



February 1, 2024

House Committee on Transportation

RE: **House Bill 2500** - *Providing for the Delta Waterfowl distinctive license plate*

Position: **SUPPORT**

Chairman Francis, Vice-Chair Neeley, Ranking Member Ballard, and members of the House Committee on Transportation,

On behalf of the members of Delta Waterfowl, both in Kansas and around the country, I'm writing you today in **support** of House Bill 2500, legislation that would create a distinctive Delta Waterfowl license plate in the state of Kansas.

For some background, Delta Waterfowl is the largest organization in North America dedicated to ducks and duck hunters. Founded at the famed Delta Marsh in Manitoba in 1911, with its United States Headquarters in Bismarck, North Dakota, Delta Waterfowl is guided by 4 distinctive and important pillars – Habitat Conservation, Duck Production, Research and HuntR3. We work to produce ducks through intensive management programs and conservation of breeding duck habitat in the prairie pothole region of the United States and Canada. We also conduct vital waterfowl research and promote and protect the continuing tradition of waterfowl hunting all across North America – including here in Kansas.

Throughout our organization's history, we have amassed an impressive body of research that includes supporting more than 600 master's and doctoral students and publishing over 950 peer-reviewed studies. Delta's research has profoundly influenced how waterfowl, wetlands and annual waterfowl harvest are managed.

We also provide biologists, technicians and young scientists with the opportunity to gain hands-on experience and guidance to become leaders in waterfowl and wetland conservation. We are extremely proud that many of Delta's former students are working for government and non-government agencies, as well as universities.

Delta has been at the forefront of hunter recruitment, retention and reactivation (commonly referred to as R3) efforts across the country. We recognized the "looming crisis" that is the declining numbers of waterfowl hunters since the 1980s and the impacts this has on state-based conservation funding and the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, and have been proactive in trying to reverse these trends.

With flagship programs like First Hunt, the largest waterfowl hunter recruitment program in North America, Delta and our volunteer chapter leaders have introduced more than 80,000 people to the ways of duck and goose hunting. In the last year, chapters across the United States and Canada hosted 263 First Hunt events with a total of 12,367 participants.

Recognizing the cultural shift in the next generation of wildlife and conservation decision makers having little to no understanding or background in hunting, Delta created our University Hunting Program. The University Hunting Program provides students who will use hunting licenses and permit revenues to manage waterfowl with a firsthand hunting experience and equips them with a more holistic view of hunting and conservation. In 2023, we were able to

conduct more than 100 UHP programs across the United States and Canada that hosted 447 future wildlife decision makers. Our long-term goal is to offer this program at 494 colleges and universities across North America.

Delta Waterfowl is known as “The Duck Hunters Organization”, and we are constantly working towards putting more ducks into the fall flight each year through intensive management in the breeding grounds of the prairie pothole region of the United States and Canada. We have led the way and helped boost breeding waterfowl numbers through efforts like our Hen House program.

Hen Houses are the most cost-effective tool to increase mallard production. Targeted to areas of the highest mallard breeding density, Delta Waterfowl Hen Houses consistently boost nest success to more than 60 percent. In areas where ground-nesting mallards typically achieve nest success of less than 10 percent, Hen Houses can increase nest success up to 80 percent.

Delta Waterfowl is extremely lucky to have some of the most passionate conservationists as members all across North America. Here in Kansas, we have roughly 500 members and 3 chapters that are active with more than 40 volunteers. These members and volunteers raise funds to help further our organizations mission, as well as reinvest funds right back into Kansas communities for conservation efforts and to support the next generation of waterfowl hunters and conservationists.

In recent years, Kansas volunteers have put more than \$6,000 back into the state through hunter recruitment and outreach programs. Our chapters have helped organize one of Delta’s flagship R3 programs – the University Hunting Program – at Pittsburg State University that included 12 undergraduate students and one faculty member. These students gained valuable insights into the role hunting plays in wildlife management and conservation funding, and will be better prepared to go on to state and federal agencies and manage wildlife on behalf of the American people.

Recognizing one of the biggest barriers to entry for waterfowl hunting is having a knowledgeable mentor to provide new and novice hunters with hands on experience and the confidence to go on to become seasoned sportsmen and women, our members have taken pride in being that valuable resource for new hunters in Kansas. Our Wichita Chapter alone has introduced more than 50 new hunters to the waterfowl world in the 2023-2024 waterfowl season alone.

Providing our organization with a unique license plate in the state of Kansas will help us showcase the great work our members and volunteers do in the state, while helping raise the profile of the Duck Hunters Organization. We appreciate Representative Delperdang and the Transportation Committee giving this legislation and this idea consideration, and look forward to working with members of the legislature and the appropriate agencies here in Kansas to have this goal realized in 2025.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cy Baird". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cyrus Hunter Baird  
Senior Director of Government Affairs  
Delta Waterfowl Foundation