



# CINDI DUCHOW

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Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage  
Public Hearing, AB 414  
October 23, 2019

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 414, relating to the fee for a first-time annual fishing license for residents who are 16 or 17 years old or who are 65 years old or older.

The 2011 Wisconsin Act 168 created a first-time license discount of \$5.00 (\$4.25 plus a \$.75 issuance fee) to recruit new anglers in Wisconsin. However, the bill unintentionally excluded 16 and 17 year olds and individuals 65 and older from the \$5.00 fishing fee.

Currently, these two age groups are eligible for a reduced annual license fee of \$7.00. This \$2 difference, while seemingly insignificant, was brought to our attention by a resident of the 99<sup>th</sup> District. She was unable to secure the \$5.00 fee for her daughter. For the sake of uniformity and to further incentivize first-time fisherman in Wisconsin, AB 414 would lower the first-time, eligible license fees for 16 and 17 year olds and those 65 and older to \$5.00.

It is my hope that the Committee support AB 414 to encourage individuals of all ages, young and old, to enjoy Wisconsin's lakes and take part in the tradition of fishing in Wisconsin.

Thank you Committee members for your time and consideration of Assembly Bill 414. I am happy to answer any questions you have.

**STATE SENATOR KATHY BERNIER**  
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**From: Senator Kathy Bernier**

**To: Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage**

**Re: Testimony on Assembly Bill 414**  
Relating to: the fee for a first-time annual fishing license for residents who are 16 or 17 years old or who are 65 years old or older.

**Date: October 23, 2019**

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for hearing Assembly Bill 414, a technical fix that would grant discounted first-time fishing licenses to teens and senior citizens who are currently excluded from the state discounts for new license holders.

In 2011, Wisconsin Act 168 established a number of programs and changes within the Department of Natural Resources to help recruit and retain the next generation of hunters and anglers. The changes included a discount for anyone purchasing a fishing license for the first time. However, a statutory cross reference within the bill unintentionally excluded residents who are 16 or 17 years old or over the age of 65 from getting this discount. As a result, today, a first-time fishing license costs \$5.00 for the general public, but \$7.00 for those who are 16, 17, or over the age of 65. Assembly Bill 414 corrects this error by making first-time fishing licenses available to any resident for just \$5.00.

I hope you'll join me in supporting our continued efforts to encourage people of all ages to get outside and enjoy Wisconsin's abundant natural resources. Please vote in favor of Assembly Bill 414.

**Thank you, Chairman and members of the Committee for allowing me to testify today.**

**I am a resident of the village of Merton. My daughter Jenna (who is now in college and unable to attend today) was taking a high school gym class in the summer of 2017 and was asked to obtain a fishing license for the class. Jenna was 16 at the time. I went to the Wisconsin DNR website and attempted to purchase a first time fishing license for Jenna. On the website, we entered Jenna's information and discovered that there was no link for the \$5 first time fishing license. I contacted the DNR's customer service by email and was told by the representative that 16 and 17 year old state residents already are given a "discounted license fee" of \$7 for the junior fishing license and therefore, did not qualify for the first time license fee of \$5. The representative mentioned that I should contact my legislator if I had any questions. And that is what I did- I contacted Representative Duchow and told her about our experience.**

**I am wondering if there is a particular reason why our 16 and 17 year old state residents have to pay an additional \$2 fee even if they are obtaining a fishing license for the first time. If my daughter had been 18, she would have qualified for the \$5 fee.**

**I was willing to pay the additional \$2 to get Jenna the license she needed, but in principal wanted to bring this inequality to your attention. Our teens are the very people that we should be encouraging to apply for licenses. They are the future sports enthusiasts that the DNR will need to maintain revenue. Teen citizens should not be penalized or expected to pay higher fees when they apply for a first time license.**

**I am grateful to Representative Duchow for investigating the matter further and sponsoring legislation that would address and correct this issue. As a parent and citizen, I wholeheartedly urge you to support this measure AB-414.**

**Thank you very much for your time and dedication!**

**Mrs. Tracy Auton**



October 23, 2019

RE: *Wisconsin TU supports AB 414 – a reduced Fishing License fee for 1<sup>st</sup> time buyers*

Members of the Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage:

My name is Mike Kuhr, I live in Monona, where I'm a husband, father, small business owner, and volunteer for Wisconsin Trout Unlimited. I currently serve as our State Council Chair. Trout Unlimited is our Nation's leading cold water conservation organization. Here in Wisconsin, we're home to over 5,200 members and 21 local chapters. I'm here to express our organizations support for AB414, which would reduce the fishing license fee for 1<sup>st</sup> time buyers.

In the last year, our members have volunteered over 50,000 hours of their time working on local trout habitat restoration projects, angler education and outreach, and coldwater advocacy. We're passionate about fishing in general and trout in particular. But we realize that our passion is not representative of the general public as a whole. AB 414 aims to make it a little bit easier for those casual anglers to come back into the sport.

Those of us in the hunting and fishing community are well aware of the fact that we're directly supporting the work of fish and wildlife departments around the country through various sporting goods taxes and user fees. These fees also contribute greatly to the conservation work taking place to ensure quality hunting and fishing opportunities abound now and into the future. This system has served us well, spreading out minimal costs among a large swath of users. Many fear the systems weakness – a potential decline in the number of future hunters and anglers.

To combat this, the sporting community has started developing R3 programs aimed at recruiting, retaining, and reactivating hunters and anglers. We believe AB 414 will help recruit more young anglers and reactivate some older ones. It'll be up to us to ensure they have a positive experience while on the water and retain them as anglers in future years.

*The Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited ("WITU") is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization which consists of approximately 5,200 volunteer members in 21 chapters in Wisconsin working to ensure that future generations have access to cold, clean, fishable water. Last year, WITU and its Chapters reported over 50,800 volunteer hours, working on 83 conservation projects, 91 youth education events, and operating 3 veterans service programs at the VA hospitals in Milwaukee, Madison, and Green Bay.*



The Outdoor Industry Association recently released its "2019 Special Report On Fishing". Across the country, over 49 million anglers wet a line in 2018. That's over 16% of the US population. And 3 million of those were new anglers participating for the first time. The most popular reason for giving fishing a try was "a friend or relative took me" (36%). AB 414 will make it easier for us current anglers to get more teenagers and seniors out enjoying time on the water.

Wisconsin Trout Unlimited asks for your support of AB 414 so that we can continue to leave a legacy of great fishing in Wisconsin for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to public service.

Sincerely,

Mike Kuhr  
Wisconsin Trout Unlimited  
State Council Chair  
[mikek.trout@yahoo.com](mailto:mikek.trout@yahoo.com)  
(414) 588-4281

The Outdoor Industry Associations "2019 Special Report on Fishing" can be viewed here:  
<https://outdoorindustry.org/resource/2019-special-report-fishing/>

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## Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage

### *2019 Assembly Bill 414*

*First-time annual fishing license fee for residents 16 or 17 years old or 65 years or older  
October 23, 2019*

Good morning Chairman Stafsholt and Committee members. My name is Linda Olver and I am the Policy Advisor in the Bureau of Customer and Outreach Services with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Thank you for the opportunity to testify for informational purposes on Assembly Bill 414 (AB 414), which extends a reduced first-time buyer license fee to annual fishing licenses sold to resident youth aged 16-17 years and to resident seniors aged 65 years or older.

Discounted first-time buyer license fees were added to statute via 2011 Wisconsin Act 168 and became effective in April 2012. Resident fishing licenses issued to the junior and senior age groups, however, were not specified as eligible for the first-time buyer fee. AB 414 decreases the current \$6.25 annual fishing license fee for 16 and 17 year-olds, and senior citizens 65 and older by \$2.00, down to the first time buyer fee of \$4.25 if the annual fishing license is issued to a resident who has not received that type of approval, or been conferred the privileges of that type of approval, in any of the ten years preceding the date of application.

Based upon 2018 license year data, 30,441 residents 16 and 17 years of age and 2,109 resident seniors 65 year of age and older would be newly eligible for the first-time buyer fee, resulting in \$65,100 in annual revenue decrease to the Fish and Wildlife Account. This estimated annual revenue decrease is 0.18% of the approximately \$37 million of annual fish-related revenue.

To implement the provisions of this bill, the department anticipates a modest one-time cost of approximately \$4,000 to update web pages and other informational materials, develop and provide training to license agents and Customer Service Representatives, and modify the automated license issuance system.

While there will be one-time implementation costs and a slight annual revenue decrease to the Fish and Wildlife Account, this bill rectifies an inconsistency in new buyer pricing for 16-17 year-olds and those 65 and over. AB 414 provides common sense clarity to new buyer pricing, will likely provide a more positive license buying experience for resident anglers and eliminate some common customer confusion.

I hope you find this information helpful as you consider AB 414. I am happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this proposal.