

CONSERVATION POLICY

FROM THE
PRESIDENT



Morrison Stevens, Sr.
PRESIDENT

I want to thank Jeff Crane and Gary Kania of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation for their articles on the Sportsmen's Act and the American System of Conservation. Their leadership and insight into policy affecting sportsmen and sportswomen is always appreciated.

The historic accomplishments of the Boone and Crockett Club resulted from a process in which highly influential and visionary members, in addition to other individuals with different assets or strengths in a specific area, would come together to identify, discuss, and solve problems related to hunting and conservation in North America. Sometimes this type of problem-solving would include direct action from the Club or one of its members. In other situations the Club would rely on its connections and direct the issue to the appropriate government agency or organization, or even facilitate the formation of a new organization or coalition of organizations. The formation of this highly effective consortium of organizations, known collectively as the American Wildlife Conservation Partners, is the most recent effort of the latter.

The Boone and Crockett Club's Strategic Plan has four strategic goals; two of them are directly related to conservation policy. These two goals are, first to improve the system of conservation throughout North America, and second to create an atmosphere where conservation and hunting can thrive.

The Club has a bold and aggressive policy program as outlined in this Strategic Plan. As the leader of the hunting and conservation community, the Club is still very much challenged today, but not as greatly challenged as Roosevelt was in the later part of the 1800s. If I were proposing to you today that we, like Roosevelt did, establish a framework for conservation, a forest service, a park service, and a fish and wildlife service, while lobbying the Congress to set aside 36 million acres of national forest lands and expand Yellowstone, then that would not at all be possible. However, it is our duty, as both citizens and as members of the Club, to maintain as best we can what our conservation leaders before us created.

That is, more often than not, easier said than done. Today obstacles to carrying out the Club's mission, vision, and beliefs are increasing in number and complexity. America's land management and hunting traditions are being distorted by many factors, including urbanization, demographic changes, ecosystem management, biological diversity, and our crowded, fast-paced lives. As hunters, we represent a small portion of the larger society. Thus, as wildlife conservation becomes more of a global concern, non-hunters and other societal groups are questioning our hunting heritage, tradition, and deep appreciation for these resources, further complicating our ability to accomplish our vision and mission.

In spite of the many great conservation successes of the past, these changes make it necessary for fish and wildlife managers, hunters, and conservationists to work together on policy initiatives to ensure longevity of our cherished habitat and resources. There are many conservation groups doing many good things, but there is a need for today's fish and wildlife leaders to unify their collective strengths and apply them to common challenges and opportunities to protect fish and wildlife, habitat, hunting, trapping, and the hunter-conservationist's way of life. Functioning at our highest level of effectiveness will require focus and prioritization, greater internal and external communications, the formation of unique partnerships, and enhanced long-term strategic thinking. Furthermore, we do not need to do what everybody else is doing. We need to focus on what everybody is not doing or is not good at, but most importantly, what is needed.

Recently, we have worked with two partners—the American Wildlife Conservation Partners and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership—on funding conservation, which has been in a decline for the past 30 years. In 2015, the total amount we as a nation spent

on natural resources was approximately one percent of our total budget. The last time our nation spent such a large percentage of its budget on natural resources was during the Reagan Administration (four percent).

As a result of this collaborative effort, I am pleased to report that the omnibus appropriations bill, which funds federal government programs through September 30, 2016, will provide funding boosts for many conservation programs. For example, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will receive an increase of \$69 million, the National Park Service an increase of \$237 million, the U.S. Geological Survey an increase of \$20 million, and the Bureau of Land Management will receive an increase of \$117 million. One key provision of this bill was the three-year reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which will receive an increase of \$150 million. This bill directs \$2.5 billion to the U.S. Forest Service for non-fire related activities, which is a \$35 million increase; \$4.2 billion was designated for Wildland Fire Management.

**"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."
- Margaret Mead**

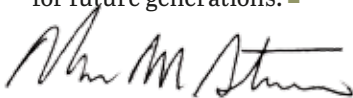
PASSING A COMPREHENSIVE SPORTSMEN'S ACT IN THE 114TH CONGRESS

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It is obvious that the Boone and Crockett Club has paved the way in creating an extensive and integrative system for conservation. However, this system must constantly be nurtured. There will always be competition for funding for managing this system and special interest groups that have their own plans for how to use that funding.

In addition to Jeff and Gary, we have a great team of government affairs specialists in Washington—David Anderson, Dr. Greg Schildwachter, and Mitch Butler, led by Bob Model and the Club's Government Affairs Committee. We are constantly adapting to the diverse political, economic, social, technological, and environmental changes we face in order to maintain this impressive system of hunting and conservation.

Except for the late 1800s, at no other time in history has hunting and conservation been at such a crossroads in North America, where we still have the capacity to "win." The challenges are great, but the historic achievements and the financial, political, communication, and scientific assets of the Club's members place us in a unique position, unlike ANY other conservation organization, to not only protect our investment in hunting and conservation, but advance it for future generations. ■



As the 114th Congress convenes in their final year, leaders and members of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC) continue working to move a bipartisan package of pro-sportsmen's legislation. The Sportsmen's Heritage and Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Act and The Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act, both introduced in 2015, aim to benefit America's sportsmen and sportswomen, addressing issues from enhancing recreational access to promoting wildlife conservation.

The end of 2015 saw a positive movement of both House and Senate packages. In October, the House Natural Resources Committee held a markup and passed the SHARE Act out of Committee with a vote of 21 to 15 in favor of the bill. In November, the

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee passed the first half of the Sportsmen's Act provisions, and the Environment and Public Works Committee is expected to hold a markup on the second half of the Senate package early in 2016.

With bipartisan support, these bills are indicative of the fact that hunting, angling, recreational shooting, and our outdoor traditions are not defined by or constrained to any partisan label. We are sportsmen and sportswomen because we appreciate and are stewards of America's great outdoors, regardless of political affiliation, race, religion, gender, or socio-economic standing. The bills have received written support from nearly 50 national hunting and angling conservation organizations who collectively represent millions of American sportsmen and sportswomen.

Among other important measures for sportsmen and sportswomen, provisions within the House and Senate sportsmen's packages will: add lead fishing line to the list of exempted products from EPA regulation, leaving regulatory authority to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and state fish and wildlife agencies; require federal land managers to consider how management plans affect opportunities to engage in hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting; and enable states to allocate a greater proportion of federal funding to create and main-

tain shooting ranges.

Leaders of the CSC are working with partners within the hunting and angling community to gain more bipartisan supporters from the House and Senate and to pass a sportsmen's package that addresses important measures for the sportsmen's conservation community, users of our public resources, and conservation funding.

The importance of passing a comprehensive sportsmen's package helps sustain and enhance the "user pays, public benefits" program known as the American System of Conservation Funding, which has generated billions of dollars for conservation projects across the United States since 1937. These funds, from the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs, come from hunting and fishing licenses as well as excise taxes from hunting, fishing, and boating equipment. The term "conservationist" was originally attributed to sportsmen and sportswomen, as true stewards of our fish and wildlife resources. In October, 37 members of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners, including the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation and the Boone and Crockett Club, published a letter emphasizing the true identity of America's conservationists.

CSF and conservation partners urge you to contact your Members of Congress and ask them to support the SHARE Act in the House, the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act in the Senate, and the swift passage of a sportsmen's bill crucial to conservation and our American traditions. ■



CSF President Jeff Crane testifies before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act.

COURTESY OF THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE.

Find out who your members of Congress and Senators are and how to contact them by visiting www.congress.gov/members.

THE POLITICS OF WILDLIFE

THE TRUE IDENTITY OF AMERICA'S CONSERVATIONISTS

GARY KANIA
VICE PRESIDENT, CONGRESSIONAL
SPORTSMEN'S FOUNDATION
B&C PROFESSIONAL MEMBER

The community of hunters and anglers must take every available opportunity to educate the American people and the media on what the term "conservationist" means, who the conservationists are, and what conservationists have achieved in making this country's wildlife resources the envy of the world.

The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), Boone and Crockett Club, and 35 other members of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners, signed on in support of the following published letter at the end of 2015, a testament to sportsmen and sportswomen as American's true conservationists.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Gifford Pinchot, Chief of the U.S. Forest Service and one of the fathers of the American conservation movement, developed the now widely accepted definition of conservation as the "wise use of the Earth and its resources for the lasting good of men." According to Pinchot, the purpose of conservation is to produce "the greatest good for the greatest number for the longest time," with sound science as the recognized tool to accomplish this objective.

Conservationists are people who support and/or engage in this approach to natural resource management. Hunters and anglers are among the first Americans to endorse the idea. Their legacy is now over 100 years old. Through their leadership, state agencies were established to manage our nation's fish and wildlife, and to adopt laws and create programs to conserve these public trust resources.

*Arguably, the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs (WSFR), a key component of the **American System of Conservation Funding**, were the most important of these programs to be created. Through this unique "user-pays, public-benefits" system, sportsmen and sportswomen are the primary funders of wildlife conservation, providing upwards of 80 percent of the funding for state fish and wildlife agencies. They also financially support conservation through the purchase of hunting and fishing licenses and permits, duck stamps, firearms, ammunition and archery equipment,*

philanthropy, and the creation of organizations whose sole mission is the restoration and enhancement of species of wildlife.

Unfortunately, the tremendous contribution made by sportsmen and sportswomen toward the restoration and conservation of our wildlife resources remains largely unknown to the general public. This situation is exacerbated by the media's broad-based use of the term "conservationist." They are unable to distinguish between individuals and organizations that financially support wildlife conservation and those that don't. The latter include animal rights and anti-hunting organizations, those whose funding is spent primarily on litigating resource management decisions and those that promote a preservationist "don't touch" philosophy in wildlife management.

It is not by accident that these groups through their interaction with the media seized upon the term "conservationist" in order to cloak their preservationist, anti-consumptive use philosophy. In the 1990s, labels such as "environmentalist," "protectionist," and "animal rightist," became undesirable labels. These groups began the calculated adoption of the term "conservationist" in an effort to reverse the political and societal credibility that they were beginning to lose.

It is critical that we educate the American public about the fact that hunting, angling, recreational shooting, and trapping are closely related to fish and wildlife

conservation. In fact, it is almost universally impossible to speak of one without the other. The term "conservationist" must be rightfully applied.

Using phrases like "sportsmen and other conservationists," or "sportsmen-conservationists" when describing ourselves accurately characterizes the relationship between sportsmen and sportswomen and our nation's natural resources. "Conservationist" is a title sportsmen and sportswomen helped create, work hard to maintain, and are proud to rightfully claim. They truly earned and deserve this distinctive designation.

The community of hunters and anglers must take every available opportunity to educate the American people and the media on what the term "conservationist" means, who the conservationists are, and what conservationists have achieved in making this country's wildlife resources the envy of the world.

Leading the charge for the hunting and fishing community are members of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), who are working in 2016 to pass comprehensive sportsmen's packages in the House and Senate: The Sportsmen's Heritage and Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Act and the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act. CSF and the Boone and Crockett Club, along with our other partners within the conservation community support and are actively engaged in advancing these important packages of conservation legislation. ■