

Nearly \$900,000 in contributions made by Nebraska's hunters, recreational shooters, anglers and boaters will be withheld from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission by the federal government in 2013 unless Congress acts soon.

Nationally, the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) Programs and the Boating Safety Trust Fund would each be cut 7.6 percent, a loss of \$74 million in 2013 that would normally be distributed to state fish and wildlife agencies. Unlike other programs at risk of sequestration, WSFR Programs and the Boating Safety Trust Fund—collectively called the Trust Funds—are not taxpayer dollars derived through federal income taxes.

The Trust Funds are raised through excise taxes levied on bows and arrows; guns and ammunition; fishing tackle and equipment; and motorboat fuel that industry pays quarterly.

Sportsmen and women have supported these excise taxes knowing they directly support fish and wildlife conservation, hunter and boater safety and activities to improve recreational access for hunting, fishing, boating and other wildlife-related activities.

Part of that support comes from that fact that these funds are protected from diversion to any use other than what was originally intended.

Congress passed the Budget Control Act in 2011 and mandated automatic federal spending cuts, known as sequestration, to reduce the federal deficit by \$1.2 trillion over the next 10 years.

In 1985, Congress passed the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act, which provided that the excise tax revenues going into the Trust Funds were exempt from budget sequestrations; however, it did not specify that the money distributed from the Trust Funds was exempt from sequestration.

Congress can close this gap by amending the exemption provision found in the 1985 Act to include appropriations from such trust funds.