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January 27, 2010

Dr. Gerald Lent, Chairman  
Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners

Commissioner Bruce Kobrin, Chairman  
Administrative Procedures, Regulations and Policy Committee

Commissioner Michael McBeath, Chairman  
Duck Stamp Judging Committee

C/O Kenneth Mayer, Director  
Nevada Department of Wildlife  
1100 Valley Road  
Reno, NV 89512

***Re: Nevada Duck Stamp Contest***

Dear Chairman Lent and Commissioners Kobrin and McBeath:

As you know, the Nevada Waterfowl Association ("NWA") has been the sponsoring organization for the Nevada Duck Stamp contest since 1992. I want to personally thank you for providing the Nevada Waterfowl Association the opportunity to address the proposed changes to Commission Policy 50 (Nevada Duck Stamp Procedure).

The Nevada Duck Stamp contest is one of the few remaining duck stamp contests in the United States. As such, the level of competition is high and the rewards for the winning artist are exceptionally lucrative. For this reason, the Nevada Waterfowl Association believes that the judging process be absolutely above reproach. As such, NWA is in concurrence with amending Policy 50 to include the following language:

***No judge will have any interest or contact with any of the entrants at any time prior to the judging.***

While NWA believes this language is functionally superfluous as great steps are already taken to ensure anonymity of the identity of the entrants and their artwork, the inclusion of this language would underscore the seriousness Nevada has in the integrity of its duck stamp contests.

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In regard to the proposed changes to the number of judges on the panel, a little background information is helpful. When the Duck Stamp contest began in 1979 there were five (5) judges including one (1) wildlife commissioner. The Policy was later amended to increase the number of judges to the current level of seven (7) individuals including two (2) wildlife commissioners. Furthermore, the judges must have expertise in one of the following areas: wildlife art, waterfowl identification, previous experience in art judging contests or other knowledge/expertise deemed suitable by the sponsoring organization.

The proposed changes include reducing the number of judges back down to five (5) and increasing the number of wildlife commissioners on the judging panel to three (3). There are two concerns with these proposed changes. First, by reducing the number of judges, the consensus-building is reduced. This opens the duck stamp contest to potential allegations of bias. While NWA is not impugning the integrity of any duck stamp judge – past, present or future – NWA believes it is vitally important to safeguard the integrity of the contest. Secondly, as noted above, the Policy also mandates judges have specific expertise in the field of wildlife art and waterfowl. NRS 501.171 provides that the Wildlife Commission be made up of specific individuals representing farming (1), ranching (1), conservation (1), the general public (1), and sportsmen (5). While the legislatively mandated makeup of the commission provides for great expertise in a wide range of wildlife related matters, it is certainly foreseeable that, in any given year, it may be difficult find three commissioners with the requisite expertise in wildlife art or waterfowl.

Finally, it was noted at during a previous commission meeting that reducing the number of judges may add efficiency to the judging process. NWA has taken great steps to ensure the process is efficient, anonymous and fair to all entrants. While numerically, a five judge panel might be able to decide matters faster than a seven judge panel, speed is not always the hallmark of a good and fair contest. It is the opinion of the Nevada Waterfowl Association that the integrity of the contest is paramount to all other issues.

For the foregoing reasons, the Nevada Waterfowl Association respectfully recommends the Board of Wildlife Commissioners only approve the language prohibiting a judge from having contact with an entrant as outlined above. The Nevada Waterfowl Association recommends no other changes be made to Commission Policy 50.

Yours in waterfowl conservation;



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