

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Lowell E. Baier
PRESIDENT
Boone and Crockett Club

Concerning Our Children's Nature Deficit Disorder

More than 500 attended the long-anticipated White House Conference on Wildlife Policy October 2-3, 2008. The major "take home" message was the concern

for the current "nature deficit disorder" of America's youth, its continuing trend of declining interest and participation in hunting and the implications this presents for traditional American wildlife management.

Richard Louv's 2005 book, *Last Child in the Woods*, highlighted the growing disconnect between our children and the outdoors. The youth of today evidence this disconnect most noticeably in their health: twenty percent are obese; three million are being treated for depression; and pediatricians are diagnosing

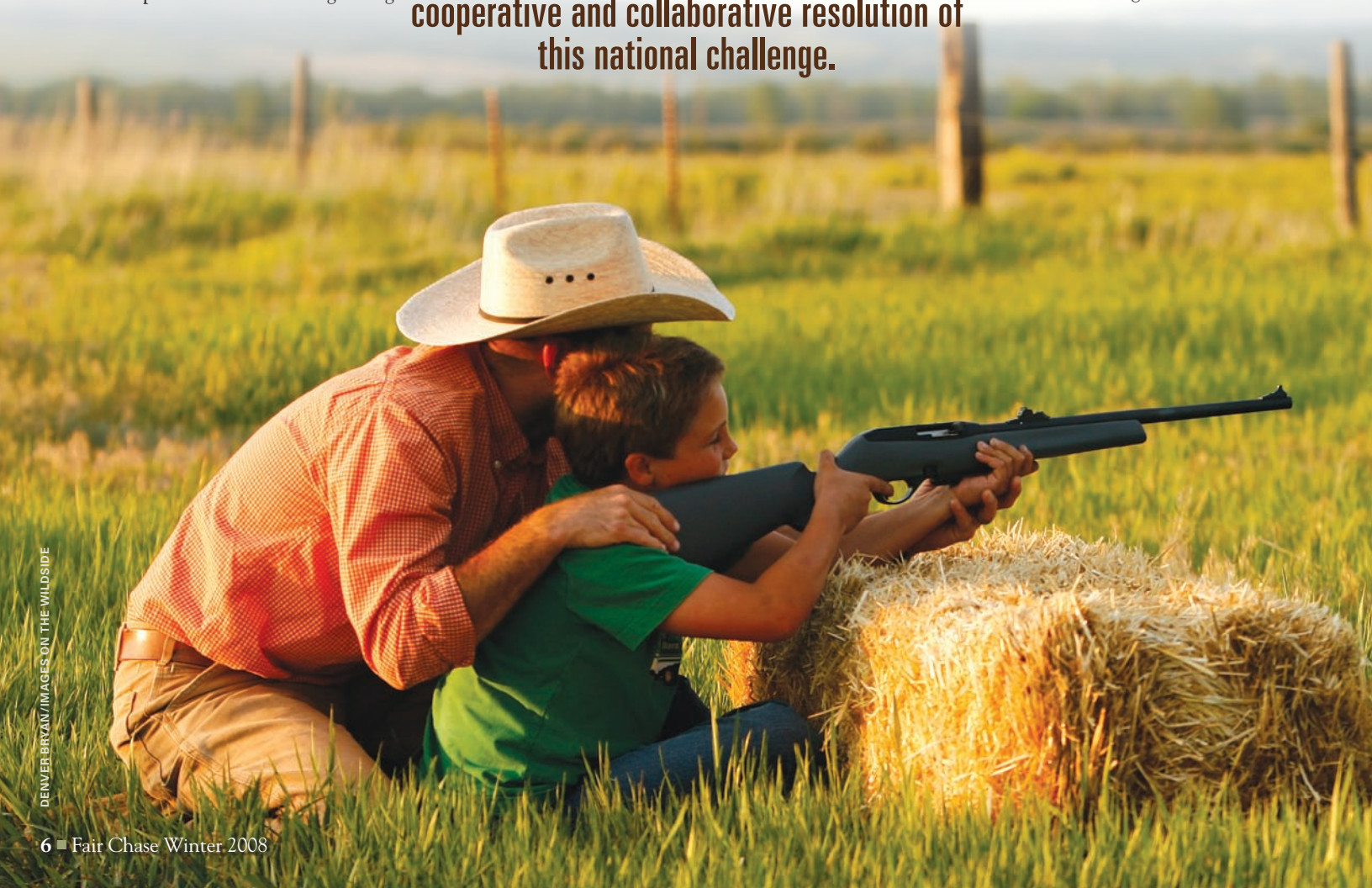
increasing cases of repetitive motion disorder. Our society is primarily urban, and access to nature is increasingly limited. Our family structure that supported traditional outdoor recreational activities has changed, as has the country's social structure. Technological devices, computer and TV time and structured activities consume our children's available time. Predators and pedophiles force parents to keep children indoors, further restricting them from freely exploring their natural world. Not only is participation in shooting sports declining, but participation is dropping in all forms of outdoor activities—hiking, biking,

skiing, golf, water sports, watchable wildlife activities, and camping—according to statistics maintained by the National Sporting Goods Association. The physical, mental, and spiritual health of our children are all being affected.

The Responsive Management organization and National Shooting Sports Foundation this year completed a thorough but disturbing study which revealed declining trends in hunting participation. Titled, *The Future of Hunting and Shooting Sports*, the study focused on participation, analyzed rural regression, changing U.S. demographic trends and characteristics, urbanization, access issues, public opinion, recruitment and retention programs, among other issues. Put in the larger context of declining participation in all outdoor recreation activities, participation in hunting at all age levels and especially by youth are declining on par. (See Figures 1 & 2).

The phenomenon of the current declining interest and

Our strength as a community has always been by working together cooperatively. It's time our conservation community gets under one big tent and makes the hunting heritage foundation a priority by resolving a strategy, and dedicating ourselves to a cooperative and collaborative resolution of this national challenge.



BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB

FOUNDED IN 1887

BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Lowell E. Baier
Executive Vice President – Administration
Ben B. Wallace
Executive Vice President – Conservation
Edward B. Rasmuson
Secretary Robert H. Hanson
Treasurer Timothy C. Brady
Vice President of Administration Manuel J. Chee
Vice President of Big Game Records
Eldon L. “Buck” Buckner
Vice President of Conservation
William A. Demmer
Vice President of Communications F.R. Daily
Class of 2008 Ben B. Hollingsworth
Class of 2009 Arlene P. Hanson
Class of 2010 Marc C. Mondavi

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Associates Program Lanny S. Rominger
Audit Edward B. Rasmuson
Budget and Finance
Robert H. Hanson and Morrison Stevens
Compensation Lowell E. Baier
Conservation Policy
Robert Model & Stephen P. Mealey
Corporate Governance John P. Poston
Development Ben B. Hollingsworth, Jr.
Government Affairs Robert Model
Health, Safety, and Environment Ben B. Wallace
Hunter and Conservation Ethics
Andrew L. Hoxsey & Daniel A. Pedrotti, Jr.
Membership James J. Shinnors
Nominating C. Robert Palmer
Outreach Marc C. Mondavi
Publications Mark B. Steffen
Records Eldon L. “Buck” Buckner
Research, Education, and Outreach
Harold J. Salwasser
Sagamore Hill C. Robert Palmer
Strategic Planning Stephen P. Mealey

PAST PRESIDENTS

Theodore Roosevelt 1888-1894
Benjamin H. Bristow 1895-1896
William Austin Wadsworth 1897-1918
George Bird Grinnell 1918-1927
Madison Grant 1928-1937
Kermit Roosevelt 1937-1940
Frederic C. Walcott 1940-1947
Archibald B. Roosevelt 1948-1952
Karl T. Frederick 1953-1955
Fairman R. Dick 1956-1959
Alfred O. Hoyt 1960-1961
Robert Munro Ferguson 1962-1964
Robert S. Waters 1965-1967
John E. Rhea 1968-1970
Frederick C. Pullman 1971-1973
John E. Rhea 1974
Wesley M. Dixon Jr. 1975-1979
Jack S. Parker 1980-1982
William I. Spencer 1983-1984
Judge F. Anderson 1985
James H. Duke Jr. 1986-1989
George C. Hixon 1990-1991
Stephen S. Adams 1992-1994
Paul D. Webster 1995-1997
Daniel A. Pedrotti 1998-2000
Earl E. Morgenroth 2001-2002
Robert Model 2003-2005
C. Robert Palmer 2006-2007
Lowell E. Baier 2008-

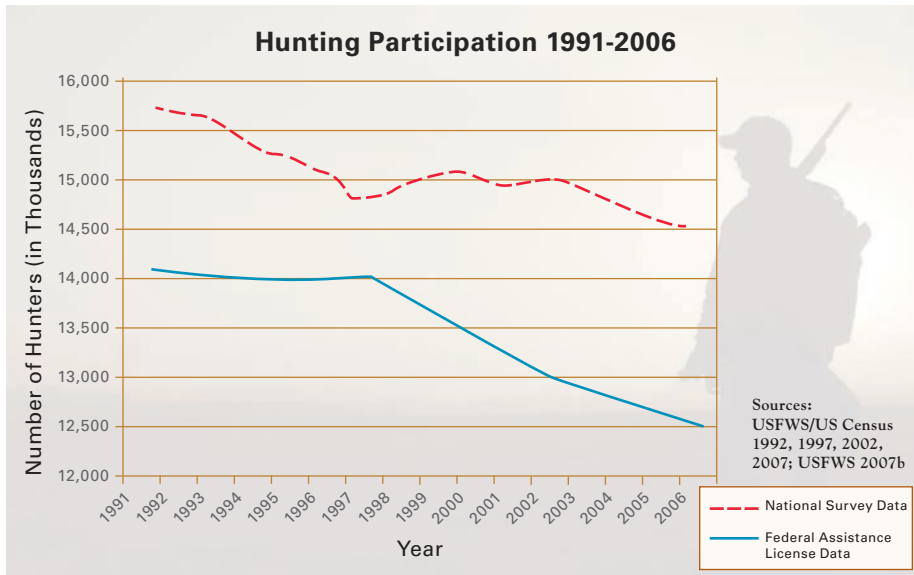


Figure 1 Trends in Hunting Participation

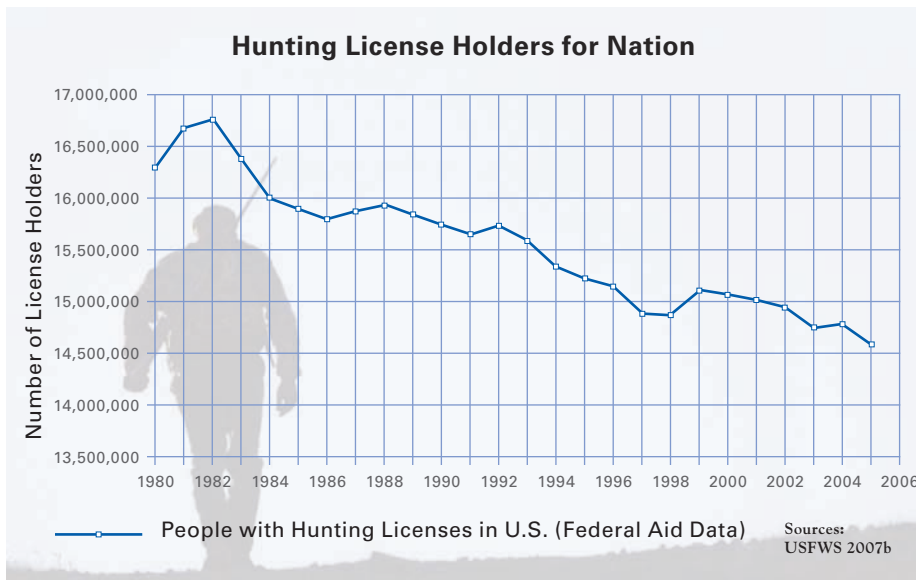


Figure 2 Trends in Hunting Licenses Sales Since 1980

participation in hunting lies in stark contrast to America's problems leading up to the first White House wildlife conference in 1908 when our nation had an overabundance of hunters and a dwindling supply of wildlife. Today the reverse is true: a diminished interest in and pursuit of wildlife, and in many cases, an overabundance of wildlife, especially game species.

How do we reconnect America's populace, especially its youth, back to the natural world of wildlife and wild lands? One of the seven technical White House papers prepared as a foundation for the White House Conference dealt with the problem of our children's nature deficit

disorder by addressing education, retention and recruitment of young hunters. The number one recommendation of this technical paper was to create a hunting heritage foundation similar to the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF), whose focus is to connect people to fishing. Funding for the RBFF is provided through the Sportfishing Restoration and Boating Trust Fund administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The funds are generated through excise taxes on fishing equipment, boats, boat motors and sonar equipment, and motorboat fuel tax and fishing license sales derived under the Sport Fish Restoration Act, a derivative of

the Dingell-Johnson Act of 1950 and the 1984 Wallop-Breaux Amendment. The top two percent of all gross funds generated go to RBFF, which amounted to more than \$14 million during FY 2008.

The RBFF perpetuates boating and fishing traditions and facilitates increased participation through its website TakeMeFishing.org, which identifies access sites throughout the country for boating and fishing and highlights related family-friendly activities. Fishing license information, local regulations by zip code, hot spots, and fishing reports are also included on the website, together with a link on ESPNOutdoors.com which takes visitors directly to TakeMeFishing.org. Three million unique visitors utilized the RBFF

(AFWA) has promoted the idea for several years. AFWA is a party to the MOU with the Sportfishing Boating and Partnership Council (SFBPC) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administering the trust fund. AFWA has established an industry/agency coalition to address the establishment of a hunting heritage foundation. The National Shooting Sports Foundation created Task Force 20/20 to address the same issue. The Wildlife Management Institute has put out its Hunting Heritage Action Plan to address the issue. The American Wildlife Conservation Partners as well as the Hunting and Shooting Sports Roundtable have also promoted the idea of a foundation. The White House Conference and the Sporting Conservation Council

tax. A graphic in Figure 3, provided by the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation in conjunction with the Archery Trade Association illustrates the funding concept unique to America.

Access & Increased Opportunity

One idea common to most proposals is expanding the scope of the 1937 Pittman-Robertson Act by amending it to include establishment of the hunting heritage foundation. Suggestions to fund the proposed hunting heritage foundation include an excise tax on merchandise not covered by the 1937 Act such as optics (rifle and spotting scopes and binoculars), camouflage clothing, etc. An extension of this concept includes expanding the excise tax to merchandise utilized in the enjoyment of non-game species such as birdseed, birdfeeders, binoculars, and similar products. Many Congressional observers see this approach as problematic, giving Congress an opportunity to potentially overhaul the Pittman-Robertson Act and divert some of its funding to cover overall deficit federal spending. Another recent idea proposes establishing a hunter-access website for all public state and federal lands, then fund a hunting heritage foundation from the website's advertising revenues. Still another idea is to merge a hunting heritage foundation into the existing RBFF since the administrative structure exists, is operational and highly successful.

If our children's nature deficit disorder is the top concern of the White House conferees, followed closely by the continual decline in the number of hunters; and the number one recommendation of the technical committee addressing this issue is the creation of a nonprofit foundation to preserve, protect and enhance America's hunting heritage, then it's time for the sportsmen's community to collaboratively figure out how to create and fund the foundation. Currently there are six separate groups referenced above all chasing the same outcome; yet no one has been able to bring it to closure. Our strength as a community has always been by working together cooperatively. It's time our conservation community gets under one big tent and makes the hunting heritage foundation a priority by resolving a strategy, and dedicating ourselves to a cooperative and collaborative resolution of this national challenge. We've done it repeatedly before. We can do it again. Let's not throw away tomorrow! ■

THE AMERICAN SYSTEM OF CONSERVATION FUNDING



Figure 3

site during FY 2008. Other promotional vehicles which RBFF uses to perpetuate the heritage include promotions with 27 Triple-A baseball teams, a mobile "Take Me Fishing Center" that travels to major boat shows, in-store displays in 424 retail outlets such as Bass Pro Shops, a variety of multimedia public-service messages, direct-mail campaigns, and a series of educational outreach programs promoted by states and local physical education programs. The RBFF program has been highly successful in preserving the boating and fishing heritage in America.

The idea of establishing a nonprofit 501(c)(3) hunting heritage foundation similar to the RBFF is not new. Leadership at the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

now join the ranks of supporters behind the idea of a hunting heritage foundation similar to the RBFF.

The model, of course, follows the traditional conservation funding model established 71 years ago by the Pittman-Robertson Act (PRA) of 1937 whereby sportsmen banded together to impose an excise tax of 11 percent on all firearms and ammunition (later extended to archery equipment) to pay for wildlife habitat conservation programs. These revenues and license sales provided the basis for a sustainable system of funding to maintain abundant fish and wildlife populations as part of the North American Model for Wildlife Conservation. In FY 2007, nearly \$321,562,500 was generated under the PRA