



MICHIGAN UNITED CONSERVATION CLUBS

P.O. Box 30235, Lansing, MI 48909 | PH: 517.371.1041 | FAX: 517.371.1505 | www.mucc.org

March 9, 2017

Dear Michigan Legislator,

Michigan United Conservation Clubs believes that natural resources management – including hunting, fishing and trapping - is essential to the health of the state's ecosystem, our residents' high quality of life and the health of our economy. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in 2011 hunters, trappers, and anglers spent almost \$4.8 billion in Michigan alone, and \$90 billion nationwide. The sportsmen and women of the state *are* economic drivers.

Wildlife disease, particularly Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) in white-tailed deer, threaten our outdoor heritage in Michigan. The implementation of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's (MDARD) responsibilities under the State of Michigan's CWD response plan and enforcement of existing regulations on privately-owned cervid facilities (deer farms) in Michigan are critical to protecting our wild deer herd from biosecurity concerns from these facilities. The recent case of CWD connected with a Mecosta County deer facility highlights the need to properly resource the agencies involved and ensure accountability and transparency for the use of these public funds.

As you look towards the upcoming budget negotiations for the Michigan Fiscal Year 2017-2018, we expect that you will leverage the substantial investment that hunters, anglers, and trappers make by enhancing key General Fund contributions contained in the budget for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, which are intended to protect wildlife as well as livestock.

Specifically, MUCC's high priority General Fund/General Purpose funding requests for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development FY 2018 Budget (Sec 105-Animal Industry) is as follows:

- Amend the "Indemnification-Wildlife Depredation" line item to be broader (Indemnification-Wildlife Depredation and Disease Depopulation) and include additional funding for indemnification for livestock disease depopulation. Increase this budget to allocate at least \$150,000 GF/GP. In FY 2016, MDARD expended \$40,645 GF/GP in wildlife depredation payments to 22 producers and in FY 2015 (the most recent public data available), MDARD expended \$59,998.00 to 33 producers for 154 animals that were depopulated due to disease issues. With CWD on the horizon in a captive deer facility, this is expected to increase.
- Create a new line item for Bovine TB surveillance and control. Currently there is no dedicated funding line item for these expenses which makes it difficult to track the level of funding and effort expended. As past history has shown, there will continue to be a livestock, wildlife, and public health need to monitor and control Bovine TB.
- Create a new boilerplate section to require an annual report on "Oversight and Compliance of Cervidae Livestock Facilities". Currently there is no dedicated funding line item for these expenses which makes it difficult to track the level of funding and effort expended. There has been concern that many facilities are out of compliance with basic regulatory requirements and it has been suggested that there is inadequate funding for oversight and enforcement, but this is not documented. Proper oversight and enforcement of existing regulations and disease testing

requirements, quarantines, and investigating disease outbreaks is necessary to protect both livestock and wildlife.

- Retain Sec. 453 boilerplate language that requires MDARD to report on the “The person to whom the indemnification was paid”. Additionally, MUCC recommends prohibiting indemnification from being paid to any producer who was not in compliance with statute and rules authorized under the Animal Industry Act 466 of 1988 and Privately Owned Cervidae Producers Marketing Act 190 of 2000 at the time of the disease discovery.

Hunters, anglers and trappers in Michigan contribute more than \$80 million of their own money through license fees to fisheries and wildlife management, along with the enforcement of these regulations. We hope that you will consider our small request of \$100 thousand in General Fund and additional transparency and accountability to continue to protect this investment and protect our outdoor heritage.

Sincerely,

Amy Trotter, Deputy Director