



THE REPORT

PIONEERS OF CONSERVATION
Our Legacy for Generations



CONSERVATION POLICY COMMITTEE REPORT

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A BANNER YEAR FOR CONSERVATION POLICY (JULY 1, 2020 – JUNE 30, 2021)

The Boone and Crockett Club has completed its work for year ending June 30, 2021, in its conservation policy area. With all the divisiveness that permeates Washington D.C., it's often difficult for people to recognize, or even believe, that important bipartisan work still gets done resulting in effective legislation. And while the COVID-19 pandemic has presented many obstacles, we have some extremely significant gains with our policy efforts. The 116th Congress has established itself as one of the most productive Congresses that we have worked with in the past 25 years on enacting important bipartisan conservation legislation and significant progress has been made to date during the 117th Congress.

The Boone and Crockett Club remains at the forefront of conceptualizing and advancing conservation policy for the United States. The successes of the previous year represent the culmination of many years of diligent work put forth by us and our partners.

Below is a summary of some of our collaborative successes this past year.

Great American Outdoors Act

The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) passed the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, and in August 2020, President Trump signed it into law. Prior to bill introduction, the Club's partners, including the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, led the effort to secure the inclusion of funding to restore the crumbling infrastructure on public lands and waters that are most important to sportsmen and women in the GAOA. As a result of these efforts, the GAOA will provide \$9.5 billion over 5 years to address the deferred maintenance backlog on federal public lands and waters with roughly \$3 billion set aside to restore the infrastructure on hundreds of millions of acres that provide access and opportunity for America's sportsmen and women. In total, our federal public land management agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), face nearly \$20 billion in deferred maintenance backlog that will be addressed by GAOA. Furthermore, the Great American Outdoors Act will provide permanent and dedicated funding to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at \$900 million annually, building on the success of S. 47, the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, which permanently authorized LWCF, but did not provide any funding. GAOA will also ensure that \$15 million of LWCF funding is set aside for the purpose of increasing access for hunting, fishing, recreational shooting, and other forms of outdoor recreation on public lands and waters. This legislation comes at a time that is most critical for sportsmen and women, and



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when more people are realizing the value of the outdoors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

America's Conservation Enhancement Act

The Club is very pleased that the U.S. Congress passed S. 3051, the ACE Act, and President Donald Trump signed the bill into law in October of 2020. ACE stands for the America's Conservation Enhancement Act. This legislation promotes conservation and creates opportunities for outdoor recreation by reauthorizing the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), which is a critical source of funding for wetland and bottomland hardwood conservation and restoration. The NAWCA has conserved over 30 million acres since it was authorized 1989. The ACE Act also reauthorizes the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, an organization that has a tremendous impact on conservation, including migratory big game corridors.

H-2B Guest Workers for Conservation and Forestry

The Club led an effort in the conservation community by requesting that the suspension of H-2B guest workers for conservation and forest-related jobs be exempted. Presidential Proclamation 10014 and its subsequent amendment bans non-immigrant H-2B guest workers from entering the United States through December 31, 2020. Work performed by H-2B workers is critical to long-term forest sustainability, collecting seeds for tree nurseries, invasive species control, forest thinning, fuel reduction treatments to prevent catastrophic wildfire, and forest restoration, all important to North American bear species. American workers do not typically apply for these jobs; labor for these jobs is extremely scarce or non-existent without the H-2B option. In early August, approximately 30 sporting conservation organizations of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners asked the Administration to provide an exemption from the H-2B visas suspension for H-2B guest workers that perform conservation and forest-related work. In August of 2020, the Trump Administration granted this exemption.

Transportation Bill

On July 1, 2020, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a surface transportation bill titled Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation (INVEST) in America Act to reauthorize the 2015 Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, which expired on September 30, 2020. The Transportation Bill includes nearly \$300 million for the construction of highway wildlife-crossings to reduce wildlife/vehicle collisions.

Endangered Species Act Reforms

The Club remains engaged on helping to advance meaningful reforms to the Endangered Species Act that would fix the listing and delisting process and create more incentives for private landowners to conserve listed species.

The Club continues to monitor issues around the Endangered Species Act, specifically the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem and Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem of grizzly bears with a focus on problem bears. Following former Secretary David Bernhardt's visit to the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch and the subsequent funding that resulted from Department of Interior to USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), the Club continues to be heavily engaged in ensuring this funding continues. The result of additional funding has reduced the time in responding to bear incidents and this is beneficial to livestock producers and others who are impacted by problem bears. The Club is also working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA APHIS, and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks about the process used to determine what happens to a particular problem bear, along with assessing administrative and legislative delisting options.



Recovering America's Wildlife Act

Also, on July 1st, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) passed in the U.S. House of Representatives as an amendment to a much larger, and previously mentioned, transportation bill. RAWA provides \$1.3 billion in dedicated funding annually (for 5 years) for the implementation of state fish and wildlife agencies' wildlife action plans and will provide greater regulatory certainty for industry and private partners by conserving species and avoiding the need to list them under the Endangered Species Act. This will support future economic growth in the outdoor recreation industry through infrastructure improvements, increases in resiliency, and recovery of imperiled species and their habitats. While RAWA did NOT pass the Congress this year, significant gains were made.

30X30 Initiative

Another major effort the Club participated in was helping to guide the conversation around the 30x30 initiative. This initiative originated in Europe with the intent to protect 30 percent of the globe's land and water by the year 2030. When this initiative came stateside in the fall of 2020 our friends at the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation picked up on it and formed a 30x30 Coalition of groups who met with administration officials, the Department of the Interior and Department of Agriculture on a number of occasions in the first half of 2021. The Coalition asked questions like what the definition of protection is. There is a big difference between conservation and preservation. We also asked what counts from the all the work our community has done since 1887 when the Club was formed. We not only helped guide the conversation but were listened to. When the America the Beautiful report was issued on May 6, 2021, conservation versus preservation was mentioned on page 1. And the hunting and angling community's efforts were mentioned 11 times in the document.

Chronic Wasting Disease

The Club has been hard at work combatting chronic wasting disease (CWD), a major threat to populations of deer, elk, and moose in North America, as well as the hunters who depend on them. Club members and staff have advocated annually for additional federal funding to assist state wildlife agencies with disease surveillance, research, and management. As of this writing, congressional appropriators have proposed allocating \$14 million to this effort in FY22, doubling the FY21 funding allocation. Concurrently, the Club is advocating for an authorizing bill to create a specialized research and management program for CWD. In the U.S. House of Representatives G.T. Thompson (R-PA) and Ron Kind (D-WI) recently introduced H.R. 5608 to do just this. The Club is also advocating for companion legislation in the U.S. Senate.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill

The Boone and Crockett Club worked with the 117th Congress, which began in 2021, to design and pass bipartisan infrastructure legislation that will allocate critical funding to improve the health of our nation's forests, reduce wildlife/vehicle collisions through new wildlife crossings, and support conservation programs that provide natural climate solutions. The inclusion of more than \$8 billion in funding for forest resiliency projects in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will help address concerns outlined in a fact sheet the Club released in April of 2021 calling for a commitment to active forest management.

The U.S. Forest Service estimates that there are more than 80 million acres of land at moderate to high risk from catastrophic fire. Active forest management such as harvesting trees, thinning dead and dying trees, creating fuel breaks, prescribed and managed burns, and creating defensible spaces are all effective tools to reduce wildfire threats while also improving habitat and helping to sequester carbon. In addition, the lumber produced by these forest management efforts



will lock up carbon in long-lasting wood products and create better growing conditions for the next stand of trees, which will sequester even more carbon. At the same time, there are estimates that over 11 million acres of U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands are in need reforestation. Failure to reforest these acres will create millions of acres of brush fields, which can be lower quality habitat and are vulnerable to future reburns. Active reforestation of these lands can also help sequester more than 16 million tons of carbon per year.

The infrastructure bill also includes a number of other provisions that are important for wildlife and natural resource conservation efforts. Of particular note, the bill includes the first significant funding allocation of \$350 million for highway wildlife crossings to reduce vehicular collisions and reconnect migration corridors. Other provisions allocate significant funds to aquatic ecosystem restoration, plugging orphaned oil and gas wells to reduce methane leakage, abandoned mine reclamation to restore habitat and water quality, culvert replacements and dam removal for habitat expansion, and coastal resiliency projects to address rising sea level and loss of habitat.

Poach and Pay

We continue our Poach and Pay research project in partnership with the Wildlife Management Institute. The current research phase is attempting to quantify the degree to which wildlife violations go undetected by surveying and interviewing representative samples of hunters, landowners, conservation officers, and persons convicted of wildlife crimes. In October 2021 surveys were sent to 80,000 landowners, 80,000 avid sportsmen (defined as purchasing a hunting license in each of the past 5 years), and more than 1,000 conservation officers in the eight target states (Maine, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Missouri, Ohio, Michigan, Oregon, and Nevada). These states were selected to maximize variability in location, urban/rural makeup, percent of public vs. private lands, species composition, and accessibility and quality of data.

Using the developed estimates of undetected wildlife crimes along with the currently accepted penalties and replacement costs for lost animal value, licenses, permits, and federal wildlife assistance grants, this research will help to determine a true fiscal cost associated with the non-detection of wildlife crimes at the state, regional, and national levels. The estimates will also evaluate the fiscal costs of undetected wildlife crimes to determine the associated conservation costs at the state, regional, and national level by comparing those costs to current conservation efforts being funded or performed by state agencies

The Poach and Pay research effort received a huge boost when the Club received word we will receive funding through the Multistate Conservation Grant Program. The Multistate Conservation Grant Program is administered by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Summary

These are just the highlights from this past year. However, none of this would have been possible without the help from key partner organizations, especially the National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Wild Sheep Foundation, the National Wildlife Federation, and the American Wildlife Conservation Partners, to name a few, but the many members of the U.S. Congress and officials in both the Trump and Biden administrations.

