

The Wildlife Society · National Wildlife Refuge Association ·
Archery Trade Association · Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies · Boone & Crocket Club ·
CampFire Club of America · Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation · Conservation Force ·
Dallas Safari Club · Delta Waterfowl · Houston Safari Club · Izaak Walton League of America ·
Masters of Foxhounds Association · Mule Deer Foundation · National Shooting Sports
Foundation · National Trappers Association · National Wild Turkey Federation · North American
Bear Foundation · North American Grouse Partnership · Orion - The Hunter's Institute · Pope &
Young Club · Quality Deer Management Association · Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation · Ruffed
Grouse Society · Safari Club International · Texas Wildlife Association · Theodore Roosevelt
Conservation Partnership · Tread Lightly! · U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance · Whitetails Unlimited ·
Wild Sheep Foundation · Wildlife Management Institute · Wildlife Mississippi

17 June 2015

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Opposition of H.R. 2016, Legislation Blocking Wildlife Management and Recreational Opportunities on the National Wildlife Refuge System

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva:

The undersigned organizations strongly oppose H.R. 2016, the "Refuge from Cruel Trapping Act." The bill would limit appropriate wildlife management and recreational opportunities within the National Wildlife Refuge System by prohibiting use and possession of foothold, snare, body-gripping traps, and other lethal and non-lethal traps on System lands.

We are particularly concerned by the limitations H.R. 2016 creates by blocking the use of traps employed in wildlife management and research. Currently, H.R. 2016 provides no provision for U.S. Fish and Wildlife staff implementing management activities within the System.

Trapping and regulated take are important components of modern wildlife management. The types of traps prohibited by H.R. 2016, which have all been evaluated for their efficiency, selectivity, practicality, safety, and animal welfare, are able to uniquely address a wide-breadth of wildlife management challenges faced within the National Wildlife Refuge System. Legislatively prohibiting their use weakens the ability of the Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure biological integrity of the systems is maintained.

The Secretary of the Interior, through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is tasked with ensuring the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the System are maintained for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans. Maintaining the refuges' biological integrity requires active management and may include the removal and/or harvest of wildlife. Refuges support more than 700 bird, 220 mammal, and 250 reptile and amphibian species; recovery of some threatened and endangered species that inhabit refuges may require the focused removal of individual predators or species that destroy habitat by employing trapping methodologies.

Lethal trapping is also a primary tool in wildlife damage management programs that involves the eradication of invasive species that cause extensive habitat degradation and threaten refuge ecosystem health. Properly regulated and monitored traps can minimize potential for non-target capture and restore refuges to better support abundant native wildlife populations.

Modified, non-lethal snares and foothold traps are also techniques used to restrain animals in wildlife research, which is an important component of evaluating current wildlife populations in order to best inform future management practices within a refuge.

Furthermore, H.R. 2016 undermines the goal of the National Wildlife Refuge System to prioritize wildlife-dependent recreational activities on Refuges by prohibiting the use of traps essential for recreational trapping. The National Wildlife Refuge System was partly established to ensure Americans the opportunity to participate in wildlife-dependent recreational activities, which generate over \$2.4 billion in economic activity in local communities. Regulated furbearer trapping by recreational users is both compatible and sustainable with long-term conservation of wildlife species through population management and monitoring.

By prohibiting recreational trapping, H.R. 2016 sets a precedent that could further limit recreational activities, such as fishing and hunting within the National Wildlife Refuge System, enjoyed by millions of Americans annually.

The National Wildlife Refuge System was created to both conserve fish, wildlife, and their habitats as well as facilitate opportunities for Americans to participate in wildlife-dependent recreation compatible with this mission. H.R. 2016 fundamentally undermines the ability of the Fish and Wildlife Service to conserve natural ecosystems and provide abundant recreational opportunities within the System.

We strongly urge the committee to oppose H.R. 2016 and to enable wildlife professionals within the Fish and Wildlife Service to manage the National Wildlife Refuge System for the benefit of our native wildlife and all Americans.

Sincerely,

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