

BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB SUPPORTS HOUSE FARM BILL

MAY 15, 2018



The Boone and Crockett Club worked closely with the U.S. House of Representatives, specifically the Chairman of the Agriculture Committee, K. Michael Conaway (TX-11), on the Conservation and Forestry titles of the Farm Bill. The House Agriculture Committee approved a bill earlier this year that is beneficial to conservation and forestry in America.

“The Club has been closely involved with the Farm Bill since the early 1990s,” said James L. Cummins, co-chairman of the Boone and Crockett Club’s Conservation Policy Committee. “We are pleased this new bill focuses conservation to key forest, grassland, wetland and other wildlife habitats. This is a direct result of Chairman Conaway, Congressman Bruce Westerman (AR-4), other members of the Committee and their staffs’ hard work. We greatly appreciate the common-sense, balanced approach these great members of Congress were able to achieve.”

“The Farm Bill is one of the largest single sources of conservation spending in the federal budget and it represents the single largest federal investment in private-lands conservation, so it is easy to see why it is so important,” stated Paul Phillips, also a co-chairman of the Club’s Conservation Policy Committee.

With more than 74 percent of the land in the United States in private ownership, the Club places much emphasis on the conservation of private lands. In the Conservation Title, the Club worked to continue the highly successful Wetland Reserve Easement, which has been essential in helping restore

wetlands habitat. One success story has been the recovery of black bear populations in the Lower Mississippi River Valley. The Club also worked to ensure that incentives for wildlife habitat improvement were increased, specifically in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and that funds were dedicated to the control of feral hogs, an invasive species that are destroying millions of acres of habitat for native species.

Phillips said, “We’re especially pleased with the inclusions of forest management reforms that have been plaguing the U.S. Forest Service. Our forests have fallen into unhealthy condition affecting a diversity of resources, including big game populations. Less game affects hunter success rates, leading to a decrease in participation. Fewer people hunting mean a decrease in license sales, which equates to less money for state fish and wildlife agency operations. This is especially true with mule deer and elk in the West and white-tailed deer in the East.”

Congressman Westerman—the only professional forester in the Congress—worked tirelessly on forest reform legislation and many of his provisions are included in the bill.

“We greatly appreciate his depth of knowledge and passion to return our treasured national forests to healthier conditions for all Americans,” said Cummins. “I have been working on the Farm Bill for 27 years and this is the best bill the House has ever passed for the betterment of conservation and the improvement of our nation’s forests. They are to be congratulated.” ■

UPDATE: DAINES’ FARM BILL EFFORTS A WIN FOR CONSERVATION

JULY 02, 2018

The Boone and Crockett Club today praised Montana Senator Steve Daines for his efforts in ensuring critical conservation measures were included in the latest version of the Farm Bill.

“Legislation is intended to address needs,” noted Ben Hollingsworth, Jr., president of the Boone and Crockett Club. “Good legislation comes from those who take a boots-on-the-ground approach with the intent of doing the greatest good for the greatest number. Senator Daines has contributed both through the provisions being included in the new Farm Bill.”

The first Farm Bill was passed by Congress during the Great Depression in 1933. It is the primary agricultural and food production policy tool of the federal government that is reauthorized every five years. The bill is also a significant piece of environmental conservation legislation. The current bill, the Agricultural Act of 2017, would have expired in 2018 but was just reauthorized by the House and then the Senate this past week.

The new Farm Bill contains many provisions to address specific needs. Three of these that Senator Daines has diligently supported include:

- Increasing the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) wildlife practices from 5 percent to 10 percent of the funding, which adds \$3 billion a year to assist landowners in planning, installing, or maintaining practices that enhance water quality and wildlife habitat, or reduce soil erosion and sedimentation. This wildlife practice, originally termed the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), was conceptualized by members of the Boone and Crockett Club in 1996. WHIP was combined with EQIP in the 2014 Farm Bill.
- Expanding the Good Neighbor Authority allowing the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to enter into cooperative agreements with states to perform forest, rangeland and watershed restoration projects on federal and non-federal lands.
- Authorizing \$50 million over the life of the bill until 2023 to maintain level funding for the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP), which is a competitive grant program that provides state and tribal governments with funds to increase public access to private lands for hunting and fishing.

“Our policy team in Washington D.C., and here in Montana, worked closely with Senator Daines evaluating where the shortfalls have been for the people who grow our food and steward our lands against the increasing demands being placed on the environment in general,” Hollingsworth, Jr. concluded. “He’s proven to be a champion for farmers, ranchers, sportsmen, wildlife, and the environment.” ■