



THE REPORT

PIONEERS OF CONSERVATION
Our Legacy for Generations



CONSERVATION POLICY COMMITTEE REPORT

JAMES L. CUMMINS AND PAUL PHILLIPS, CO-CHAIRS

The Boone and Crockett Club has a long and successful record addressing critical conservation policy concerns as it related to its mission. With the assistance of David Anderson and Greg Schildwacher in Washington, DC, the Club has remained very engaged and recognized among our peers. Along with the entire conservation community, we are achieving numerous successes once again. It is no secret that the sporting conservation community has had strong advocates in the Trump Administration. That has been extremely helpful when working with the departments of the Interior and Agriculture. However, bi-partisan support in the U.S. Congress as we have witnessed on our issues is also essential and, while there have been many other issues to address, our issues have received their fair share of attention. Here are just a few of them we chose to highlight.

Great American Outdoors Act

We did it; the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate passed the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) and on August 4th, President Trump signed it into law. Hunters, anglers, and all those who enjoy spending time in the great outdoors have something to look forward to as it is the largest conservation achievement of the 21st century. Thanks to good lobbying and strong support from many sources, including the Club, \$6.5 billion will be allocated over five years towards repairing infrastructure (e.g., roads, buildings, trails, utilities, etc.) in our National Forests, National Parks, the Bureau of Land Management lands, and National Wildlife Refuges. In addition, the Land and Water Conservation Fund is funded at \$900 million annually, of which we urge the U.S. Congress to allocate up to \$75 million in FY 2021 to go towards improving recreational access to public lands. All those who enjoy America's many wild places and wild things will benefit from this devoted funding, especially those who use them to hunt and fish.

H-2B Visas for Conservation and Forest Related Work

The Club and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation recently led an effort in 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. 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. On August 12, the Trump Administration granted this exemption.



Highway Bill-Wildlife Crossings

On July 1st, 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 expires on September 30, 2020. This bill includes nearly \$300 million for the construction of highway wildlife-crossings to reduce wildlife/vehicle collisions. The U.S. Senate's infrastructure bill, also being considered, includes \$250 million for wildlife crossings. The Club is actively supporting both bills. Even if this Congress punts a highway bill to next year (by extending the FAST Act), the U.S. House and Senate likely will include funding for wildlife crossings when they start again in the next Congress.

Recovering America's Wildlife Act

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 infrastructure bill, the Moving Forward Act. 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. The Club is working to advance a bill in the U.S. Senate as well. The prospects for RAWA are uncertain, as this Congress has a limited number of work days left in this session.

Chronic Wasting Disease

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is still a top priority. Surveillance, testing, managing, and response activities is imperative to better understanding this disease. The Club has requested \$30 million for Equine, Cervid, and Small Ruminant Health within the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) for CWD activities. Specifically, the Club is asking that no less than \$24 million be allocated directly to state departments of wildlife, and \$6 million be provided to state departments of agriculture. Other than a commitment to hold a hearing this fall that we have secured—working with partners—from U.S. House of Representatives' Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson (D-Minnesota), Congress and APHIS have responded poorly to our proposal thus far. The House Agriculture appropriations bill proposes only an additional \$500,000 for the low-priority effort to develop a live test, and \$7 million for management and response. APHIS has diverted \$1.5 million of the \$5 million appropriated last year and is offering the remaining \$3.5 million for a wide variety of low priority uses, including a number of research topics favored by deer/elk farmers.

Wildlife Health

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has proposed guidance that will complicate the use of medications in veterinary medicine. FDA is trying to limit the custom preparation (compounding) of various medicines, which will limit the availability of those needed for the special purposes and in the correct dosages for working with wildlife. We are working with FDA and wildlife health professionals to resolve this. Comments on the proposed guidance are due in October and we intend to have a solution worked out by then.



Big Game Migratory Corridors

The Club has been working steadily with states and the federal government to conserve big game migratory corridors in the West. Sportsmen's groups scored a big win on corridors on April 30, 2020, when the Department of the Interior announced \$24.7 million in support for habitat conservation in big game migration corridors and winter range in the West. The Department of the Interior set aside \$4.4 million in grant funding for habitat conservation projects in 11 western states that conserve migration and winter range for elk, mule deer, and pronghorn.

Desert National Wildlife Refuge

The Club joined the Wild Sheep Foundation and other partners in stopping an ill-considered proposal from the Air Force to take over most of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge (DNWR) in southern Nevada. DNWR was established for desert bighorn sheep conservation and it is the largest refuge outside of Alaska. It is adjacent to the Air Force National Test and Training Range. Since the establishment of DNWR, the Air Force has had access to it for limited training under a "military land withdrawal." Since the term of that withdrawal is about to expire, the Air Force proposed an outright transfer of the lands previously withdrawn (50 percent of the DNWR) and in addition another 25 percent of the DNWR. Responding to our advocacy as part of a large coalition, both the U.S. House and Senate Armed Services Committees have rejected the Air Force proposal. Final details on how the Air Force will be required to cooperate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are being worked out now between the House and Senate Committees.

Wildlife for the 21st Century

The Club's role as a leader in the conservation community was marked this year by publication of the latest volume of "W21", titled Wildlife for the 21st Century. W21 is the agenda of the sporting conservation community; this document is the 4-year agenda of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners (AWCP)—a coalition of the nation's leading wildlife conservation and shooting sports organizations. This edition is also the 20th anniversary of AWCP's founding at the Club's headquarters in Missoula. The previous edition became the playbook for the U.S. Department of the Interior over the last 4 years, which is why we have had such great success promoting better access to public lands. This edition of W21 is the most professional effort by AWCP in its 20-year history. W21 presents 10 recommendations covering aspects of public and private lands, funding, recreational shooting, and hunting heritage. We are now using W21 to engage the presidential campaigns and U.S. Congress in preparation for our next 4 years of work.

Opening National Wildlife Refuges

Continuing efforts begun by the George W. Bush Administration, the Club supported expanding federal refuge hunting and fishing seasons to align with those of the states. On April 8, 2020, the Department of the Interior proposed a 2.3 million-acre expansion of hunting and fishing opportunities at 97 National Wildlife Refuges. The Department of the Interior created nearly 900 distinct new hunting and fishing opportunities at those refuges to align with allowed state seasons.

Hunting Access on Federal Land

It was a long time coming, but the Club finally succeeded in passing a Sportsmen's Act in Congress. On March 12, 2019, President Trump signed the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, which increases access and opportunities for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreational activities on federal land, and mandates that a portion of the Land and Water Conservation Fund be spent on projects that improve public access to hunt and fish on inaccessible federal land.



TRMR Access Permits

The policy team helped Club staff member Luke Coccoli secure flexibility from the U.S.D.A. Forest Service on the number of days allotted for trips led by the Club's Education program. These trips, which are important for inspiring the next generation of conservationists, operate from the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch (TRMR) under special use permits from the Forest Service. Because these permits classify the Club's educational program as a profit-for-hire commercial operation, limits apply to the number of days and the size of groups entering Wilderness areas. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were hitting our day-use limit, which is now resolved, and we are continuing to work with the Education Program and the Forest Service on future improvements.

In Summary

The Conservation Policy Committee recognizes the Club's Regular and Professional Members, as well as Associates' heartfelt desire to impact the development of conservation policy in a manner which achieves the mission of the Club. This has been accomplished through enactment or developing the groundwork required for future action. It is not easy and, sometimes it isn't pretty, but it is always worth the effort. Thank you to each and every member who assisted in moving the Club's conservation program forward. And a special thank you to Johnny Morris and the Bass Pro/Cabelas Outdoor Fund for making such a large donation to the Club's conservation policy program. However, none of this important work could have been accomplished without the bipartisan support from many members of Congress and the Trump Administration. Thank you!

