THE BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB ON FAIR CHASE

9/5/2016

Why a Discussion on Fair Chase?

All significant human activities are conducted under a set of ethical principles that guide appropriate behavior. Depending on the activity, these principles are molded into laws when specific behavior is required. Without ethics and laws, most activities would become unsafe and unacceptable to both those who participate in them and those who do not. Hunting is no different. It, too, has principles and laws that guide ethical behavior. In modern, developed societies, there exists a general expectation that hunting be conducted under appropriate conditions—animals are taken for legitimate purposes such as food, to attain wildlife agency management goals, and to mitigate property damage. It is also expected that the hunting is done sustainably and legally, and that hunters conduct themselves ethically by showing respect for the land and animals they hunt. In the broadest sense, hunters are guided by a conservation ethic, but the most common term used to describe the actual ethical pursuit of a big game animal is "fair chase."

The concept of fair chase has been widely promoted for over a century by the Boone and Crockett Club, an organization founded by Theodore Roosevelt in 1887 to work towards saving what was left of dwindling North American wildlife populations. The Club defines fair chase as "the ethical, sportsmanlike, and lawful pursuit and taking of any free-ranging wild, native North American big game animal in a manner that does not give the hunter an improper advantage over such animals."

Fair chase has become a code of conduct for the American sportsman, helped shape the foundation of many of our game laws, and is taught to new hunters as they complete mandatory certification courses. However, despite its long history and widespread acceptance, fair chase is not as clearly understood by hunters or the non-hunting public as it should be. This is because social values, conservation practices, and hunting technologies are constantly evolving. Furthermore, fair chase is more a matter of the "spirit of the hunt" than a set of written rules. It is shaped, in part, by an individual's motivations for hunting and their personal sense of right and wrong. Thus, the meaning of fair chase can vary to some extent from one person to the next. What is most important is that hunters recognize and embrace the ideal of fair chase and use it individually to measure their hunting decisions and experiences.

Our society has become increasingly urbanized. More people are now living isolated from nature and outdoor activities such as hunting. As hunters represent a smaller percentage of the overall population, and wildlife conservation becomes more of a global concern, growing segments of society are questioning the validity of hunting including its benefits, how it is conducted, and if it should continue as a legal activity. Regulated hunting fundamentally supports wildlife conservation efforts in North America and, to varying extents, in other parts of the world. A loss of hunting would therefore equate with a measureable loss in conservation efforts. Consequently, the Club believes that informed discussion about hunting ethics and fair chase are important if we are to maintain a tradition of successful wildlife conservation and management.

The Origins of Conservation and Fair Chase

By the close of the 19th century, the preceding two hundred years of unregulated taking of wildlife by commercial market hunters combined with irresponsible land use practices had left North American wildlife, especially big game populations, in dismal condition. Some species had already been lost to extinction while others were close to being lost forever. Something drastic had to be done. What was needed was a new relationship between the nation's citizens and their natural resources. This new relationship would be known as conservation. Theodore Roosevelt and his fellow Club members believed that conservation of all natural resources, especially wildlife, was critical to the nation's future. The most practical means of ensuring future resource availability was through a sustainable use approach, and for wildlife, sustainable use meant regulated, public hunting. Hunting was well suited to serve as the foundation of this new system of wildlife conservation because when any natural resource has value and people have access to it, the resource flourishes under the advocacy and protection of its users.

Boone and Crockett Club members defined conservation as "wise and prudent use without waste," which was based on a belief that humans are part of the natural world and that wildlife can and should be used, but in an ecologi-

cally sound, sustainable manner. Conservation was implemented through active management, regulated hunting, and in some cases, complete protection of wildlife species. In the late 1800s, unrestricted hunting was still a way of life and a means of livelihood for many people. Conservation was initially not a popular idea among meat or "pot" hunters and commercial market shooters. It was also difficult to convince citizens who were just becoming aware of the scale of wildlife depletion that the best way to recover this diminishing resource was by continuing to hunt game species, and stop the killing of other species. Ultimately, conservation would be the focal point of President Roosevelt's administration and was not only accepted, but became a matter of national duty.

> ***"Conservation means development as much as it does protection. I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us."***
> —Theodore Roosevelt, The New Nationalism speech, 1910

The sustainable use approach of Theodore Roosevelt and others helped launch the first environmental movement in North America. As historian and author John Reiger noted of the Boone and Crockett Club, "the organization's influence would prove far in excess of any ordinary association of similar size. In fact, the Boone and Crockett Club—not the Sierra Club—was the first private organization to deal effectively with conservation issues of national scope." Many other conservation-minded segments of society joined the Club to solidify conservation as the most widely accepted model for the treatment of natural resources, including wildlife, timber, water, and soils.

At the first official meeting of the Boone and Crockett Club in 1888, its members, who were all experienced outdoorsmen and explorers, discussed an ethical code for sportsmen. They were aware that ethics in hunting had first emerged centuries ago, primarily among wealthy European landowners and royalty who hunted both to enjoy the challenge and to manage game on their land holdings. The majority of immigrants that settled in the New World, however, were commoners concerned primarily with survival. They had no need or desire for a hunting ethic.

The members of the Club reasoned that if the recovery and conservation of big game populations was to stand a chance of succeeding, a different approach to hunting was needed. Laws and government game management agencies alone would not necessarily satisfy a society concerned with wildlife extinction. The Club believed there also had to be a code of conduct for sportsmen, leaving no doubt that hunting would be conducted ethically and in a manner that would aid wildlife recovery and not threaten wildlife populations. Members agreed that such a code would also be helpful in further distancing ethical hunting from commercial market hunting, an industry that was eventually eliminated by actions of the Boone and Crockett Club. The code needed to convey the idea that achievement in the field is best measured by the effort involved, that the hunting experience was far more important than the kill, and that hunting serves the goals of conservation. These ideas merged to become fair chase.

Fair chase was not widely accepted at first. Many people were still hunting to survive or at least supplementing their income through hunting. The public had not yet realized that wildlife populations were not in unlimited supply. In addition, the Old World idea that wildlife "belonged" to certain individuals had been rejected. In North America, wildlife was viewed as a public trust resource. This meant that wildlife did not belong to government, wealthy individuals, or royalty. Wildlife and other natural resources belonged to all citizens equally. At the time, a public trust approach to wildlife access was a new concept and a uniquely American way of viewing wildlife.

One of the most famous hunts illustrating fair chase was in 1902, when President Theodore Roosevelt went to Mississippi to hunt black bear. When Roosevelt failed to locate a bear on his own, his hunting guide took it upon himself to corner and tie a bear to a tree, and then summoned the President. Being excluded from the actual pursuit and being expected to shoot the helpless black bear was unacceptable to Roosevelt. He found the entire situation extremely unsportsmanlike. The news of this event spread quickly through newspaper articles across the country. In showing his passion for the hunt itself by imposing his own rules of ethical engagement, Roosevelt provided a simple but powerful example of fair chase to a nation who was largely unfamiliar with the concept. This famous hunt also resulted in the birth of the world's most popular toy – the Teddy Bear.

By the early part of the 20th century, a noticeable societal change had occurred. People taking responsibility for wild game and the lands they required became more widespread, especially after conservation efforts began to pay dividends and game populations showed signs of recovering. Hunting responsibly, by implementing fair chase,

became a badge of honor. Using self-restraint shifted the emphasis of measuring success from the quantity of game taken to the quality of the chase. The hunting experience now meant contributing to a greater good as opposed to simply killing a limit. Hunting under a conservation ethic meant there would be game to hunt in the future. This may have been self-serving—using restraint today so there would be game to hunt tomorrow—but time would prove it was the right choice for the nation's wildlife.

New laws were established at the insistence of sportsmen, which included structured hunting seasons and reasonable bag limits. Eventually, sportsmen chose to tax themselves to support conservation and game management programs. Combined with game laws, the fair chase ethic became a self-policing way of doing what was best for the hunter's personal sense of accomplishment and for wildlife populations. Ethics in hunting also demonstrated that sportsmen were committed to the ecological welfare of the land and water on which wildlife populations depended.

Hunting has played and continues to play a vital role in wildlife conservation. Game managers rely heavily on regulated hunting to help them maintain sustainable animal populations in harmony with both the lands they inhabit and other wildlife, and at socially acceptable levels. The fees and excise taxes that are generated by hunting remain a critical source of funding for federal, state, provincial, and tribal governments that manage all wildlife, game and non-game species alike. It is true that fair chase emerged at a time of crisis in North America. The objective then was wildlife recovery and an ethical approach to hunting guided by game laws. Today, there are many laws to protect species from over-harvest. Game species have recovered and, in some cases, wildlife overabundance is becoming a problem. Regardless of this recovery, regulated hunting remains a cornerstone of conservation and fair chase remains the ethical basis of hunting's conservation ethic.

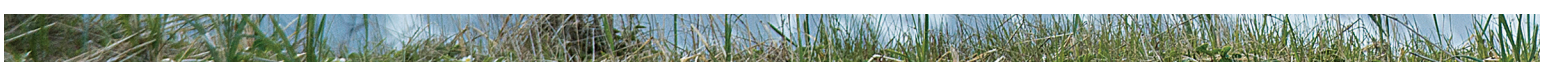
> ***"There must be some force behind conservation more universal than profit, less awkward than government, less ephemeral than sport, something that reaches into all time and places where men live on the land, something that brackets everything from rivers to raindrops, from whales to hummingbirds, from land estates to window boxes. I can see only one such force: A respect for land as an organism; a voluntary decency in land use exercised by every citizen and every land owner out of a sense of love and obligation to that great biota we call America. This is the meaning of conservation."***—Aldo Leopold, The Meaning of Conservation, 1946

Ethics, Fair Chase, Laws and Hunting

Ethics, in general, are a set of principles that guide human behavior. Ethics can be private and social, subjective and objective, emotional and rational. The most basic of all ethical principles is to do no harm to other individuals, communities where you live, society in general, and the biotic community to which all humans belong. Ethics in hunting are rooted in an overall conservation ethic, which prescribes doing no harm to game populations or their habitats, or unnecessary or frivolous harm to the individual animals being hunted. Ethical hunting, therefore, requires both a sustainable and respectful approach to harvesting game and making every effort to ensure a quick, humane death without unnecessary suffering for the particular animal being pursued.

Hunting ethics are not the same for every person. They are shaped by ethical teachings from mentors and peers, as well as an individual's own experiences, culture, basic upbringing, and what motivates them to hunt. An individual's hunting ethic is manifested by their actions before, during, and after a hunt. For example, honing skills in marksmanship and knowing one's maximum effective range are ethical preparations before the hunt. Properly caring for the meat in the field and packing it out are examples of ethical approaches after the animal has been harvested (and also the law in most states and provinces). Following up and exhausting all possibilities to verify if an animal has been hit and possibly wounded is an ethical choice. Choosing to hunt fair chase is also a choice among a number of ethical decisions a hunter must make.

Fair chase deals specifically with ethical choices made during a hunt. There is accountability that comes with taking the life of a game animal, which is why hunting is so different than any other human activity. Choosing to release an arrow or fire a bullet is final. There is no calling it back. With so much left up to the individual at the moment immediately before a weapon discharges, there is much personal responsibility that comes with that decision. These kinds of personal choices cannot and perhaps should not be regulated by laws. Indeed, it is the self-governing nature of fair chase that allows us to take pride in the choices we make, and take exception to practices and choices



we deem unethical. A valuable aspect of the time-honored tradition of hunting is that sportsmen have historically policed themselves and extended their ethical behavior in many cases beyond the requirements of the law. Even if they don't always agree on what fair chase is in every case, hunters admire the personal acceptance and application of an ethical code towards their activity and the animals they pursue.

If there is one hard and fast rule, it is that something illegal can never be fair chase. Conversely, just because something is legal does not make it fair chase. This is because fair chase extends beyond written laws. For example, shooting a wild turkey perched on a limb of a tree is not illegal, but to those who consider the art of decoying and calling a wary bird into range to be turkey hunting, taking such a shot would be neither fair chase nor turkey hunting. There are no laws against shooting a game animal that has become partially domesticated or habituated to humans. Fair chase, however, would not take advantage of animals whose natural instincts have been compromised in this way. Similarly, even if technology can be legally used to take longer and longer shots, a fair chase hunter would choose to stalk an animal to a proven, effective range instead of testing the limits of equipment and shooting skills. These may seem like easy distinctions to make, but fair chase decisions can be nuanced in an increasingly complex world.

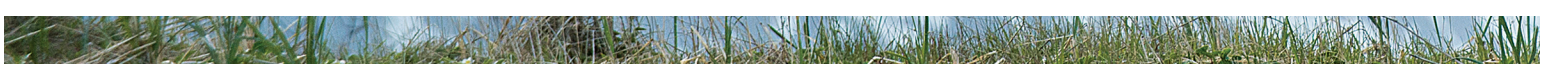
> ***"Ethical behavior is doing the right thing when no one else is watching—even when doing the wrong thing is legal."*** —Unknown

The literal meaning of fair chase is complicated by the fact that "fair" has many meanings and uses in the English language, e.g., fair ball, fair weather, fair skin, fair chance, fair play. When the word "fair" is paired with "chase," it implies that hunting is fair or equal. It is not. Hunting is not a field sport like baseball or football where the participants agree to the rules of engagement beforehand. In hunting, the hunted has not agreed to anything, nor does it have an equal chance in most cases to kill the human hunter. For most species, escape is the only option. Therefore, the meaning of fair chase is based on the definition of "fair" that relates to legitimate, honorable, genuine, or appropriate, given the circumstances. To complicate matters further, hunting itself is often labeled sport hunting, even though hunting does not resemble any sport played on a field or court. The term "sport" as used in hunting means offering the animal a chance to escape. A sporting approach recognizes the advantage of human capabilities, including technologies, and a desire to constrain ourselves. More often than not, this means prey will avoid the hunter. Knowing what improper advantage means comes from experience, but if there is any doubt, the advantage should go to the animal. That is fair chase.

What is and is not fair chase can be further complicated by the influence of local customs, traditions, and methods. Baiting bears and running deer with dogs are good examples of traditions that may be acceptable in one region but not in another. Even if these local customs are legal, preferred, and prescribed hunting methods by the governing agency (and therefore ethical) in that locale, a fair chase hunter should still consider how these methods align with their personal value system. However, even if one determines that such hunting tradition is not personally acceptable, one should still respect another person's decision to engage in that custom.

One of the most basic tenets of fair chase is determining if an animal has a reasonable opportunity to escape. If it does not, the hunt cannot be considered fair chase. Shooting an animal stranded by flood waters, mired by deep snow, or entangled in a barbwire fence is simply unethical and certainly not an appropriate chase. In fair chase hunting, the pursuit itself defines the experience, while the kill remains a secondary. To the seasoned hunter, a fair chase hunt that ends with no animal harvested is still a successful hunt. That is because fair chase applies the hunter's acquired knowledge of the animal against the animal's own superior senses and evasive capability. Once this has happened; hunting happens, whether a kill is made or not. Shortchanging, manipulating, or otherwise compromising this hunt equation lessens the significance of the experience, and potentially undermines the defensibility of the hunt.

> ***"Hunting at its most fundamental level is defined by an intimate yet tenuous and unpredictable relationship between predator and prey. This is an intrinsic and irrefutable connection that cannot be compromised if the hunter is to maintain the sanctity of this bond and any credible claim that hunting is respectful of wild creatures and in service to wildlife conservation. This relationship is built upon many complex components that differentiate hunting from simply shooting or commercially harvesting wild game."*** —Dan Pedrotti, Jr., *Fair Chase* Magazine 2013



Canned shoots are examples of situations that completely distort the hunt equation, and are an affront to fair chase hunting. Canned shoots involve the "pursuit" and killing of any big game animal kept in, or released from, captivity in order to be shot in an artificial hunting situation where a kill is virtually guaranteed. Canned shoots may be legal in some states and provinces, but they are not representative of fair chase hunting. Canned shoots exist because there are willing buyers who will pay a fee to engage in this activity. These customers must believe it is acceptable to trade the experience of a fair chase hunt for the sake of an assured kill. Businesses that provide this service have responded accordingly by offering contrived, expensive, quick-kill situations. The canned shoot should be a concern to all sportsmen, especially when the broader non-hunting public often mistakenly believes that this practice is representative of all hunting.

Advancements in technology can also have an effect on the hunt equation and challenge our notions of fair chase. The use of technological advancements in mechanized travel for hunting, such as by boat, airplane, or other motorized vehicle is a good example. Their use increases our advantage while decreasing the reasonable chance of game to escape. Transporting ourselves and our equipment to the area where we are hunting is one thing. Fair chase requires that from this point (unless physically limited), that the final stalk is done on foot. Other technologies have certainly made us better and more efficient marksmen relative to taking game quickly and humanely, which are positive advancements. On the other hand, when technology becomes a substitute for basic skills in the field (i.e., buying skill), this is where technology not only undermines the hunting experience, but also has the potential to erode public support for hunting. It is very difficult to maintain any credible claim that hunting is rewarding because of the challenge if the entire experience can come down to pressing a button on a highly sophisticated device.

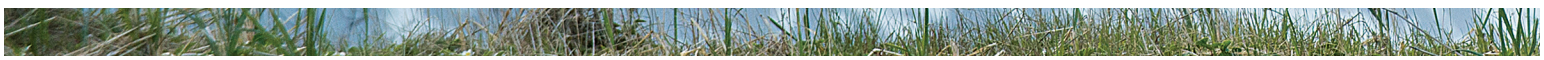
States and provinces sometimes establish laws to limit the use of emerging technologies, but new hunting products are constantly being developed and marketed. Advances in technology have made hunting very efficient for the hunter, more efficient than what some game populations can bear. Even where legal, hunters must consider the ethics of using technologies that allow them to shoot at substantially increased distances far beyond an animal's ability to sense danger; game scouting cameras that transmit live, real time images to the hunter; on call hunting (using cell phones to call in a hunter when game has been located by others), and using two-way radios to guide a hunter to game in the field.

When the challenges of hunting are eliminated, we risk losing the special nature of the hunting experience itself. Most hunters agree that the uncertainty and the "no-guarantees" character of hunting is its most powerful attraction. Recognizing humans are the alpha predator and that there is a need to limit our hunting advantage over wildlife is key to using technology in an ethical manner. A fair chase hunter does not measure success by the sophistication of the technology they employ, but by the level of restraint they use. Inevitably, each of us will have to choose if easier is better.

> ***"The true hunter counts his achievement in proportion to the effort involved and the fairness of the sport."*** —Saxton Pope

Some people believe that trophy hunting—selectively hunting for animals with the largest antlers, horns, or skull—is an unacceptable motivation for hunting. This disapproval is not based on how an animal is hunted, but on the belief that the sole purpose of the hunt is to collect a large mount for the wall, and the rest of the animal is wasted. Despite these misperceptions by some people, if a hunter's intent is to hunt hard and hold out for an animal that is well into maturity, passed his breeding prime and has survived many seasons, that is a choice that should be respected. The primary motivation for seeking a trophy is a higher degree of difficulty. An older, more mature animal is experienced in not being seen by and eluding predators, including human hunters. These individuals are typically more difficult to locate and hunt—qualities that appeal to the fair chase hunter. The Club is concerned about the disapproval of trophy hunting, which is focused more on the trophy hunter than the welfare of the big game animal. With the criticisms being more about the hunter, one way to address this situation is to always hunt under fair chase conditions.

Fair chase and the Boone and Crockett Club's trophy record books are not intended to glorify the hunter, but rather to celebrate the animal and the wildlife management and conservation efforts that allowed it to reach such an age and size. That is why the Club keeps track of all eligible antlers, horns, skulls and tusks, and not only those taken



and entered by hunters. The record books are designed to include qualifying animals that are shot and discovered later, animals that die of natural causes, or ones that are killed by vehicles, for example, and they are listed in the record books as "Picked Up." The Club believes that any animal taken in fair chase is worthy of respect and admiration, regardless of size. A mounted trophy should really stand only for two things: as proof that science-informed conservation works, and as a lasting memory of a special time, place, and animal that was taken fairly and hunted ethically.

For the fair chase hunter, a challenging hunt is always deemed more meaningful and provides lasting memories. Memories of time spent afield are a treasured outcome of any hunt, particularly for those that cherish the hunting experience and their connection with the natural world above all else. For many hunters, "the ones that got away" are just as memorable as the ones that did not. Less than ethical behavior may or may not change the outcome of a hunt, but it will certainly diminish its value as a memory. If one needs to skip certain details in telling others about a hunt, those details probably offended a personal sense of fair chase at some level. Fair chase hunting ensures nothing needs to be edited. Fair chase also ensures we pass along to the next generation the virtues that will maximize their enjoyment of hunting, while encouraging proper stewardship of wild game and habitat. Fair chase hunters seek and attract other fair chase hunters. There is comfort in knowing that those who inherit our hunting traditions will be safely and ethically hunting among friends who share these values.

> ***"Some people claim we have too many hunting laws and principles like hunting ethics and fair chase and that these are just words used to justify hunting to the wider public as if we were doing something wrong. I disagree; and I disagree strongly. Clearly we need never apologize for something that provides as much as hunting does for society and for the natural environment. Having rules, laws, and personal ethics to govern and guide our hunting practices is about respect, for the wildlife we pursue, for the landscapes in which those creatures thrive, and for ourselves as hunters. Certainly we should also acknowledge that our society rightly expects, and deserves, an ethical approach to the use of any public resources and especially toward any living creature. The truth is, we are hunting today because the majority of sportsmen over the past century have held themselves to a high ethical standard. My concern, and the concern of many sportsmen I have talked to is this: what they were taught was unacceptable is now being shown as acceptable to our next generation of hunters. Unfortunately, times and circumstances are changing, moving the line between what was once unthinkable to something now less troubling."***—Shane Mahoney, Hunt Ethics episode, Boone and Crockett Country 2012

Fair Chase and the Boone and Crockett Club's Records Program

The big game records program of Boone and Crockett Club is a set of wildlife and hunting records that gauges the successes of wildlife conservation and management programs. The Club's scoring system and records data provides an indicator of herd and habitat conditions for native, wild, North American big game species. These records data, which have been collected since the early 20th century, are a respected benchmark by which successes and failures of conservation efforts over time can be measured across all North American big game species. The records not only recognize the quality of the animal but also the sportsmen and sportswomen who took the animal while upholding the tenets of fair chase. Over the years, the Club has developed rules for trophy eligibility based on its desire to promote fair chase while also collecting data that is valuable to game managers, biologists, lawmakers, hunters, and others responsible for wildlife conservation in North America.

The Boone and Crockett Club has always required that in order for a trophy to be accepted in its records books the animal must be taken under fair chase conditions, and satisfy all other entry requirements. Over the years, the Club has clarified fair chase specifically for its records program in response to new technologies and hunting practices. For example, when aircraft became more widely used in hunting remote areas in the 1960s, the Club deemed spotting or herding game from the air and then landing in its vicinity for hunting purposes not to be fair chase; animals taken in this way were therefore ineligible. In the early 1980s, when the practice of building high fences around private properties was increasing, the Club anticipated that this trend would challenge the principle of public wildlife, the traditions of hunting wild, free-ranging game, and lead to more canned shooting operations that violated the principles of fair chase. In 1983, the Club adopted a policy that made whitetail deer and other species taken in escape-proof enclosures ineligible for its records books.

Today, the Club recognizes that not all high fence properties are engaging in canned shoots or unnatural manipulations to produce trophies for shooting, but its records program utilizes a clear and easily applied rule that all animals from escape-proof enclosures are treated the same—as ineligible trophies.

Fair chase and other policies relating to technology, escape-proof enclosures, and hunting practices will continue to be a standard for inclusion of any trophy in the Boone and Crockett Club's records program, but it has never been the intention of the Club to limit the application of fair chase only to eligibility in its records book. Less than one-half of one percent of hunters will ever take a qualifying Boone and Crockett book trophy in their lifetime. More to the point, fair chase is an ideal the Club advocates for all the reasons presented in this essay. Fair chase exists with or without records books, and it should be a consideration for every licensed hunter whenever and wherever they hunt. Fair chase is not only significant to a personal hunting ethic; it is critical to the continuation of hunting and the success of conservation in North America.

Fair Chase and the Survival of Hunting

Ethical choices in hunting are more important today than at any previous time. Hunter's values—their motivations and their conduct—shape society's opinion of hunting. A recent scientific survey conducted by Mark Damien Duda of Responsive Management indicates that American's approval of hunting remains high. The study found that 77% of American adults strongly or moderately approve of hunting, however this support is conditional rather than absolute. Approval of hunting tends to vary considerably according to species, and method of hunting. Equally important to Americans' overall approval of hunting is the motivation for hunting. American adults overwhelmingly approve of hunting for food (85% of all respondents expressed strong or moderate approval), to protect humans from harm (85%), for animal population control (83%), for wildlife management (81%) or to protect property (71%). However, approval diminishes considerably when respondents are asked about hunting for the sport (53% approve), to supplement income (44%), hunting on Sundays (41%), for the challenge (40%) or for a trophy (28%). While more than half of American adults strongly or moderately support hunting with dogs (57%), less than half support any of the other hunting methods asked about in the survey: hunting using special scents that attract game (36%), hunting over bait (27%), hunting using high tech gear (20%) or hunting in a high fence preserve (20%). This number climbs to 48% for hunters with limited mobility hunting within a high fence preserve.

In any democracy, society decides what is acceptable or unacceptable, and therefore what stays and what goes. Hunting traditions are potentially at risk if the majority of citizens develop a negative perception of hunting, whether this perception is justified or not. Ethics may be a matter of choice, but the actions of individuals can come to represent the entire group and it is important that hunters understand this.

If the right to hunt is at risk because of unethical hunting practices, wildlife conservation and management is also at risk. At stake are the diverse and abundant wildlife populations that exist in the United States and Canada today, and the landscapes they inhabit. History has shown that when traditional forms of wildlife management are legislated away without a practical and sustaining means to replace them, wildlife, habitat, and people suffer. When hunting is allowed, wildlife populations thrive under active and appropriately funded management programs. When hunting is disallowed, broad interest in game species can decline and wildlife conservation overall becomes an exclusive, expensive government function.

Fair chase helps define hunters as conservationists. Despite the increasing human population, there are proportionally fewer hunters; therefore, hunters must be increasingly united in thought, motivation, and action. There will always be those who believe that advocating or even discussing hunting ethics only divides hunters. There are individuals whose ethics will not agree with those of the majority. The personal nature of hunting ethics invites such a "build-to-suit" response. Fair chase hunters must adopt ways of thinking that guard against the self-serving misrepresentations of others. The good news is that the majority of hunters have embraced fair chase standards; otherwise, society would have done away with hunting decades ago. This is strong evidence to show that fair chase unites more than it divides.

The Boone and Crockett Club will continue to take the steps it believes necessary to ensure that fair chase maintains its prominence among hunters while also reaching out to non-hunters about fair chase and a conservation ethic. Sportsmen and sportswomen must also lead by example as primary proponents of fair chase hunting and, by doing so, safeguard the overall welfare of wildlife, especially big game animals and their habitats.

"In the United States, while the right to keep and bear arms is constitutionally assured, hunting is a privilege to be repeatedly earned, year after year, by those who hunt. It is well for hunters to remember that in a democracy, privileges, which include hunting, are maintained through the approval of the public at large. Hunting must be conducted under both laws and ethical guidelines in order to ensure this approval."—Jack Ward Thomas, *Fair Chase* Magazine 2014

All significant human activities are guided by unifying principles; otherwise the activity becomes less acceptable, less meaningful, and diminishes in value. Fair chase hunters are part of a community that embraces and practices our many privileges, including our right to hunt. As the Club continues to explore and describe the nuances of fair chase, it does not do so in order to exclude others but rather to clearly express ideals and values that will inspire others to join in its practice. The Club's history as a conservation organization requires continuous championing of the fair chase message. We recognize that we do not represent all who hunt. However, all hunters are better off if we hunt responsibly, respectfully, and ultimately defensibly, to maintain the support of society at large. In the end, it is our responsibility to make sure hunting exists for as many people in North America for as many years to come as possible.

Adopted by the Boone and Crockett Club Board of Directors 2/24/2016