

Editorials

Unlimited ducks

Sometimes, government does work

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It just goes to show, you need to take your time with the Sunday paper. Don't get in a hurry to turn the page, or skip over a small item. You'd almost certainly miss something.

Sure enough, there it was--last Sunday's nugget. Buried on page 8C, beneath Bryan Hendricks' column. Just more than six inches of copy. What those in the business call a brief.

But it must have been the big talk around a lot of Arkansas lunch tables after church last weekend.

There's a bill before Congress to raise the price of duck stamps. And you know who's all in favor of it? A lot of duck hunters, including the brass at Ducks Unlimited and a number of Southern congressmen who know their constituents.

The bill would raise the price of your federal duck stamp from \$15 to \$25. Which wouldn't price out most folks, especially duck hunters. A whole socio-economic treatise could be written about the class difference between duck and deer hunters in this state, if any, and if you know one (a study, not a hunter), do let us know where to find it. It would make interesting reading.

Duck hunters don't mind paying for duck stamps, never have, and shouldn't mind the increase now. Because 98 percent--*ninety eight percent!*--of all the money raised by duck stamps goes directly to buy or protect wetlands where the ducks live and breed. Which is a big reason why the government's efforts to bring back the duck population over the last 100 years have been such a success. If you don't think so, drive down a highway near or around Stuttgart, Ark., around Christmastime. Or take a ride around Jonesboro, Ark., at the first of the year. There are times when the flocks almost blot out the sun.

The moral of this success story: Government can work. The duck-stamp program is a fine example of good work by private citizens--the duck hunters--and government's wildlife officers. There is the kind of combined public and private effort that indicates the American can-do spirit still lives.

Much like farmers, duck hunters may be the best conservationists around. Teamed with government, they can save so much of the environment--and they're at it again. Good for them.

It's been 23 years since the price for duck stamps has gone up. Those who know say that's the longest period without an increase since the program began in 1934. So, yes, let's go to \$25. Call it a user fee. And let's keep more-'n'-more ducks coming to Arkansas every winter.

And where ducks come, so will the hunters--from all over. What a pleasure to write about good news for a change. Give us more of it!

Editorial on 08/06/2014