should use technology to improve their licensing experience, as well.

In Louisiana, we have been early adopters of electronic hunting and fishing licenses. We accept electronic offshore permits for fishing. We even allow electronic tagging or harvest reporting for deer and turkey. Louisiana hunters and anglers have appreciated the convenience and utility of this new technology. We have maximized our ability to offer electronic licensing under our jurisdiction. However, the one item that we cannot offer our hunters under current law is a Federal Duck Stamp, valid for the entire waterfowl season.

Louisiana is proud to be part of the pilot program, We implemented an electronic federal duck stamp system in 2014. It is administered by state fish and wildlife agencies, valid for 45 days, or until the actual stamp is received by mail. The law maintained the requirement, that once the individual receives their actual federal duck stamp, they were to physically sign it across the face with an ink pen and keep it on their person.

HR 2872 will extend this 45-day period through the end of the waterfowl hunting season. A state will be able to incorporate their issued federal duck stamp into their own secure online electronic applications or platforms, which will streamline

the customer experience. For Louisiana, this means the hunter will possess all the required licenses, stamps, and permits on their smartphone. It also allows the physical stamp to be delivered to an individual after the season is closed. Why is this important? This means all waterfowl hunters and stamp collectors would still receive their actual federal duck stamp in the mail, thereby maintaining the artistic integrity of the federal duck stamp. As many of you know, the duck stamp art contest is one of the oldest and absolutely the most unique conservation art contests in the United States. Therefore, this legislation allows the contest and its rich heritage to remain strong.

The proposed legislation before you provides a voluntary opportunity for states, not a unilateral requirement. According to a 2022 report by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 44 of 49 states that allow waterfowl hunting (Hawaii being the exception) provide a means for electronic self-purchasing of licenses, and 42 of 49 states allow either digital or physical proof of licensure<sup>1</sup>. While a majority of states do offer an electronic stamp option, states who do not wish to offer the electronic version of the stamp are not compelled to do so. For states that offer an electronic duck stamp, hunters can still acquire an actual stamp. Therefore, this legislation preserves the value of a physical stamp and the art that helped secure the wetland conservation success of the program while offering the hunter a convenient, electronic version when going into the field.

On a final note, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, all four Flyways Councils, Delta Waterfowl Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation support this legislation. I am here to represent Louisiana, but the benefits of this legislation will extend beyond our sportspeople. This will serve as a sincere thank you to all American waterfowlers, who have always supported conservation.

Once again, I deeply appreciate the opportunity to provide our perspective on this simple but important legislation. We look forward to working with the Committee and our partners as this bill moves forward.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the opportunity to speak in support of this bill, and I welcome any questions.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/3216/6333/2968/Duck\\_Stamp\\_Report\\_Final\\_2-28-22.pdf](https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/3216/6333/2968/Duck_Stamp_Report_Final_2-28-22.pdf)