

**TESTIMONY OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 1127**

**“Resolve, Directing the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to Create a Process for Real-Time Confirmation of Live Bait Retailer’s Licenses by Electronic means.”**

**Presented by Senator RENY of Lincoln.**

**DATE OF HEARING: April 19, 2023**

Good afternoon Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Francis Brautigam, Fisheries Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to **L.D. 1127**.

This bill directs the Department to create a process which would allow a Live Bait Retailer’s license to be issued online in real time as we do with many other licenses, permits, and registrations issued by the Department.

There are 3 different licenses involved with the taking and selling of live baitfish and smelts. In talking with the bill’s sponsor, the Department has determined that all 3 of these licenses are requested to be offered for sale online in real-time. A Live Bait Retailer’s license allows a person to sell both live smelts and baitfish. A Baitfish Wholesaler’s license allows a person to take and sell live baitfish. A Smelt Wholesalers license allows a person to take and sell live smelts. Many folks have more than one of these licenses and some have all 3. In 2022, a total of 507 licenses were sold to 387 different people.

Both Baitfish Wholesalers and Smelt Wholesalers are required to report information on their baitfish/smelt catch each year before a new license is issued for the following year. This reporting requirement makes the online, real-time issuance of these licenses problematic. No other licenses, permits, or registrations that are offered online in-real time are contingent upon receipt of a harvest report.

The Department is in favor of the concept of allowing as many licenses, permits, and registrations to be done online in real time as possible. The Department undertakes projects each year to expand online offerings. Our priorities are always to do those projects which impact the largest number of customers, unless directed differently by the legislature.

The Department is opposed to developing a process for selling baitfish licenses online at this time for two reasons. The first reason is that these are low volume licenses that will benefit relatively few people compared to other projects we are working on such as the self-registration of turkeys. The second reason is the yearly reporting requirement for these licenses. As stated previously, there are no other licenses, permits, or registrations currently done online that have reporting requirements. In order to implement a smooth and efficient process for issuing these licenses online, we would also need to develop an online real time Reporting Application that interfaces directly to our licensing system. This

can certainly be done but it is not a priority for us at this time unless you make it one. We could not handle this project with existing resources and funding without giving up another project.

In conclusion, while the Department is supportive of moving as many licenses, permits, and registrations online as possible, we cannot support this proposed legislation at this time.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session. Bill Swan, our Director of licensing will also be available at the work session.