

# CAPITOL COMMENTS

## Big Thinking Needed for Public Lands and Wildlife



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**Wildlife Conservation has** evolved by thinking big. Actions in the past by Theodore Roosevelt to set aside the Forest Reserves, which became the National Forests, and the first National Wildlife refuge, which led to the current refuge system, are examples. Such bold steps are often taken at odd times - at the end of a congressional session, by passage of a bill that received little attention, or a decisive act by a political leader. Most often a group of citizens, such as our forebears in the Boone and Crockett Club, provided the energy and the resolve to get the job done.

Perpetuation of public lands and resources for all Americans requires some of that big thinking. There are too many questions being raised about what those lands are for, who should call the shots in managing them, and whether some of them should be sold off to pay for something else. Any thinking conservationist cannot ignore these issues.

that care for these lands. On balance it appears that conflict over "who is in control" of natural resource decisions is getting in the way of clear thinking about the future of our public lands, the agencies that manage them, and the recreational needs of the American people.

At a time when the Administration and the Congress are proclaiming the likelihood of balanced budgets - even surpluses because of good economic times - natural resources funding appears to be falling through the cracks. The initial Budget Resolution from the Senate Budget Committee, unaccountably zeroed out proposed FY 1999 increases for national wildlife refuges and other wildlife programs. Continuing support for refuges, for example, would have seemed a natural step following the progress made in last year's budget. The early Senate action inappropriately tied sale of unspecified BLM lands to proposed funding to make endangered species programs work better for wildlife and the private landowner. Let's hope the whole Congress can do better.

On April 14, 1998, the Public Lands Funding Initiative was sent to the Congress and other policy leaders over the signature of Boone and Crockett member Theodore Roosevelt IV.

Supported by more than 100 national and local organizations throughout the country, from recreationists to sportsmen's groups, this call for support is based on a comprehensive look at the status of funding for national resources for public lands and wildlife.

Discussions with each of the agencies about their funding, staffing, land management programs, and the overall status of their ability to do their job for the American people has led to this initiative. There is substance behind the expressed needs for these programs which is documented in the public

Lands Funding Initiative. Projected funding needs are based on face to face discussion with agency personnel. The value of documentation of needs, that helped secure funds for national wildlife refuges, is now spreading to the other natural resource agencies, partly under the direction of Congress. This includes meeting specific needs of parks, refuges, national forests, and research to support management.

Forest service staff described program needs 50 percent above current funding to support wildlife and recreational benefits of more than \$4 billion annually-worth many times that of commodity production. Fish and Wildlife Service needs for wildlife refuges alone exceed \$850 million for operation and maintenance - even with the increases documented in the last issue of *Fair Chase*. Since 1978, Park Service budgets have decreased more than 40 percent in constant dollars, yet visitation is up almost 50 percent. Bureau of Land management wildlife programs are similarly deficient, yet have to support large land holdings of great value to our interests.

Research to support management of public lands and wildlife has been crippled by transfers between agencies and punitive budget reductions. None of this invests in the future for better resource management.

The Public Lands Funding Initiative calls for an increase in what is called the 302(B) allocation to the Interior Appropriations Subcommittees, gradually over a six year period. The attached table from the Public Lands Funding Initiative shows the magnitude of the increases needed, which are relatively small parts of the nation's budget. It is important to know that the balanced budget agreements have started this overall funding on a downslide that would leave it several billion dollars lower than it is today without these increases. This

### INCREASED 302(B) ALLOCATIONS: An Incremental Approach to Budget Growth

	FY98	FY99	FY00	FY01	FY02	FY03	FY04
302(b) Increase over prior FY (Millions)	\$536.3	\$486.3	\$486.3	\$486.3	\$486.3	\$486.3	\$486.3
Interior Sub-committee Resulting Allocation	\$13.1*	\$13.64	\$14.12	\$14.61	\$15.09	\$15.58	\$16.07
% of Change from previous FY		4.09	3.57	3.44	3.32	3.22	2.35

\* This amount does not include the Balanced Budget Agreement's infusion of an additional \$699 million in FY98 for LWCF.

These public lands represent an investment in America through the conservation of our natural and cultural heritage. A growing American public is turning to our public lands for education, recreation, and the economic well-being of their families and communities. Yet the vital role of these public lands is threatened by inadequate funding and a lack of vision to invest in the agencies

erosion would prevent the National Park Service, Forest Service, The Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau Of Land Management from effectively managing their lands for wildlife and accommodating the recreational uses for the future that Boone and Crockett supports. This would lead to further cutbacks in services to the American people.

A part of the Initiative is restoration of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Members will recall that, since 1964, royalty receipts from offshore oil and gas extractions totaling over 900 million dollars each year are supposed to be deposited in a fund, to be used to provide a secure heritage of lands for outdoor recreation for America. This has not been happening for a variety of reasons, including its use for deficit reduction, and to some extent because of opposition to more land purchase.

Over \$12 billion that was to go for these purposes has not been spent for recreation purposes - that is big money in wildlife circles! The original contract from the Congress to the American people was to use these revenues from extraction of a nonrenewable resource owned by all the people, from its public lands, and provide tangible long-term benefits for future generations. Conservationists are arguing that this contract has been broken by successive Administrations and Congresses. A second national meeting of the new organization Americans For Our Heritage and Recreation convened in May in New Orleans, Louisiana, to consider ways to advance this cause.

This is the fund that is helping to solve elk, bison, and grizzly bear habitat problems near Yellowstone Park. This is the fund that can be a significant player in buffering the impacts of development in the Northern Rockies and other parts of America that are so dramatically affecting the future of our big game herds. This is the kind

of big thinking that deserves the direct support of the Boone and Crockett Club.

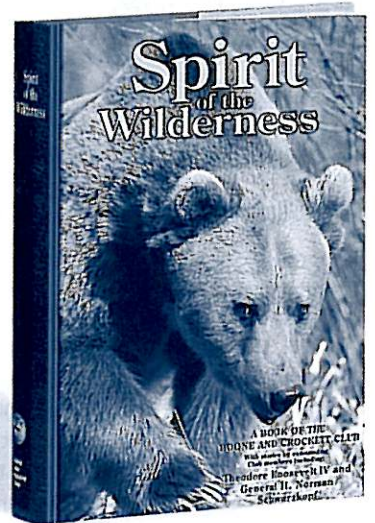
This continuing need for big thinking about the future makes enhancing the status of wildlife funding at the state level vital to our interests. Recent Club discussion of Teaming With Wildlife, the proposal to extend the user-pays excise tax beyond traditional hunting and fishing equipment sources, raises legitimate concerns. We worry about losing control over programs we value.

Realistically, hunters are a small part of society. We are proud of our role in wildlife restoration, but that does not insulate us from changes in society. Many samples of American attitudes tell us the vast "middle" of American society - who neither know much nor care much about hunting - will determine our future. A scary thought, but one that offers opportunity. The opportunity is to work directly with the larger public through broader wildlife agencies, with hunting-related programs as strong and successful components of modern conservation. We need to lead that "middle" of society as we have in past decades - or others will - others who don't share our conservation perspectives!

The choice before us is to entrench around our comfortable funding sources or embrace the larger needs of wildlife again, as the Club did for public lands and wildlife at the turn of the century. If we keep to ourselves, we lose the high ground of being the leaders who are responsible for the American conservation movement. If we step ahead and build on our past success, and help provide the leadership for comprehensive wildlife management for all wildlife, we have a solid role for the Boone and Crockett Club in conservation leadership. We need to continue an open dialog of that big thinking - and find the way to stay in the lead. ▲▲▲

# Now Available... Spirit of the Wilderness

Stalking wild sheep, tracking a trophy cougar, hiking the back country of British Columbia, fishing for striped bass and coming face to face with a grizzly bear are some of the wilderness adventures found in *Spirit of the Wilderness*, a new 300-page hardcover book by Boone and Crockett Club.



General H. Norman Schwarzkopf and Theodore Roosevelt IV (great grandson of President Roosevelt) headline the stories compiled by B&C editors as part of the Acorn Book Series. Schwarzkopf tells us about his efforts to reintroduce the grizzly bear into the lower 48 states as National Spokesperson for the movement, and Roosevelt tells how he taught his young son the value of catch and release while fishing for striped bass.

In addition to stories by Schwarzkopf and Roosevelt IV, other noted Boone and Crockett Club members contributing stories of hunting, fishing, hiking, exploration and adventure include Richard Borden (wildlife film maker for Walt Disney Company and National Geographic), Richard P. Carlsberg (noted sheep hunter), Prentiss N. Gray (first editor of the B&C records book, *Records of North American Big Game*), John M. Kauffmann (National Park Service executive), Dr. William MacCarty (surgeon) and Paul D. Webster (B&C president). Idaho wildlife artist Hayden Lambson created the cougar sketch etched in silver leaf on the book's cover. A four-color photograph of a massive grizzly bear, by Denver Bryan, graces the dust jacket.

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