



Arizona Wildlife Federation
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Arizona Wildlife Federation Position Statement on HB 2072

The Arizona Wildlife Federation (AWF), a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation was founded in 1923 to take politics out of Arizona's Game and Fish Management and to promote the management of Arizona's wildlife and natural resources based on the principles of "Sound Science". The AWF got its start as the Arizona Game Protection Association and will celebrate 90 years of Arizona conservation activity in 2013.

The AWF has been following HB 2072 *sale of big game tags* closely since its introduction in the 2012 Legislative Session by Representative Jerry Weiers and offers the following analysis:

HB 2072 attempts to create a winner by propping up a singular organization using public resources under the guise of making additional revenues for wildlife. The bill privatizes wildlife, treating it as a commodity for sale on the open market to the highest bidder with the revenue being managed and spent by an unaccountable non-public organization.

HB 2072 mandates that the Arizona Game and Fish Department give big game tags to a specific organization, tags that currently may take an individual hunter 10 plus years to draw. The bill defines this "qualified organization," so narrowly crafted as to exclude the vast majority of Arizona non-profits and nearly all of Arizona's wildlife and sportsmen organizations even if amended as proposed. This organization or any others propped up by this new found government commodity are in direct conflict with Arizona's constitutional gift clause which states:

"Neither the state, nor any county, city, town, municipality, or other subdivision of the state shall ever give or loan its credit in the aid of, or make any donation or grant, by subsidy or otherwise, to any individual, association, or corporation, or become a subscriber to, or a shareholder in, any company or corporation, or become a joint owner with any person, company, or corporation, except as to such ownerships as may accrue to the state by operation or provision of law or as authorized by law solely for investment of the monies in the various funds of the state."

HB 2072 proposes to pay private parties fees for accessing private lands which will virtually ensure that every private landowner has an incentive to close their lands except for payment once the smell of money is in the air. This bill privatizes a portion of Arizona's public wildlife resource and gifts this revenue to specific organization(s) while directly decreasing the average hunter's ability to purchase tags through the time-tested 70 year old fair draw system. It would permit using the sale of a public resource to provide funding for political lobbying and public relations in support of non-publicly vetted agendas.

While the anticipation of reaping additional revenue for Arizona's wildlife through raffles and auctions sounds appealing, the tenets of HB 2072 are antithetical to the current Arizona Game and Fish Commission form of professional wildlife management. It is clearly attempting to manage hunting and

wildlife policies through the legislature instead of utilizing the Commission forum of public process that was established for that purpose. Appeals to the legislature to over-ride the Commission should be reserved for rare cases when someone feels the Commission has gone off the rails. To that point, an omnibus resolution adopted by the AWF in 1996 is currently apropos and speaks directly to the attempt by HB 2072 to directly diminish the Commission's ARS Title 17 authority:

(74) RELATIVE TO THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF ESTABLISHING A NON-POLITICAL CITIZENS' COMMISSION AUTHORITY OVER STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES -- the Arizona Wildlife Federation encourages all states not currently doing so to implement a citizen's fish and wildlife commission structure to manage all wildlife resources for sustainability, recreational use and commercial harvest (where appropriate); and that the commission be composed of broad-based volunteer representatives concerned with wildlife management appointed to overlapping 4-6 year terms by the Governor of the State; and that the commission be responsible for appointing the Director(s) of the State Fish and Wildlife Agency(s), to approve all commission staff personnel and to approve all budgets for the Fish and Wildlife Agencies; and that the Commission be allowed to operate as a non-political public body. (#2-1996)

To his credit, Representative Weiers has notified sportsmen organizations across the state that because of input and concern about this proposal he will not be moving the bill forward. This is a testament to the watchful eye of sportsmen's organizations that hold their elected politicians accountable. The continued efforts by a minority single-minded organization to give HB 2072 a second life in the 2012 Legislative session while claiming broad based sportsman support does not represent the wishes of the AWF Board or our membership.

By completely ignoring the Arizona Game and Fish Commission process and taking wildlife policy straight to the legislature, the door is then open to everyone to behave in the same fashion. The Arizona Game and Fish Commission and its professional wildlife and administrative staff are currently what tethers Arizona's wildlife policy to sound science, rationality and best governance. The AWF believes that sound science and best governance principles for Arizona's wildlife resources must be rigorously observed by all parties of honest motivation and persuasion.

The AWF rejects all tenets of HB 2072 in its current or any amended form. This endeavor needs to cease and the sponsors told **NO!** Arizona's wildlife is not for sale for your organizations personal benefit under the guise of increased revenues for wildlife. This single-minded group has caused Arizona's wildlife to become a political football between the Executive Branch, the legislature and various wildlife groups and stakeholders. This is very sad testimony and unreflective of the honest, transparent, fundamental cultural values shared by the vast majority of Arizona's wildlife/natural resource community.