

**Archery Trade Association * Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Bear Trust International * Boone and Crocket Club * Camp Fire Club of America
Catch-A-Dream Foundation * Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation * Conservation Force
Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports * Dallas Safari Club
Delta Waterfowl Foundation * Ducks Unlimited * Houston Safari Club * Izaak Walton
League of America * Masters of Foxhounds Association * Mule Deer Foundation * National
Bobwhite Quail Conservation Initiative * National Rifle Association * National Shooting
Sports Foundation * National Trappers Association * National Wild Turkey Federation
National Wildlife Federation * North American Grouse Partnership * Orion-The Hunters
Institute * Pheasants Forever * Pope and Young Club * Quail Forever * Quality Deer
Management Association * Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation * Ruffed Grouse Society *
Safari Club International * Shikar Safari Club * Sportsmen's Alliance * Texas Wildlife
Association * The Wildlife Society * Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Tread Lightly! * Whitetails Unlimited * Wildlife Management Institute
Wildlife Mississippi * Wild Sheep Foundation**

January 18, 2016

The Honorable Jim Inhofe
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Boxer:

The undersigned sportsmen-conservation organizations urge you to reject any amendments in next week's markup of the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act that interfere with professional wildlife management, including any ban or infringement on ethical, legal state regulated trapping. As moving as an image of a trapped animal is, so to wildlife managers and sportsmen are the sights of ecological wreckage on a National Wildlife Refuge overrun with invasive species such as nutria, a waterfowl population decimated by overabundant skunks or other predators, or a diversity of habitat inundated by overabundant beaver colonies. Trapping is the means of preventing these less-recognizable and more-devastating losses and is also a means of sustaining a legitimate and historical practice of science-based conservation and sustainable use of our natural resources. We share the responsibility for keeping trapping in the assemblage of wildlife conservation activities by insisting on rigorous licensing and enforcement for this and all other means and methods of taking wildlife both professionally and personally.

For example, body gripping traps have been employed on the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge to manage over abundant invasive nutria, an effort that has spared the dikes, levies and other infrastructure on the Refuge. Body gripping traps are also traditionally utilized to remove beavers which are impeding natural water flow on rivers, streams or managed wetland systems which are critical to ensure optimum habitat consistent with the specific Refuge's mandates; or to remedy the inundation of roads and buildings.

Furthermore, the use of body gripping traps is a very well-regulated activity by state fish and wildlife agencies and the USFWS. Refuge staff commonly employ professional trappers to conduct very specific wildlife management tasks to help meet the refuge's mission and wildlife management needs. This also makes federal lands available to the public for wildlife-associated recreation.

In 1997, the United States and the European Union signed an agreement on humane standards for trapping of furbearing animals which represents a binding international treaty commitment of the United States. Concurrently, an agreement was reached between Canada, Russia and the EU. The Agreed Minute on International Humane Trap Standards (AIHTS) continues to identify humane methods for the capturing of furbearing animals. To assist the United States in fulfilling its commitment made under Agreed Minute, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies together with its state fish and wildlife agency members and federal and Canadian partners have completed 23 species specific Best Management Practices (BMPs) that promote trapping methodologies that comply with the accepted international humane trapping standards. The BMPs are supported and promoted by the Association's state fish and wildlife agency members, who have regulatory authority over trapping, and our conservation community to encourage the use of BMPs' science-based trapping methodologies that are proven to meet animal welfare standards.

While we share your desire to promote the most humane methods of take for any species, we believe that the negative consequences of banning body gripping traps on National Wildlife Refuges would far outweigh any potential benefits. For these reasons, we respectfully request that you strongly oppose any attempts to amend the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act in a manner that would ban, prohibit or restrict trapping or undermine state fish and wildlife agencies' authority to regulate trapping.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and your continued service on behalf of sportsmen -conservationists.

Sincerely,

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CC: Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works