

Guest writer

Price fits the bill

Duck stamp aids hunters, state

By George Dunklin Jr. Special to the Democrat-Gazette

As the president of Ducks Unlimited--the world's largest waterfowl and wetlands conservation organization--I would like to sincerely thank the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* for running the editorial regarding the federal duck stamp.

As a native of Arkansas, I would also like to express my appreciation to my senator, John Boozman, for supporting Senate Bill 2621 to increase the price of the federal duck stamp from \$15 to \$25.

Without the continued backing from people like Senator Boozman, this legislation would never have made it this far. I'd encourage the entire Arkansas congressional delegation to lend their support to the passage of this much-needed legislation.

Waterfowl hunting is a time-honored tradition for many Arkansas families, and it also provides a significant economic impact for our state.

A 2011 study showed that migratory-bird hunting alone produced nearly \$3.4 billion in economic retail sales and supported 68,827 jobs annually nationwide.

If passed, this legislation will provide many benefits, including healthy habitat for waterfowl and perpetuating the deep-rooted traditions of hunting, which generates significant impacts. Many Arkansans, both sportsmen and business owners, look forward to seeing a strong fall flight of mallards each year.

I'm fortunate enough to live in Stuttgart and have seen firsthand what an influx of hunters and skies filled with waterfowl means for the local economy.

In closing, I'd like to reiterate a point the editorial poignantly noted: Ninety-eight percent of monies raised by the duck stamp are used for conservation efforts to sustain waterfowl populations and habitat.

I bet, however, that those reading the editorial were not aware that when the duck stamp last received an increase, the price of a gallon of gas was \$1.27, and land prices have escalated as much if not more.

It's easy to see that inflation has significantly reduced the conservation impact of our duck stamp over the last 23 years.

Thank you again, *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, and I look forward to reading the news in your paper once the bill is passed.

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