



THE REPORT

PIONEERS OF CONSERVATION
Our Legacy for Generations



B&C CONSERVATION POLICY COMMITTEE REPORT FALL 2017

ENHANCE AND IMPROVE LONG-TERM LAND MANAGEMENT

Improve the Health of Federal Forests and Rangelands

At this very moment, the House and Senate are attempting to negotiate a deal on the twin issues of fixing the funding mechanism for wildfire suppression, and reforming forest management laws to accelerate forest restoration. If a deal gets done, it probably would be included with several other issues that Congress must pass before the end of the year. Wildfires and smoke this summer in several states, especially California and Montana, have added even more pressure to take these steps. The fix to funding suppression would stop the steady erosion of the Forest Service's operation budget--caused by having to pay for fire suppression in worsening wildfire years. Suppression is now 54%, up from 18% two decades ago, of the Forest Service's annual budget. Management reform would likely enhance the well-regarded Good Neighbor Authority, expand the use of a streamlined National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review, and perhaps stem the tide of delay-driven litigation. The Club has been the most active sportsmen's group on these issues.

Improving Access to Federal Lands

The Club secured inclusion in the Department of the Interior (DOI) Secretarial Order 3356 of language promoting improved permitting for guides and outfitters, including "the development of a distinct permitting process for non-profit organizations (such as those working with youth, veterans, or underserved communities)".

The Club published a supportive position regarding the DOI's review of National Monuments notably where designations impact hunting or recreational access. The Club asked the DOI to continue funding "access" projects in their next land acquisition budget.

Federal Land Disposal/Acquisition

The Club has engaged the new leadership of the U.S. House of Representatives' Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands. We have presented a list of principles for a land conservation act that would secure the future of federal public lands by easing the process for approving pro-conservation land sales, exchanges and other transactions, and resuming active-management and access for hunting, fishing, and other recreation.



Improve the Health of Private Lands

The Farm Bill is one of the largest single sources of conservation spending in the federal budget and the single largest source of spending on private lands conservation. The 2014 Farm Bill authorized \$57.6 billion in conservation spending. The Club has been working extensively with the Agriculture committees of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, as well as the personal offices of the members of the Agriculture committees, on the 2018 Farm Bill. Specifically, efforts are being made to increase the size of the Conservation Reserve Program, fund the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program with at least \$500 million annually, increase the percentage of spending for wildlife conservation practices in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program from 5 percent to 10 percent, and provide a waiver on Adjusted Gross Income prohibitions for projects of special conservation significance, to name a few.

UPDATE AND MODERNIZE THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

The “patch” fix for wolf delisting under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) continues to develop. As Wyoming has now been re-delisted again by a court order, the Congressional language to secure this achievement has been amended to prohibit further judicial review. On the related situation for Yellowstone grizzly bears, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) published its latest delisting rule, which is under litigation as expected.

The Club has met with the U.S. Senate Finance Committee regarding the authorization of tax Incentives for landowners to help recover species. Species conservation has devolved from the shining legacy of sportsmen-led restoration of game species to the unwieldy and risky policy and political problems of the ESA. The goal is to create incentives for private landowners willing to implement species conservation measures to aid in recovering and de-listing a species through tax incentives (i.e., tradable tax credits), which has worked well in conserving lands through easement donations.

On other fronts, the Club continues to engage the Western Governors Association, business and environmental groups, and Congressional offices in support for small improvements of the ESA. Also, the U.S. House of Representatives’ Natural Resources Committee has passed several bills that fit the pattern of targeted issues raised by Republicans that have little chance of becoming law except possibly as items in an end-of-year 2018 deal on a larger package of legislation.

REFORM THE EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE ACT (EAJA)

This bill is ready for passage. It is contained in the Sportsmen’s Act, and a stand-alone version has been referred to a U.S. Senate committee, and a stand-alone U.S. House of Representatives version has already passed the House and is held at the desk in the Senate for final passage.

STRONG WORKING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR**The Political Approach—Improve Working Relationships:**

The Club has developed a good working relationship with the new Administration as appointees are named



and confirmed to their positions, and we successfully re-engaged the DOI's leadership in the "grand plan" that began with the first Federal Advisory Committee (The Sporting Conservation Council) in 2003.

The Club is leading the way with an initiative in partnership with the FWS titled Conservation Without Conflict. Its purpose is to showcase how the collaborative use of voluntary methods and tools has resulted in numerous conservation successes (i.e., precluding the need to list the New England Cottontail, delisting of the Louisiana black bear, reversing the decline of longleaf pine, etc.). Demonstrating, both nationally and internationally, how conservation can thrive in a non-confrontational manner with the twin goals of a healthy environment and a strong economy not only exist, but support each other.

THE SPORTSMEN'S ACT

The U.S. House of Representatives was set to vote on the Sportsmen's Heritage and Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Act but pulled the vote as a result of two major mass shooting crimes over the last few months. The bill may not withstand this public pressure because it was drafted without teamwork among sportsmen and the gun lobby. Gun provisions were added that altered the strategy. Then, the shooting of House Majority Leader Scalise occurred on the day when the first hearing was scheduled. Furthermore, the Las Vegas shooting occurred as the bill was under consideration for a floor vote. A U.S. Senate version with other provisions remains in play in that chamber. Passage in the Senate will be influenced by whether or not a Senate-House deal on a final bill is in the works.

MOVING CONSERVATION TOWARDS A BRIGHT FUTURE

This priority of the Club involves advocacy for carrying Executive Order 13443 of 2006, and also a provision included in the Sportsmen's Act that would authorize permanently the Federal Advisory Committee for sportsmen, which has carried various Club member names since first chartered in 2003. We are also pushing for the next 10-year conference called for in Executive Order 13443, which is due next year.

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 1, 2017 - Boone and Crockett Club's 130th Annual Meeting - Savannah, Georgia
10 a.m. – noon CONSERVATION POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING – Scarbrough Four room

CONSERVATION PANEL DISCUSSION – 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Part One: Forest and Rangeland Health and Public Lands Management

Moderator: David Anderson

Panelists: Chris French (US Forest Service), Joel Pedersen (National Wild Turkey Federation), George Emmerson (Sierra Pacific)

Part Two: Chronic Wasting Disease

Moderator: Matt Dumfee

Panelists: Greg Schildwachter (Boone and Crockett Club), John Fischer (Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study), Becky Humphries (National Wild Turkey Federation)

