

CONGRESSIONAL SPORTSMEN'S FOUNDATION TURNS 30

CONSERVATION
POLICY COLUMN



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With this issue of *Fair Chase*, we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), established in 1989. CSF's mission today is to work with Congress, governors, and state legislatures to protect and advance hunting, angling, recreational shooting, and trapping. It is one of the Boone and Crockett Club's most valued partners. Seven of CSF's members—Simon Roosevelt, Richard Childress, Paul Babaz, Jim Baker, Walter McLallen, Lindsay Thomas, and I, James Cummins—are Regular or Professional Members of the Club.

It is the goal of CSF to provide scientific research, wildlife management guidelines, public education materials, conservation information and offer non-partisan advice, support and information to sportsmen's caucuses and governing officials. Today, the CSF is one of the most respected and trusted sportsmen's organizations in the political arena.

CSF provides support and guidance to three caucus networks operating at both the state and federal levels:

Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC) The bipartisan CSC boasts of nearly 250 members and has grown into one of the largest and most competent caucuses in the US Congress. The CSC is an ally to all sportsmen and women and one of their first lines of defense in protecting hunting, angling, recreational shooting and trapping.

Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC) With 26 members today, the GSC assists in the progress of information and communication exchanges between governors in support of legislation and regulations that protect and promote hunting, angling, recreational shooting and trapping.

National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC) Over 2,000 state legislators and 49 state caucuses are consolidated under the NASC umbrella. This caucus is instrumental in promoting the interaction and idea exchanges between the outdoor community and the state caucus

leaders. The Boone and Crockett Club works primarily through NASC in developing and passing state policy.

This unique and collective force serves as a vital network of pro-sportsmen elected officials across the country working to advance the interests and necessary protections of America's hunters and anglers.

The significance of CSF as the sportsmen's leader on policy issues has continued to grow through active involvement within the hunting and fishing conservation community. This involvement includes staff leadership and engagement in organizations such as American Wildlife Conservation Partners, the Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife, and the Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports at the national level, and, at the state level, the Sunday Hunting Coalition and Families Afield.

CSF is also represented on federally chartered advisory councils that deal with hunting, wildlife management and recreational fishing, including: the Hunting and Shooting Sports Conservation Council, the National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee, the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee, and the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council.

In an effort to further ensure inclusivity, CSF is governed by a board of directors comprised of leaders from the sportsmen's community and allied industries. Each individual serving on the board is dedicated to the commitment of service to the mission, objectives and goals of the Foundation. I am proud to be a part of this board.

Sportsmen and women across the country have benefitted from the work of the CSF. Here are some examples of the policy advances at the federal level made possible by CSF in the 30 years since it was founded:

Mason Neck Wildlife Refuge Vote (1992) The first real test faced by the CSC and CSF. A clash between animal rights advocates and sportsmen ensued over a whitetail deer hunt on the Mason Neck Wildlife Refuge, a site overrun by deer.

Animal rights groups were able to include a provision to stop the hunt in an Interior appropriations bill. The CSC and CSF were instrumental in obtaining an amendment to support the hunt which passed the house in a bipartisan vote. With this achievement, the CSC and CSF were able to demonstrate that sportsmen could effectively unite on conservation issues.

Recreational Hunting Safety and Preservation Act (1994) Due to an increase in harassment from anti-hunting groups, this act was passed, allowing for penalties to be brought against individuals who purposefully disrupt hunting activities on federally-managed lands.

Magnuson-Stevens Act Reauthorized (1996) A key federal law governing marine fisheries management, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act was overhauled. This resulted in significant changes with the goals of conserving fish stocks and restoring overfished populations.

Disabled Sportsmen's Access Act (1998) This bill was passed, which made it easier for disabled sportsmen to hunt on Department of Defense (DOD) lands. This also allowed for the DOD to accept donations and volunteers in order to increase safety and access. This resulted in over 25 million acres of DOD lands being opened to the public for hunting purposes.

State Wildlife Grants Program Established (2001) Born out of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA), the State Wildlife Grants Program became a core program for keeping wildlife from becoming endangered by providing much-needed funding for conservation projects in every state and territory.

Electronic Duck Stamp (2006) The E-Duck Stamp Act was passed and was

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pivotal in launching a program to make it easier to obtain a Federal Duck Stamp online. This change resulted in the online sales of 250,195 Federal Duck Stamps, producing \$3.7 million towards waterfowl habitat restoration.

Increased Funding for Wetlands Conservation (2006) The reauthorization of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) was signed into law. Passage of this act resulted in the conservation of more than 20 million acres of wetlands and associated uplands in over 1,600 projects across North America.

Conservation Stamp (2010) Known simply as H.R. 1454, the Multi-National Species Conservation Funds Semi-Postal Act, became public law after CSF and 40 other conservation organizations signed a letter sent to the House Natural Resource Committee supporting the act. This legislation allows the public to purchase a conservation stamp that generates funding for conservation without costing the taxpayers money.

Billfish Conservation Act (2012) H.R. 2706 became public law. This was passed to reduce overfishing by prohibiting the sale of Pacific-caught billfish, except for Hawaiian traditional fisheries. The passage of the Billfish Conservation Act of 2012 was considered a huge victory for sportsmen and the economy as it fought to support conservation efforts and healthy ocean ecosystems.

Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act (2014) H.R. 1206 allowed states to participate in an electronic duck stamp program so hunters can purchase their duck stamps by using a personal computer.

Modern Fish Act (2018) H.R. 200 was included in the Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization, which gives recreational anglers a more prominent seat at the table for fisheries management.

The Farm Bill (2018) The 2018 version of the Farm Bill included a robust conservation title by allocating funding to provide conservation incentives on agricultural land. It promoted partnerships between state and local governments and private landowners, among other provisions that promote wildlife and land conservation.

John Dingell Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (2019) S. 47 became the largest sportsmen's package of legislation signed into law in over a decade, including several provisions for sportsmen's access and opportunities across the country (state level).

National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses is Formed (2004) With the inception of NASC, an umbrella organization was established for sportsmen's caucuses across the country that created a network of state legislators working together, sharing information and creating pro-sportsmen's legislation. There are currently 49 states that have a legislative sportsmen's caucus totaling more than 2,000 state legislator members across the country.

No-Net-Loss Catches On (2005) This legislation was introduced in Illinois as a means to prevent state lands open to hunting and fishing to be arbitrarily closed without an equal amount of suitable lands becoming available for hunting and fishing access. This idea was shared at the initial NASC meeting in December 2004. As a result, Arkansas and Maryland were successful in advancing the issue in the 2005 legislative sessions. Mississippi and Florida followed in 2006.

First Sales Tax Holiday on Outdoor Gear Established (2008) South Carolina was the first to create legislation that suspended taxes for a day on outdoor gear, including firearms.

Advancing Hunter Recruitment Programs (2009) Members of CSF's state caucuses across the country introduced several pieces of legislation dealing with the recruitment of new hunters through apprentice hunting license programs and college student hunting licenses, among other promotional items that have since been passed into law. Advancing hunter and angler recruitment, retention, and reactivation has been a continued goal of NASC and the state caucuses.

Right to Hunt and Fish (2007 - present) In order to establish in perpetuity what has been assumed for centuries, several states have sought amendments to their state constitutions that give their citizens a right to hunt, fish, and harvest wildlife and to continue a consumptive, yet responsible, use of natural resources. Currently, 22 states have enacted legislation or amended their constitution to protect the right to hunt, fish, and harvest wildlife. The Mississippi Legislature passed legislation that put this question to the voters of Mississippi on the November ballot in 2016, where it passed overwhelmingly.

These achievements represent a small portion of the work done by CSF. However, the immense impacts on conservation with these alone are immeasurable. After 30 years, there have been many goals accomplished, yet there is more work to be done. Thankfully, CSF is always working to advance and promote conservation efforts on the state and federal levels. The Boone and Crockett Club is proud to be a part of such a great organization, and we congratulate CSF on 30 years of great work.