

THE BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB AND
THE AMERICAN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PARTNERS

Celebrating 20 Years Of Conservation Partnership Magic PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

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Original Summit Attendees | August 2000 | Boone and Crockett Club Headquarters | Missoula, Montana

THE PAST

The Boone and Crockett Club has had “magical” moments. Best known was the December evening in 1887 when Theodore Roosevelt welcomed a dozen or so friends and colleagues to his home in New York City for dinner and the formation of a club of American hunting riflemen to be called the Boone and Crockett Club. Less well known was a March afternoon in 2000 in Rosemont, Illinois, when the Club, during its annual spring meeting associated with the 65th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, approved a proposal to organize and host a wildlife conservation partners summit that August in Missoula, Montana.

Club President Dan Pedrotti and Club professional member Steve Mealey, also Club consulting administrator, proposed a wildlife conservation partners’ summit to: identify how the nation’s hunter-conservationists could best work together to help chart the course for the future of wildlife conservation in the United States. They argued there was a strong need for hunter-conservationists to speak effectively with one clear voice on important national wildlife and conservation policy issues. Discussion among Club members was lively and opinions were divided: some strongly supportive, but many opposed believing unity among sportsmen while desirable, was not likely achievable. Jack Ward Thomas, Boone and Crockett Club Professor at the University of Montana at the time, reminded discussion participants of the courage and achievements of the Club’s founders who believed in the “magic” and promise of courageous and unified efforts on behalf of wildlife and conservation. After a brief period of reflection, Club members unanimously agreed to support and host the summit.

By 2000, the sporting conservation community recognized that America’s hunting traditions were being challenged and pulled in multiple directions by many forces. These included demographic change, urbanization, concepts including ecosystem management and biological diversity, mass turnover in professional staffs of State and Federal wildlife agencies, declining hunter participation, and rising anti-hunting sentiment. Against this backdrop the number of wildlife advocacy organizations was rapidly increasing, often with conflicting messages diluting their effectiveness. In spite of great successes in restoring wildlife—especially game species—over the past 100 years, the changing social landscape made clear the necessity of facilitating a new coalition of hunter-conservationist organizations seeking a common national agenda for wildlife. This would require building unity among wildlife organizations and increasing their collective effectiveness. Club members saw that a conservation partners summit would advance these ends and extend the great



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conservation legacy begun by Roosevelt and his companions 113 years earlier.

Following the Rosemont meeting, Mealey was assigned full-time to pull the August summit together. He was assisted by a steering committee with representatives from the Boone and Crockett Club, Conservation Fund, Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Izaak Walton League of America, National Shooting Sports Foundation, National Wild Turkey Federation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Safari Club International, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Alliance, and the Wildlife Management Institute. This group completed all the necessary planning and arrangements for a successful summit. Max Peterson with the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Rollie Sparrowe with the Wildlife Management Institute, Paul Hansen with the Izaak Walton League, and Boone and Crockett Club President Dan Pedrotti were especially active and effective steering committee members. The Steering Committee adopted two mottos for the summit: "We Believe in Magic"; and, "It's amazing what can be accomplished when there are no concerns about who gets the credit."

THE FIRST SUMMIT

The summit took place August 7-9, 2000, at Boone and Crockett Headquarters in Missoula, Montana. Nearly 60 hunter-conservationists representing

35 of the nation's leading wildlife conservation organizations participated with a commitment to explore ways of increasing their collective effectiveness in advancing the interests of wildlife and hunting.

Rollie Sparrowe writing in the Winter 2000 edition of *Fair Chase* perhaps best summed up the summit:

"In the heat and smoke of a major fire season in August 2000, 35 wildlife organizations representing 4.3 million hunter-conservationists gathered in Missoula at the National Wildlife Conservation Partners (soon to be changed to American Wildlife Conservation Partners—AWCP) Summit as guests of the Boone and Crockett Club for a meeting about the future of wildlife in America. At Club headquarters over two days of meetings, representatives of this diverse group worked hard to answer four focus questions:

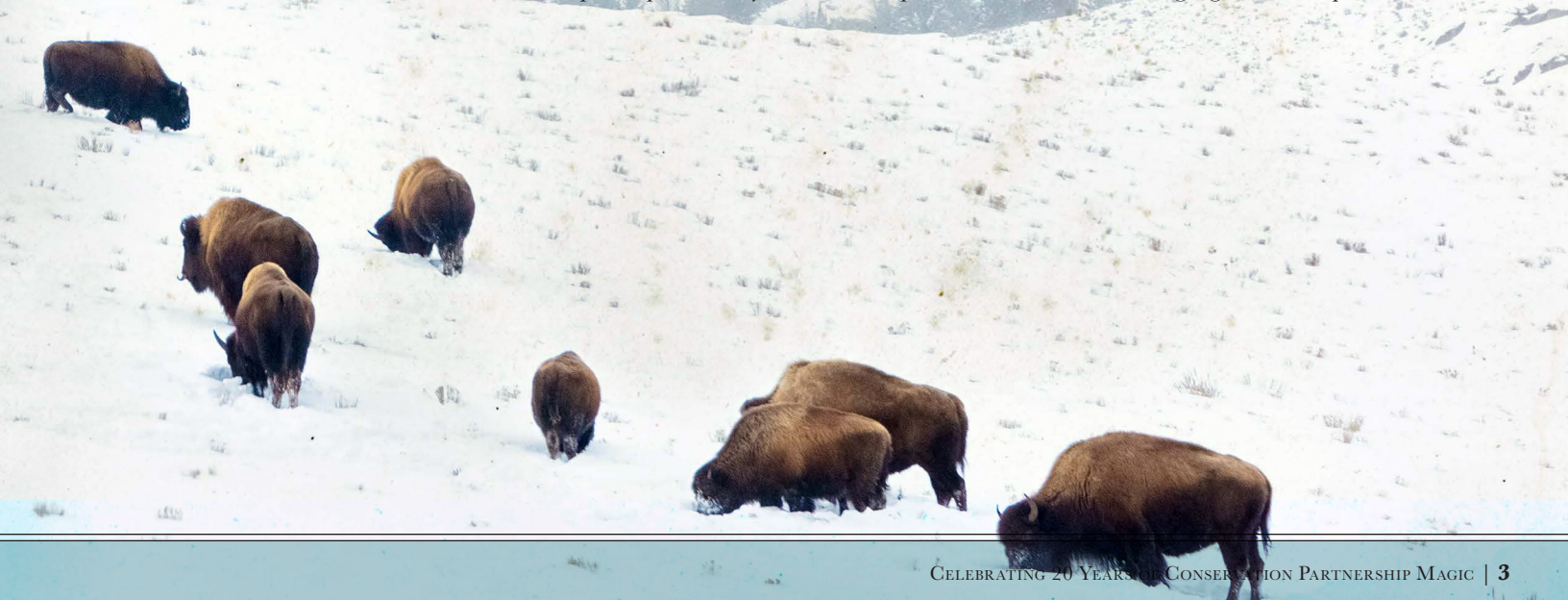
- 1) Should our organizations build unity and increase collective effectiveness; if so, what are some of the specific ways to do it?
- 2) Should our organizations develop a vision for wildlife; if so, what should it contain?
- 3) Should our organizations collectively address some key issues: if so, what is the short list of issues and how should resolution be accomplished?
- 4) Should our organizations develop a wildlife conservation agenda for the next Administration and Congress; if so, what should it contain?

"During the meeting, nearly 60 participants said yes to the four questions

and made significant progress in putting together the who, what, why, and how."

As indicated in Sparrowe's summary, the summit concluded with a "bias for action." The partners agreed to develop and address a list of key wildlife conservation issues, and to advance the list as a wildlife conservation agenda for the new President (George W. Bush), and Congress. The agenda was published in a booklet titled *Wildlife for the 21st Century (W21)* and was sent to the President March 16, 2001. *W21* presented a "short list of issues which if not properly resolved soon could put American wildlife and wildlife management at risk." It also contained 11 recommendations to the President. *Wildlife for the 21st Century* was to be updated every four years concurrent with the presidential election cycle.

The partners also agreed that policy positions would be taken by partner organizations collectively, not in the name of AWCP. Individual partners would initiate "sign-on" letters advocating policy positions that would be circulated among all partners affording each the opportunity to sign and become part of the advocacy. The first two sign-on letters were sent in September 2000 to members of Congress and Western State Governors, and to Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt addressing issues of wildfire damage repair and national monument designations respectively. To date, more than 430 sign-on letters have been sent (about 25 per year over the past 10 years) covering a wide range of topics and issues ranging, for example, from





AWCP'S GREATEST HOPE FOR SUCCESS IN THE FUTURE IS ITS CONTINUED USE OF THE MODEL THAT HAS BROUGHT PAST SUCCESS.

healthy federal forests to Black Rhino import permit enhancement.

Finally, it was agreed to hold an AWCP summit each summer in a different part of the country to reinforce unity and chart progress or need on current and new issues. Winter/Spring meetings would be held in conjunction with the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference each year. In August 2001 at the second summit held in Cody, Wyoming, a charter was adopted outlining AWCP governance. The charter detailed principals, rules of engagement, steering committee, and new partner admission. Key parts were:

- Be a potent force advocating conservation, hunting, trapping, and stewardship.
- Positions are taken by partner organizations and not in the name of AWCP.
- Work together where we agree.
- Each partner organization retains its organizational autonomy.

The charter was refined August 2005 and again in 2014.

AWCP Milestones

In reviewing the significant events in AWCP's first 20 years, a few stand out as being defining moments helping to fulfill the dream of charting the course for the future of wildlife conservation in America.

1) December 2003 and April 2004 Meetings with President Bush

Several years of work came to fruition for AWCP with a personal meeting with President Bush in the White House in December 2003. The President was grateful for AWCP support of the recently passed Healthy Forest Restoration Act and Farm Bill. The President stated his personal commitment to conservation and wetlands protection and made a personal promise that he and his Cabinet and Administration would work with AWCP on wildlife, wetlands, and other related conservation issues.

A second meeting with President Bush took place at the President's Crawford, Texas ranch in April 2004. Here the President announced an expansion of his "no net loss of wetlands" initiative to one seeking a "net gain of wetlands." The President reaffirmed his commitment to wildlife conservation and to his Administration's intent to cooperate with AWCP in advancing wildlife interests.

The main value of these meetings was assurance of AWCP access to and cooperation with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture.

2) May 2005 Mini-Conference with the Department of the Interior

A one day conference with representatives of nearly all of the then 40 AWCP partners and Department of the Interior Secretary Gale Norton and her senior staff, including Assistant Secretary Rebecca Watson and Senior Advisor Melissa Simpson, occurred in Washington, DC May 18th, 2005. A main purpose of the gathering of nearly 100 was for AWCP to present the Secretary with *Wildlife for the 21st Century: Volume II*; Recommendations to President George W. Bush. Another was to conduct in depth joint discussions on key selected topics from *W21 Volume II*. Secretary Norton's opening keynote address highlighted the Department's commitment to address conservation challenges with AWCP, and success in addressing issues raised by AWCP in *W21 Volume I*. Her closing lines emphasized that "Your agenda is our agenda." Conference follow-up action items included a pledge by Assistant Secretary Watson to look into establishing a council of sportsmen and women to advise the Secretary on wildlife conservation matters. AWCP partners and Secretary Norton pledged to continue to strengthen their conservation partnership agenda, with *W21 Volume II* as the primary focus.

3) March 2006, Interior Secretary Norton establishes Sporting Conservation Council to advise Interior on hunting and wildlife resource issues; subsequent councils continue to current times

In March 2006, Secretary Norton announced the creation of a new Sporting Conservation Council (SCC)

to advise the Interior Department on resource conservation issues of interest to the hunting community. Norton also named the 12 initial members of the council, all from AWCP partner organizations, to represent the many parts of the hunting community. The council was expected to provide input in the areas of habitat restoration and protection, the impact of energy development on wildlife, forest and rangeland health, hunting access to federal lands, and other issues in which the sporting conservation community could provide a valuable perspective to resource managers and senior leaders throughout the department. Soon after Norton's announcement, Secretary of Agriculture Schaffer extended the SCC charter to the Department of Agriculture.

This precedent led Interior Secretary Salazar and Agriculture Secretary Vilsack in the Obama Administration to appoint the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council (WHHCC) in July 2010 to advise the departments on wildlife and hunting matters. There were 18 council members nearly all from AWCP partner organizations.

In May 2018, the Trump Administration's Interior Secretary Zinke and Agriculture Secretary Perdue appointed the Hunting and Shooting Sports Conservation Council (HSSCC) with 18 members, mostly AWCP affiliates, with essentially the same responsibilities as its predecessor councils.

These three councils have assured that AWCP member organizations and their millions of members have had ready and consistent access to Cabinet level natural resources representatives for over 14 years.

4) August 2007 Executive Order 13443: Facilitation of Hunting Heritage and Wildlife Conservation; and December 2008 White House Conference on North American Wildlife Policy

In the summer of 2007, at the recommendation of the SCC, President Bush issued Executive Order 13443 with the primary purpose to direct the Interior and Agriculture Departments to facilitate the enhancement of hunting

opportunities and game species and their habitat. It also directed the Chairman of the CEQ in coordination with the SCC, States, Tribes, and other Federal agencies to convene within a year a White House Conference on Wildlife Policy. Finally, it called for a Comprehensive Recreational Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Plan that presented a 10-year agenda for hunting and wildlife conservation.

White House Policy Conference:

During the fall of 2007, in response to the Executive Order, and in cooperation with the CEQ Chairman and the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, the SCC along with AWCP members, other conservation organizations, and State and Tribal wildlife agencies identified eight major issues confronting wildlife conservation and hunting heritage. These challenges were identified for further examination and action. Topics included:

- The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.
- Federal, State, and Tribal Coordination.
- Wildlife Habitat Conservation.
- Oil and Gas Development and Wildlife Conservation.
- Climate Change and Wildlife Effects.
- Funding the North American Model.
- Preserving the Tradition of Hunting: Access to Public and Private Land.
- Preserving the Tradition of Hunting: Education, Recruitment, and Retention.

In April 2008, many of the nation's leading conservationists met in Denver, Colorado, to prepare formal "white papers" describing the challenges and opportunities associated with each of the eight issues. (White papers were printed in the December 30, 2008, SCC publication *Strengthening America's Hunting Heritage and Wildlife Conservation in the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities*.) White papers were then presented at

a policy review in June 2008 in Washington, DC. The culmination of the policy review was the development of recommendations for discussion at the White House conference that was held in Reno, Nevada October 1-3, 2008. Conferees representing the widest possible range of American wildlife and hunting stakeholders developed preferred actions responsive to SCC white paper goals and recommendations. These actions became the basis for the CEQ and Administration's December 14, 2008, 10-year action plan: Facilitation of Hunting Heritage and Wildlife Conservation: The Recreational Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Plan as Directed by Executive Order 13443. The plan included 58 action items for implementation. These action items became the basis for subsequent SCC, WHHCC, HSSCC, Interior and Agriculture Department, and congressional programs for implementation. Over its 10-year lifetime and beyond, the plan became a principal force in "charting

the course for the future of wildlife conservation in America."

5) 2014 Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act, 2019 John Dingell Conservation, Management and Recreation Act, and 2020 Great American Outdoors Act

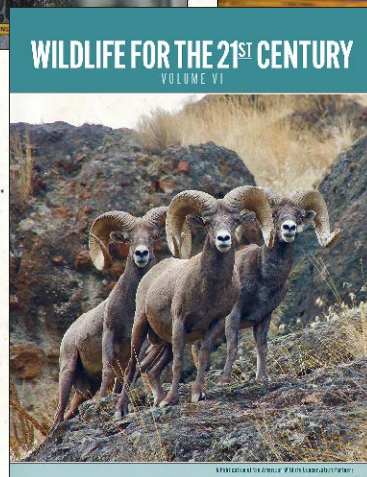
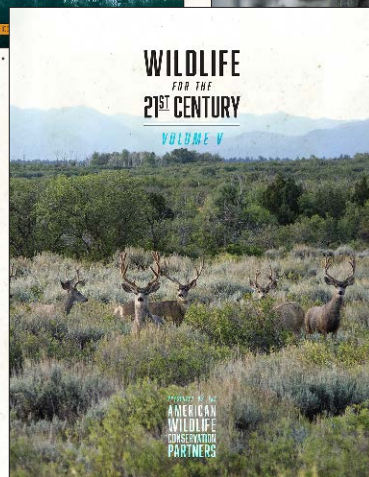
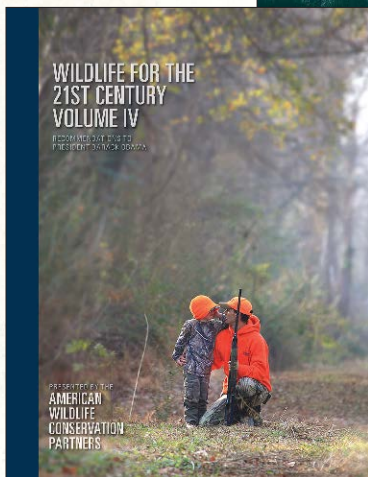
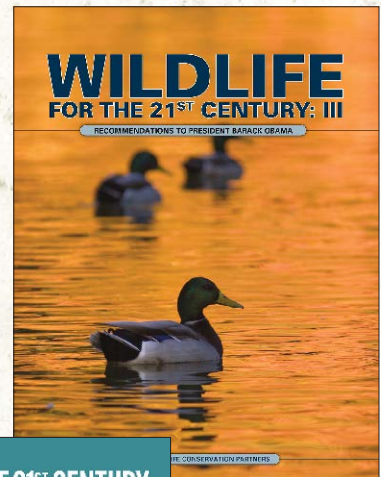
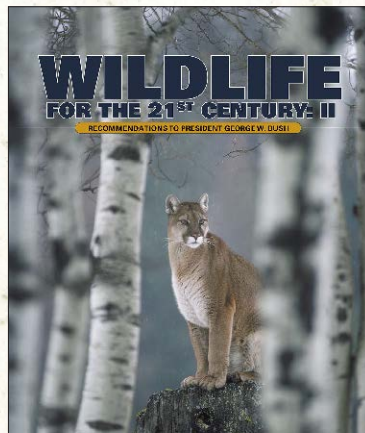
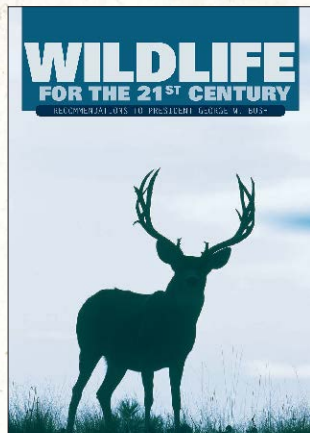
AWCP members, led by the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, believed in 2014 the time was right to attempt congressional legislation that included a package of priority actions that had appeared in Wildlife for the 21st Century volumes, the Administration's 10-year action plan, and sign-on letters. Using the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus as a sounding board, S. 2363, the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act of 2014, was prepared and introduced in May 2014 with 46 cosponsors. S. 2363 contained nine provisions including two that increased access to Federal land for hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting. Also included were provisions for reauthorizing important conservation legislation including the Federal

Land Transaction Facilitation Act, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Establishment Act.

While S. 2363 did not survive the legislative process in 2014 or in revised form in several subsequent years, the combined legislative effort on behalf of sportsmen greatly elevated congressional understanding, acceptance, and support of AWCP wildlife policy priorities. During this period of congressional initiatives, Volumes V and VI of *W21* were published, both including heightened priority for permanent authorization and dedication of full funding to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

With the leadership of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation and Caucus, the John Dingell Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (S. 47) was signed into law in March 2019. S. 47 contained many longstanding AWCP priorities from S. 2363 that are critically important to increasing access

WILDLIFE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY



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for hunters and anglers to federal public lands. It also made LWCF permanent, but did not permanently fund it.

The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) (H.R. 1957) was signed into law in August 2020. It had strong bipartisan support with 59 co-sponsors, both Democrats and Republicans. It passed the House and Senate with 75% margins. GAOA has two major components: fully and permanently funding the LWCF at \$900 million per year and providing \$9.5 billion over five years to address maintenance backlogs mainly on national park, national forest, and BLM lands. The Associated Press wrote that the GAOA was “the most significant conservation legislation enacted in nearly half a century.” GAOA will help conserve highly valued lands for hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation. In addition, it will ensure access to public land and conserve important wildlife habitat, key objectives of AWCP.

The way for the GAOA was paved by the 2014 Sportsmen’s Act and its successors and the overwhelming support from the conservation community, especially AWCP. A March 11, 2020 sign-on letter to the Senate majority and minority leaders offering total support for GAOA was signed by 45 partner organizations. *W21 Volume VII* urged Congress to enact the GAOA, restore wildlife habitat, fix recreational infrastructure, and expand access to America’s outdoor heritage. Congress heard the strong voices of over 6 million hunter-conservationists represented by AWCP and responded favorably.

6) *Wildlife for the 21st Century Volumes I-VI*

Publication of *Wildlife for the 21st Century* every four years on the presidential election cycle is the principal way AWCP maintains its unity of purpose and informs the President and Congress of the wildlife conservation priorities of hunter-conservationists. *W21* provides the policy focus for each AWCP partner organization and a clear, constant, and consistent voice to all stakeholders stating the wildlife issues and needed actions that concern American sportsmen and women. To date, six volumes

of *W21* have been published: two for the George W. Bush Administration, two for the Obama Administration, one for the Trump Administration, and one for the Biden Administration. While each volume contains 10 or more recommendations, a few themes are consistent across the volumes including:

- Secure and protect sufficient Federal funding for wildlife.
- Restore and maintain Federal forest and rangeland wildlife habitats through active management.
- Enhance Federal public land access for hunting and other outdoor recreation.
- Support State responsibility and authority for management of wildlife populations.

The continuing presence of a consistent set of wildlife policy priorities over time through *W21* has provided compelling support for Administration and congressional response, as in the case of the GAOA and the Dingell Conservation Act.

THE PRESENT

AWCP is stronger than ever with nearly 50 partner organizations representing over 6 million hunter-conservationists, working in harmony within a well-accepted governance structure to produce sign-on letters, *W21*, and collaboration with the Administration and Congress. Primary “carry-over” challenges include:

- Gaining traction with the Biden Administration including “marketing” *W21 Volume VI*.
- Pursuing pieces of the 2014 Sportsmen’s Act and its successors unaddressed by recent legislation.
- Pursuing unaddressed recommendations of *W21 Volume VI*.

A new challenge/opportunity has emerged with the 30x30 global initiative that seeks to protect the earth’s biodiversity and address climate change by protecting 30% of the planet’s lands and waters by the year 2030. Concerned about the uncertainty that 30x30 pol-

icies may pose for hunting and fishing access, the sporting conservation community led by the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation and more than 60 other sportsmen’s groups (half of which are AWCP partners) issued the Hunting and Fishing Community Statement on the 30x30 initiative. The statement recognizes and embraces the overlap between the conservation community’s collective work to conserve fish and wildlife species and habitats and the establishment of ambitious global biodiversity conservation goals, while outlining standards for 30x30 proposals to ensure that access for hunters and anglers is protected. AWCP members will continue to engage the 30x30 initiative to ensure it includes hunter and angler interests.

THE FUTURE

AWCP and the Boone and Crockett Club have growing conservation success legacies and those legacies are linked; virtually all AWCP chairmen have been Club members. Continuation will be challenged by an increasingly polarized American social and political climate divided mostly along urban and rural lines. Equally challenging will be a changing physical environment driven strongly by climate.

AWCP’s greatest hope for success in the future is its continued use of the model that has brought past success. A clear, straight line can be drawn between AWCP’s founding, *W21* volume recommendations, the 2006 Mini-Conference, the SCC and successor councils, Executive Order 13443, the 2008 White House Conference and 10-year action plan, the 2014 Sportsmen’s Act, and the resulting GAOA and Dingell Conservation Act. The operative words are: stay the course and patience.

With a proven success model for charting the future for wildlife and hunting in America, AWCP will meet future challenges as long as partners don’t forget: “We Believe in Magic” and, “It’s amazing what can be accomplished as long as there are no concerns about who gets the credit.”

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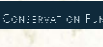
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