

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Wild Rides This Summer



Ben B. Wallace
PRESIDENT
Boone and Crockett Club

You would have to live in a cave and under a rock not to be aware of what our economy is doing. For the first time since financial service rating companies began business, Standard and

Poor's (S&P) lowered the U.S.'s long-term credit rating from AAA to AA+. This was a result of the Budget Control Act of 2011 which was a weak compromise to increase our Country's debt ceiling in order to pay the bills from previous over-spending by our federal government. Bottom line is that S&P was pessimistic about our federal government's ability to get its fiscal act together.

The result of S&P's downgrade late on Friday, August 5th, was one wild four-day roller coaster ride with the U.S. stock-market indices, in particular the Dow Jones Average (DJA). On Monday, August 8th, the DJA fell 634.76 points. Tuesday it rose 429.92 points. Wednesday it fell again 519.83 points. Then Thursday it rose 423.37 points. Panic, fear, bewilderment—all of these emotions were in play that week. Confidence levels are down, economists are using the word "recession" again and many are pointing to a slowing economy. What does all this mean to North American Wildlife Conservation? It does not bode well.

In our last *Fair Chase* publication, Steven Williams, Ph.D., Professional Member and president of Wildlife Management Institute, wrote an article titled "The Budgets of Discontent". In his article, Steve expressed concern that Congress, in its attempt to slash expenses, was proposing draconian cuts to conservation grant programs. The current levels of proposed cuts are as follows: Land and Water Conservation Fund—\$149 million (33 percent); Farm Bill Conservation Section—\$508 million (23 percent); National Wildlife Refuge System—\$11 million (2 percent); Wetlands Reserve Program—\$119 million; North American Wetlands Conservation Act—\$10.2 million (20 percent); and State and Tribal Wildlife Grants - \$28.2 million (31 percent). Not to be outdone, my own state of Texas slashed Texas Parks and Wildlife's 2012-2013 (we were smart enough to have our legislature in session only 140 days on a bi-annual basis) budget by \$145.46 million (20.8 percent).

Congress is on its August recess as I write this article, and I know there are efforts by many conservation organizations, including Boone and Crockett Club, to convince Congress of the perils in failing to invest in our natural resources, but I urge all of us to join in these efforts to protect our wildlife and its habitat.

On a brighter note, I had the honor to be included in a team-building experience last week with our Boone and Crockett Club staff.

Most of the staff and I went white-water rafting in the "Gorge" on the Clark Fork River outside of Cyr, Montana. I've never been white-water rafting and I had an absolute blast (my other "wild ride"). Once again, I'm glad and thankful to re-confirm that we have a truly talented and dedicated team working for our Club.

August is the start of our North American hunting season, and many of you are out in the woods after sheep, caribou, and other critters, while I and one of my best friends (an African rookie) are heading southeast to Zimbabwe to chase down cape buffalo and leopard. I want to wish all of you a rewarding, successful, and safe hunting season. ■

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Half of the B&C staff and Ben Wallace hitting the rapid known as Tumbleweed while rafting the Clark Fork River during our team-building float.