



Idaho Sportsmen's Caucus Advisory Council

PO Box 7652 • Boise, Idaho 83707 • www.idahoscac.org

Purpose

To protect and improve Idaho's wildlife heritage of hunting, fishing, and trapping, for present and future generations by:

Providing an organization where Idaho's sportsmen's organizations can come together to seek consensus on issues important to sportsmen.

Providing education to the Idaho sportsmen's organizations, the Idaho Legislature and other governmental entities on sportsmen's issues.

Being an information resource to the Legislature and other governmental entities on issues, legislation and rules affecting Idaho's wildlife heritage of hunting, fishing and trapping.

Member Organizations

Ada Co. Fish & Game League
Backcountry Horsemen of Idaho
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Idaho Chapters Safari Club Int.
Idaho Conservation Officers Ass.
Idaho Falconers Association
Idaho Houndsmen Association
Idaho Hunters Education Ass.
Idaho Poachers Club
Idaho Rifle & Pistol Association
Idaho Rivers United
Idaho State Bowhunters
Idaho Steelhead & Salmon Unl.
Idaho Traditional Bowhunters
Idaho Trappers Association
Idaho Trout Unlimited
Idaho Waterfowl Association
Idaho Wildlife Federation
Landowners & Sportsmen United
National Wild Turkey Federation
Pheasants Forever
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Snake River Cutthroats
The Idaho Bass Federation
Wild Sheep Foundation

February, 16, 2012

To: All Idaho House and Senate Representatives, Governor Butch Otter, IDFG Director Virgil Moore and Idaho Fish and Game Commissioners

Reference: Senate Bill S1283

To whom it may concern,

The Idaho Sportsmen's Caucus Advisory Council (ISCAC) opposes the sale of Idaho Fish and Game Landowner Appreciation Permits. This position was supported unanimously at the February 1st. ISCAC meeting held in Boise. To understand sportsman's rationale on this position an understanding of ISCAC is necessary.

With a Sportsmen's Caucus in place in the Idaho Legislature it is sportsmen's responsibility to be an effective, balanced, and long-lived support and advisory group to that caucus. Their role is to know when legislation is introduced, research its impacts, gauge the sportsmen's position(s) on it, determine a consensus position on it, and provide data supporting that position to the Caucus members in both houses before the debate is scheduled. In March of 2005 twenty founding sportsmen's organizations adopted the bylaws, elected officers and officially formed the Idaho Sportsmen's Caucus Advisory Council. Forming this group has helped Idaho sportsmen gain a voice and serious influence in conservation issues that affect Idaho's wildlife. It is our responsibility to deal with issues with restraint, resolve and to always form positions based on the best science available and with the long-term welfare of wildlife in mind. United with other state caucuses around the country we help present a united front against anti-hunting nonsense, habitat destruction and against bad-science game management programs that represent special interests detrimental to wildlife.

It is clear that Senate Bill S1283 has been introduced into the Senate Resources and Environment committee with a self-serving intent by

Senator Jeff W. Siddoway. If S1283 is passed into law, Senator Siddoway has a substantial monetary potential gain. This law, if passed, would sell the public's wildlife to the highest bidder.

ISCAC members believe that Idaho's public wildlife are not to be bought, sold, or diverted in any way to private interests. ISCAC believes in the intent of the LAP Permit system that IDFG established many years ago. We do not feel this program should be altered at the whim of politics. This program should only be changed after the IDFG commission has analyzed, debated and vetted those changes in open public meetings. Then, if needed, this legislation should be presented and debated at the State House.

Senator Siddoway, as a committee member, has the authority to introduce potential legislation to the Senate Resource and Environment committee. However he breached the public trust when he did not recuse himself from voting on any such proposed legislation because of his personal conflict of interest.

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ISCAC supports the IDFG rationale for not supporting S1283, see attached document.

Senate Bill S1283 is a bad bill for the reasons stated. Senator Siddoway's position and actions on this bill to date are not in the best interest of the wildlife resource or the citizens of Idaho.

The Idaho Sportsmen's Caucus Advisory Council (ISCAC) opposes the sale of Idaho Fish and Game Landowner Appreciation Permits and urges this bill to be killed and Senator Siddoway's actions be brought to the forefront for judging and action if necessary by the Senate leadership.

Sincerely,

Mark

Mark Bell, ISCAC President

Attachment: Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) rationale for not supporting Senate Bill 1283



Idaho Fish and Game Commission

600 South Walnut • P.O. Box 25 • Boise, Idaho 83707-0025 • 208-334-3700

Dear Senators:

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission opposes Senate Bill 1283. This bill creates new public policy allowing landowners to sell their Landowner Appreciation Program tag (LAP) tag to the highest bidder. We respectfully request you reject Senate Bill 1283.

Our rationale for not supporting Senate Bill 1283:

The LAP tag program originated as acknowledgement of wildlife benefits provided by private property/landowners. The tag is a mechanism to allow larger acreage landowners the opportunity to hunt both on their private property and public land when their private property was in controlled hunt areas. The LAP tag is a "draw tag" specifically for a pool of eligible landowners so draw odds are often better than for sportsmen in regular controlled hunts. The LAP tag was never meant to provide direct financial gain for a landowner by allowing landowners to sell their hunting opportunity.

The Commission recognizes and fully supports a private property owner's right to manage access to their land, including the ability to charge a fee for access. This legal mechanism allows landowners to financially benefit from their private property access rights without selling LAP tags. This is the basis of the Department's *Access Yes* program, a financial contract with willing landowners to provide property access.

The Commission fully recognizes that public wildlife causes private property damage but the LAP tag is not the proper or necessary mechanism to compensate landowners for crop depredation by wildlife via sale of a LAP tag. The State of Idaho and sportsman's license dollars already fund a specific program that provides compensation for crop damage by wildlife. In fact, sale of LAP tags may exacerbate compensation claims because landowners would have incentive to disallow depredation hunts on their property to increase value of their LAP tag for exclusive hunting opportunity. This incentive could result in one landowner providing safe harbor for wildlife for hunting that then depredates on a neighbor's crops, already a growing concern in parts of Idaho. To be eligible for depredation compensation, landowners must allow reasonable access for hunting, unless it impacts their operation.

The LAP tag is not limited to a landowner's property but is valid for the entire controlled hunt area. This is in recognition of wildlife benefit from private property and landowners but wildlife may not be on the property for landowner access during hunting season. However, with LAP tag sale, landowners would also be selling hunting opportunity on public land, especially in cases where the tag purchaser is prohibited access to the landowner's property.

Money generated from the sale of LAP tags would benefit private landowners without commensurate benefit to the wildlife resource (on or off of private property) for which the LAP tag is issued. Sale of LAP tags may further erode sportsman and landowner partnerships to uphold hunting access to wildlife as a public trust resource. Landowners that currently participate in the *Access Yes* program may decide there is more money in closing off existing access to their private land and selling their LAP tag for exclusive hunting, a detriment to Idaho sportsmen. Landowners that still freely allow sportsman access may also be financially incentivized to restrict free access to provide more exclusive hunting opportunity. We foresee increasing pressure for the Fish and Game Commission to manage wildlife in a manner to benefit private financial gain, such as emphasis on trophy animals, rather than managing wildlife as a public trust resource.

Many of the LAP tags are in coveted controlled hunts that may take a sportsman a lifetime to draw. Landowners may begin to expect to always get a tag to sell yet sportsmen must participate in a democratic process to draw a similar tag.

Senate Bill 1283 is contrary to the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation and its tenet of democracy of hunting and the public trust doctrine. The Fish and Game Commission has heard from many sportsmen across the state that do not support Senate Bill 1283 and will be very dissatisfied with its passage.

The Commission recognizes strong partnership with private landowners and upholding healthy, working landscapes is absolutely necessary to fully achieve wildlife benefits for sportsman and all Idaho citizens. The Commission believes that allowing the private sale of LAP tags is inconsistent with this partnership. The Commission feels this bill compromises and undermines the Commission's authority and ability to deal with difficult wildlife management and access issues.