



Promoting Excellence in Wildlife Stewardship through Science and Education

# INDIANA CHAPTER

## The Wildlife Society

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To Members of the House Committee on Environmental Affairs:

On behalf of the Indiana Chapter of The Wildlife Society, I am writing this letter to urge you to **vote no regarding SB 389** as it is currently written.

The Indiana Chapter of The Wildlife Society is a collective group of more than 100 professional wildlife biologists, educators and natural resource managers in Indiana. Our mission is to enhance the ability of wildlife professionals to conserve diversity, sustain productivity, and ensure responsible use of wildlife resources for the benefit of all people.

SB 389 would repeal Indiana's existing laws protecting isolated wetlands in the state. These isolated wetlands serve a very valuable role in our environment by providing wildlife habitat, water purification, and flood water storage. Indiana has already lost up to 85% of its original wetlands and SB 389 puts a large portion of the remaining 15% of wetlands at risk.

Loss of these wetlands would negatively impact Indiana's wetland-dependent wildlife, unique wetland ecosystems, and the water quality for citizens of the state. Loss of these wetlands could further threaten state and federally endangered species like the Indiana Bat and Blanding's turtles. Furthermore, this bill could negatively impact economic and recreational opportunities related to wetland-dependent wildlife like waterfowl hunting and bird watching; both of which are enjoyed by thousands of Hoosiers.

Our members understand that economic growth and environmental protection often create complex problems that require creative solutions to meet the needs of both initiatives. Simply repealing Indiana's isolated wetlands law, as SB 389 would do, is not an effective solution. We feel this issue of wetland protection and permitting should be sent to summer study committee so that alternative ideas could be presented and debated in order to develop a more comprehensive solution that addresses all concerns.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Despot

President, Indiana Chapter of The Wildlife Society