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For Immediate Release:
March 9, 2006

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PRESS RELEASE

Department of Conservation Failures Resurrect Sen. Cauthorn's Golden Goose Egg Award

Agency's Massive Surplus, Bloated Staff Can't Solve Long-Standing Problem

JEFFERSON CITY, MO – After a two-year hiatus, Sen. John Cauthorn is bringing the Golden Goose Egg Award out of retirement. Poor deer population management practices have earned the Department the infamous designation.

Incompetence and failure by the Conservation Department meriting the award includes:

- Increasing number of automobile accidents due to deer
- Tire and vehicle damage from deer carcasses on roads and highways
- Department of Transportation spending \$1.8 million removing deer carcasses from highways
- Crop and tree damage from overpopulation of deer
- Municipalities citing the need for deer hunting within city limits

“The Conservation Department has been bad neighbors, and they cannot control a deer population that destroys crop land and puts motorist safety in jeopardy,” said Cauthorn. “The Golden Goose Egg Award is being dusted off for their years of neglect and mismanagement.”

Since February 2003, Cauthorn has awarded various state agencies and bureaucrats for their misuse of taxpayer dollars and lack of stewardship as a public servant. Cauthorn is Chairman of the Government Accountability and Fiscal Oversight Committee.

The Department of Conservation is the 15th recipient of this award. This marks the third time Conservation has been awarded this infamous honor.

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“Folks have been asking what happened to the Golden Goose Egg,” said Cauthorn. “Fortunately our state agencies are saving taxpayer dollars and running a tight ship. Leave it to the Conservation Department to be the black sheep of state government.”

The Department is also placing video cameras on deer to learn about their behavior.

“Now we can know what a deer sees before running into Missouri motorists, or how they sneak up on folks property before destroying it,” chuckled Cauthorn.

Cauthorn has sponsored legislation in the past requiring that the one-eight cent sales tax, which funds the Department, be placed on the ballot every 10 years. Once and only voted on in 1976, the sales tax currently provides the department \$93.5 million in funding, over 60 percent of their budget. While state departments are looking at ways to trim budgets to live within taxpayers’ means, the department is sitting on a \$36 million balance waiting to be spent. Every state agency except the Conservation Department is subject to appropriations and has to justify budgets annually.

“This last time Missourians have voted on this tax Jimmy Carter was a southern governor,” said Cauthorn. “If they are the model program in the nation as they insist, then one public vote every 10 years isn’t too much to ask for to provide some sense of accountability. Our hunting and fishing programs will prosper without this tax.”

Cauthorn’s proposal will begin to restore accountability to the department and force them to address taxpayer concerns. Among some of the fleecing of Missouri’s tax dollars is:

- Numerous programs to which few people attend
 - Paid \$4,000 for concert pianist to perform in Kansas City for a small crowd
- Department purchase of land beyond organization’s original goals
 - Original goal was to buy 300,000 acres of land. In 2004 had bought 450,000 acres of land.
 - Original goal to add five conservation areas within 50 miles of urban centers. In 2004 had 22 areas totaling 68,000 acres.
 - Purchased two acres of land in Cedar County costing \$70,560 total
- State Auditor reported excessive spending, including:
 - Over \$900,000 for catering and food service providers in 1999-2002
 - Incurred \$1,100 in late charges on credit cards in 1999 and 2000
 - Expensive costs for employees attending conferences (i.e. eight day St. Louis conference totaling \$30,000 for some employees)
 - 1,300 on-road vehicles with no cost reports or usage logs for vehicles PLUS owned three planes and one helicopter in 1999

Additionally, a loss of funding will not eliminate the department. Federal regulation ensures hunting and fishing license fees will not be used for purposes other than a state fish and wildlife agency.

Sen. Cauthorn represents Missouri’s 18th Senate District. He can be reached at his capitol office at (573) 751-6858. You can also visit his web page by going to www.senate.mo.gov/cauthorn.