

The Environmental Resources Network (TERN)

Position statement on the pricing of wildlife specialty license plates Used to fund the Nongame Conservation Section Of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources

In May of 2010 the State changed the fee structure and revenue sharing allocation for specialty plates that benefit the Nongame Conservation Fund (eagle and hummingbird tags). The cost of a newly issued wildlife tag was increased from \$25 to \$60 and an annual renewal fee of \$35 was imposed. The Nongame Conservation Section receives \$10 for each new plate and \$10 for each renewal. Most of the fee increase goes to the general fund of Georgia. In the first year after the fee change there was an increase in revenue for both the general fund and the nongame fund. TERN believes the long-term viability of the program is in jeopardy because the price increase has resulted in a 90% decline in the number of new tags issued since May of 2010 and fewer existing wildlife tags being renewed. In June of 2009 there were nearly 350,000 tags outstanding and by July 2013 there were estimated to be 106,000 outstanding. Some of this decrease may be the result of poor economic conditions, but we believe the dramatic decline of new tag sales and renewals after May 2010 points directly to the price increase.

TERN is the friends group of the Nongame Conservation Section dedicated to helping raise funds for the Section which receives no state funds in carrying out its mission of wildlife conservation. The wildlife tag program has been an important source of funds for the Nongame Conservation Section since 1997. Although revenue from wildlife tag sales and renewals are currently adequate, we believe future revenue is in doubt if sales and renewals continue to decline.

TERN requests the Legislature reduce the cost of the wildlife tag and/or increase the allocation of its portion of the fee to the Nongame Conservation Section. We believe a lower cost and a greater benefit to conservation will encourage our citizens to buy more wildlife tags and hopefully reverse the downward trends in sales and renewals. TERN believes the purpose of buying a wildlife tag is to benefit wildlife conservation and to promote conservation by proudly displaying the tag.

Adopted by the Board on February 2, 2012
Updated with new data on August 29, 2013

