

# THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

## Title III: Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Act Deserves Our Support

The Spring '99 issue of *Fair Chase*, contains an excellent overview of House and Senate versions (H.R.701/S.25) of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1999, which were introduced in Congress early this year. This summary by Rollie Sparrowe, President of the Wildlife Management Institute, points out that both versions would dedicate 50% or more of annual federal income from offshore oil and gas leases, which averages about \$4.6 billion per year – into three separate funds. The distribution of funds is stipulated in three titles in these bills:

**Title I** – Outer Continental Shelf Impact Assistance;

**Title II** – State, Local and Urban Conservation and Recreation; and,

**Title III** – Wildlife Conservation and Restoration.

Title III, H.R. 701, would dedicate \$460 million (10%) to states annually for wildlife conservation and related recreation and education programs. Most in the wildlife community with a deep interest in this topic have agreed to focus on supporting Title III while recognizing there are differences or concerns among many organizations over Titles I and II that will have to be worked out later. I have several questions

about Titles I and II that need some good answers before I am comfortable with them, but Title III is different. In general it looks very good and I want to focus on it more closely here.

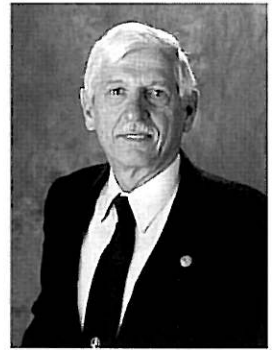
The first purpose of Title III of H.R.701 is “to extend financial and technical assistance to the states under the Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson Act) for the benefit of a diverse array of wildlife and associated habitats, including species that are not hunted or fished, to fulfill unmet needs of wildlife within the states in recognition of the primary role of the states to conserve all wildlife.”

Strengthening the states in their “primary role” to conserve all wildlife is a powerful reason for the Boone and Crockett Club to consider strongly supporting this legislation. It offers an opportunity to reverse the current trend of the federal government taking over the role of our states as the primary keepers of wildlife. This is occurring through increased protection of species under the Endangered Species Act.

Increasingly, state wildlife agencies are facing tough challenges managing game species while attempting to conserve declining wildlife and habitats, and

meet conservation education and wildlife related recreation demands, all on limited and often declining budgets. A major problem lies in the lack of dedicated funding sources for conserving a wide array of species, including those commonly referred to as “non-game.” These species constitute roughly 90% (over 2,000 species) of the fish and wildlife species in the United States. Most threatened and endangered species listed under the Endangered Species Act come from this non-game group.

Title III would allow the states a greatly improved ability to respond to early warning signs of decline in vulnerable species by addressing their needs through cooperative non-regulatory programs with private landowners. This would not only conserve the species but also help avoid the social and economic disruption that comes with federal regulation as-



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sociated with species listing. This regulation can and has already adversely affected hunting and fishing opportunities. The more the state wildlife agencies can learn about declining species, the quicker they can respond with a broad array of incentive-based non-regulatory programs, which permits maximum flexibility working with landowners, to allow them to meet personal and wildlife conservation objectives at the same time. This prevention approach to conservation makes good biological and economic sense while reinforcing the authority and credibility of state wildlife management and conservation. It also reinforces the value of local solutions that are usually the most practical and the best.

Title III has been referred to as "the most far-reaching wildlife conservation legislation in our lifetime." At stake are not only the futures of many "at risk" wildlife species but also the future of states as the primary managers and conservers of America's wildlife. We should all be especially proud that the legislation comes from the House Resources Committee chaired by Boone and Crockett

Club member Don Young (AK) and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee chaired by Boone and Crockett Club member Frank Murkowski (AK). Boone and Crockett Club members Max Peterson and Rollie Sparrowe have also worked hard to shape Title III.

Use of the outer continental shelf funding for conservation is supported by the National Governor's Association, the Southern Governor's Association, the Western Governor's Association, the National Association of Counties, Safari Club International, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Isaac Walton League, the Wild Turkey Federation, the National Rifle Association, the National Wildlife Federation, The Wildlife Legislative Fund and many others. On May 10, 1999, Texas Governor, George Bush, signed a concurrent resolution of the Texas legislature memorializing Congress to pass the Conservation and Reinvestment Act.

Title III, needs and deserves our strong support now, especially as it appears in H.R. 710 with the proposed 10% expenditure for wildlife. The bill could be improved by

including a specific emphasis on funding for non-game wildlife, but it is still acceptable with the 10% funding. What's most important is for us to do everything we can to make sure there are no major changes in the fundamental thrust of Title III as it continues through the legislative process.

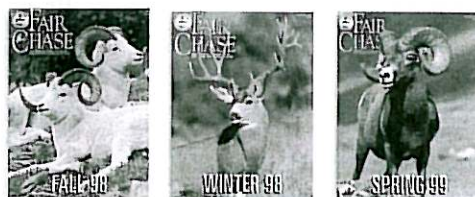
I hope you will consider this important opportunity as seriously as I have. It's a great way for us to help realize the Boone and Crockett Club's vision and mission. The best thing each of us can do is weigh in with our respective congressional representatives and Governors and support Title III. I will be writing to the appropriate House and Senate committees to express the Club's support for Title III. Steve Mealey is available at Headquarters to provide you any assistance you'd like. We are still working with some of the provisions in Titles I and II and hopefully we will be able to recommend the entire bill for your support soon. It would be a disaster for Title III to go down due to some questionable or uncertain provisions in the rest of the bill or adverse amendments to Title III.



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