



Fast Facts

One out of every six Georgians hunt or fish contributing to job creation, supporting local economies and contributing to the local tax base.

Every \$1 invested in wildlife management by the State of Georgia results in a \$40 benefit generated in economic activity.

Annual spending by Georgia sportsmen is more than the combined cash receipts for cotton, greenhouse/nursery, eggs, and cattle – four of the top agricultural commodities in the state (\$1.8 billion vs. \$1.67 billion).

Per the 2007 Georgia Farm Gate Value Report, deer hunting leases alone rank 17th out of 61 farm values, not counting government payments or crop insurance, ranking higher in farm value than sweet corn, tobacco, wheat, peaches and soybeans.

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Keep Budget Fair to Sportsmen

What's at Stake?

Georgia's 1.1 million hunters and anglers spend \$5 million a day on their sport. Their annual spending totals upwards of \$1.8 billion. Sportsmen support as many jobs in Georgia as Delta Airlines and Hewlett Packard, two of the largest employers in the state, combined (31,000 jobs).

Our state is also the number one sporting destination in the nation for out-of-state hunters. Over 136,000 hunters visit Georgia annually to enjoy the hunting opportunities supported by a well-managed professional wildlife agency. Many of these are in jeopardy due to state budget cuts.

Proposed budget cuts by the Governor and legislative leadership include closure of one out of every five Wildlife Management Areas, closure of one of the three state trout hatcheries, elimination of 28 Wildlife Ranger positions and other cuts that will have a negative impact on sportsmen's programs.

Challenges

Because of state revenue shortfalls, budget cuts are necessary to balance the state budget. However, the Georgia Wildlife Resource Division (WRD) has experienced budget cuts for the last six years even during the good economic times and have very little left to cut. The budget cuts proposed this year are extremely damaging. The challenge is helping others understand that WRD is bringing in new revenue that will exceed the budget cut proposals.

In 1987, a hunting and fishing license increase generated \$4.5 million annually. These funds were used to purchase land. Twenty-year bonds worth \$30 million were sold to purchase the land, and were paid off in 2007, resulting in \$4.5 million in unobligated funds flowing annually into the state's general fund. In 2009, a new hunting and fishing license system will be operated by a private vendor. This was the result of outsourcing of state functions. This change resulted in an increase of \$800,000 in new revenue as well as state savings of \$300,000 by eliminating the license unit. In addition, the reciprocal hunting and fishing license agreement with Florida was terminated in June of 2008, which will result in well over a \$500,000 increase in out-of-state license sales. These changes total a \$6.1 million annual increase in revenue.

Next Steps

Rather than accepting across-the-board budget cuts, legislators should consider maintaining funding for sportsmen's and wildlife management programs. The General Assembly should consider developing a mechanism providing permanent funding to the state wildlife agency in order to avoid future budgetary cuts and shortfalls.