



THE REPORT

PIONEERS OF CONSERVATION
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CONSERVATION POLICY COMMITTEE REPORT JANUARY 1 – JUNE 30, 2019

POLICY

Farm Bill Implementation

The Boone and Crockett Club is working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to improve the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). The Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) is a component of ACEP that is largely responsible for restoring bottomland hardwood and wetland habitat. For example, WRE helped the delisting of the Louisiana black bear. Specifically, the Club is requesting: 1) NRCS provide a minimum of \$30 million in funding annually for wetland reserve enhancement partnership (WREP) opportunities; 2) Funding allocations between the Agricultural Land Easement and WRE follow historic allocations of legacy programs, and; 3) In determining criteria for environmentally sensitive land of special significance for waiving the Adjusted Gross Income limitation for ACEP, that NRCS give the most consideration to lands that can demonstrate significant linkages with the conservation objectives of migratory corridors, wetlands conservation, and water quality programs, plans, or initiatives.

Department of the Interior Secretarial Order on Land Disposal

Secretary David Bernhardt recently issued Secretarial Order 3373 urging the Bureau of Land Management to consider hunting and fishing access on public lands. Specifically, this Order directs the Bureau of Land Management to adequately weigh public access for outdoor recreation—including hunting and fishing—when determining the appropriateness of the disposal or exchange of public lands. The Club's priority on public lands to ensure that low-value lands are replaced with high-value for hunting, fishing, and all conservation.

David Bernhardt Named New Secretary of the Interior

In April, the Senate confirmed David Bernhardt as the new Secretary for the Department of the Interior. David has served as the Department's Deputy Secretary under President Trump, as well as its top lawyer during the second Bush administration. Between those appointments, he worked as a lawyer and lobbyist. The Club supported his confirmation and continues to work with him and his staff on various conservation priorities.

Cooperative Research Units Funding

The Club is working on funding for the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units. The U.S. House of Representatives has increased funding for them by \$5.29 million to \$24 million. The Club is working to obtain a similar increase in the U.S. Senate.



S. 47- John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act

In March, the President signed a landmark public lands package. This law enhances hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting opportunities; helps restore primacy of state jurisdiction over the management of fish and wildlife, such as grizzly bears; affirms the rights of law-abiding hunters and recreational shooters; and fairly examines the role and cost of litigation in federal decisions. The bill enacted into law the effort by Club President Emeritus Lowell Baier to begin reforming the Equal Access to Justice Act.

Highway Bill Discussions

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee is developing a highway bill that will have important wildlife conservation implications. The Club is advocating for conservation measures like wildlife crossings and adequate funding for Forest Service roads. Drafts of a potential bill so far include programs and requirements to make wildlife crossings a regular consideration in highway projects.

Interior Appropriations Bill Discussions

Boone and Crockett is working with the Interior Appropriations Subcommittees to increase FY2020 funding for hazardous fuels treatment in National Forests to \$500 million; increase FY2020 funding for Road maintenance and repair for USFS to \$248 million, and increase FY2020 funding for timber sales to \$385 million. These increases will create jobs, improve the health of federal forests for a diversity of species, including big game, and reduce the risk of wildfires.

Disaster Supplemental

The Club worked to obtain \$480 million for the Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) to restore forests damaged from Hurricanes Michael and Florence, as well as wildfires, tornadoes, floods occurring in 2018 and 2019. We also worked to obtain \$435 million for the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP), which includes the Floodplain Easements Program, to restore floodplains damaged from Hurricanes Michael and Florence, as well as wildfires, tornadoes, and floods occurring in FY2018 and FY2019. The Club worked to help obtain \$720 million to repay borrowed funds from the non-fire accounts of the U.S. Forest Service to cover costs of the FY2018 wildfire suppression activities.

EAJA Implementation

The Club is engaging with the Departments of Interior, Agriculture (USDA), Justice, and the Administrative Conference of the U.S. (ACUS) on implementation of the EAJA amendment enacted earlier this year. This work will publicize for the first time in more than 20 years the important details of lawsuits against conservation agencies. The data will show who is filing, why the government loses (when it loses), and how much money is paid to litigators. Before this law passed, the Department of Interior and USDA-Forest Service were already organizing this data. The Department of Justice is responsible for reporting on payments from the Judgment Fund (separately from EAJA).



Endangered Species Act

The Club is engaged with the Senate Environment and Public Works committee on advancing possible amendments to the ESA. The Committee is primarily focused on the Highway Bill but is also working on ESA. Club discussions are ongoing to determine the short list of top priority issues (e.g., do away with listing-deadline lawsuits); however, Republicans and Democrats have not found a way forward on a bipartisan approach.

Chronic Wasting Disease

Paul Phillips has engaged with Secretary Perdue through our seat on the Hunting and Shooting Sports Conservation Council to urge a joint approach to CWD between USDA and Interior. USDA has recently issued the latest version of Herd Certification Standards that pertain to interstate transportation. We are engaging with the sponsors of the 8 separate but similar bills in Congress that address financial assistance to states. Here we are hoping that a consolidated approach to new programming could attract enough of the cosponsors behind one measure to achieve enactment.

Forest Health

The Club is working with several Members of Congress on funding for states to use the Good Neighbor Authority. We have in mind a revolving grant fund, and are talking with potential lead sponsors. We also are tracking modest changes to the Forest Service's NEPA regulations that were published for public comment recently. AWCP likely will submit a letter of support.

EVENTS

PAST EVENTS: The Policy Team has participated in the following events during the first half of 2019:

Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Annual Meeting, January 3 – 5, Tucson, Arizona

National Wild Turkey Convention, February 14, Nashville, Tennessee

Mississippi Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus Annual Banquet, February 20, Jackson, Mississippi

American Wildlife Conservation Partners' Spring Meeting, March 5, Denver Colorado

Boone and Crockett Club's Spring Meeting, March 6-7, Denver, Colorado

North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, March 6-7, Denver, Colorado

In-person meetings with Congressional Members and Staff, March 11-12, Washington, D.C.

Conservation without Conflict Kick-off Meeting, March 13, Washington, D.C.

Joint Meeting of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus and the Working Forest Caucus, March 14, Washington, D.C.

University of Montana's Policy Class, March 18, Missoula, Montana (via Skype)



In-person meetings with Congressional Members and Staff, March 20-23, Washington, D.C.

Hunting and Shooting Sports Conservation Council, March 21, Washington, D.C.

Ducks Unlimited's Washington, D.C. Banquet, April 30, Washington, D.C.

The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation Congressional Shootout, May 14, Beltsville, Maryland

In-person meetings with Congressional Members and Staff May 15-16, Washington, D.C.

Demmer Scholars' Policy Program Student Dinner, May 23, Washington, D.C.

In-person meetings with Congressional Members and Staff, May 23-24, Washington, D.C.

Western Governors' Association Summer Meeting, June 10-12, Vail, Colorado

Various meetings with Members of Congress and Governors in their states

Future Events for 2019:

American Wildlife Conservation Partners Summer Meeting, August 12-13, Ridgedale, Missouri

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation Annual Banquet and Auction, September 11, Washington, D.C.

In-person meetings with Congressional Members and Staff, September 10-13, Washington, D.C.

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, September 22-25, St. Paul, Minnesota

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation Wine, Wheels and Wildlife, October 9, Lexington, North Carolina

National Association of Sportsmen's Caucuses Annual Summit, November 12-15, Greensboro, Georgia

Western Governors' Association, December 13-14, Las Vegas, Nevada

Various Photos of Policy Work During 2019:

