

American Sportfishing Association \* Archery Trade Association \* Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies \* Boat U.S. \* Boone and Crockett Club \* Camp Fire Club of America  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation \* Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports  
Dallas Safari Club \* Delta Waterfowl Foundation \* Ducks Unlimited \* Houston Safari Club  
Izaak Walton League of America \* Mule Deer Foundation \* National Association of Forest  
Service Retirees \* National Marine Manufacturers Association \* National Shooting Sports  
Foundation \* National Trappers Association \* National Wild Turkey Federation \* North  
American Bear Foundation \* Orion – The Hunter's Institute \* Pope and Young Club \* Pure  
Fishing \* Quality Deer Management Association \* Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation \* Ruffed  
Grouse Society \* The Nature Conservancy \* The Wildlife Society \* Theodore Roosevelt  
Conservation Partnership \* Trout Unlimited \* Wild Sheep Foundation \* Wildlife Forever  
Wildlife Management Institute \* Wildlife Mississippi

June 11, 2015

The Honorable James M. Inhofe  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Environment & Public  
Works  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Shuster  
Chairman  
House Transportation and Infrastructure  
Committee  
2165 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barbara Boxer  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Environment & Public  
Works  
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio  
Ranking Member  
House Transportation and Infrastructure  
Committee  
2163 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Inhofe and Shuster, and Ranking Members Boxer and DeFazio:

Our organizations, which represent millions of hunters, anglers, wildlife enthusiasts and other conservationists, write to request your consideration for the inclusion of seven important elements within your Committees' respective Transportation Reauthorization bills -- provisions to enhance the habitat connectivity and resilience of the nation's transportation system; reauthorization of the Sport Fish Restoration & Boating Trust Fund; extension of the realized interest under the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to be directed toward the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA); robust funding for roads within public lands; provisions to enhance highway safety and reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions; and integrated roadside vegetation management. We hope that we can work with your Committees this year to answer any questions you may have with regard to these priorities. We believe this language and critical funding will help improve our nation's transportation infrastructure system while minimizing its impact on the surrounding lands, waters and wildlife.

### **Incorporate Habitat Connectivity into Long-term Planning and Design**

When transportation projects are designed to incorporate habitat connectivity, states can see improved safety and reduced costs associated with flooding and other natural disasters. For example, road-stream crossings that are designed to protect habitat connectivity are also more likely to perform better in extreme weather events, while helping to preserve the health of stream, tributary and river systems. Prior statutory language on wildlife corridors has been very successful. Likewise, we view the attached language as an important next step in habitat connectivity.

### **Prioritize Infrastructure Resilience in Transportation Planning**

In the last few years, we have seen numerous examples—from Hurricane Sandy to the spring flooding throughout the Midwest—of how our nation’s roads and bridges are vulnerable to incidents of extreme weather. In order to improve infrastructure resilience and avoid costly repairs, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and state transportation planning should take into account the potential consequences of severe weather, increasing precipitation, flooding and other disruptive events. We support the attached language to guide MPOs and state planning.

### **Sport Fish Restoration & Boating Trust Fund**

The Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund serves as the backbone for fishery conservation funding in the United States. Funding for the Trust Fund is attained through a “user pay-public benefit” system, in which excise duties on fishing tackle and equipment, motorboat and small engine fuel taxes, and import duties on recreational boats and fishing equipment are collected for the various sportfish restoration and boating programs under the Dingell-Johnson and Wallop-Breaux Sport Fish Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. 7777). Congressional reauthorization of the contributions from the motorboat and small engine fuel taxes to the Trust Fund in the upcoming Transportation Reauthorization bill is critical for ensuring the Trust Fund remains viable and the diverse set of state and national recreational fish and boating programs, including recreational boating safety, fisheries management, habitat conservation, water and boating access infrastructure programs, among others, continue to receive nearly \$600 million annually. Please find attached language to support these recommendations.

### **Extension of Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act Interest Payments**

Under the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. 669-669i), excise taxes collected on certain hunting equipment are deposited into the Pittman-Robertson Fund and are available without further appropriation for grants to States. The Pittman-Robertson Act requires that interest earned through fiscal year 2016 on balances in that fund be used to finance waterfowl conservation projects authorized under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). The NAWCA Program – considered to be one of the nation’s most successful public-private conservation programs – restores and enhances wetland habitat that serves as vital breeding, migratory and wintering grounds for millions of waterfowl throughout their life cycle. We support the inclusion of language in the Transportation Reauthorization bill to extend through 2026 the authority for this critical funding source to be directed toward the NAWCA Program. Please find language attached to support this recommendation.

### **Funding for Roads within Public Lands**

As representative organizations of anglers, hunters and other conservationists who enjoy our public lands, we support strong funding for construction and repair of roads through National Forests, National Parks, Wildlife Refuges, and other public lands. A substantial portion of the maintenance backlog on public lands can be attributed to roads. Outdoor recreation on public lands is a vital economic driver, especially in rural areas. We urge you to support robust funding for this critical need.

### **Highway Safety and Wildlife**

The number of wildlife-vehicle collisions has increased dramatically in the U.S. over the last two decades, now comprising 1 in 20 of all reported motor vehicle crashes. Last year there were over 1.8 million accidents involving motorists and deer. Highway crossing technology and improved management of highway right-of-ways offer tremendous opportunities to dramatically reduce wildlife – vehicle collisions.

### **Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management**

Seventeen million acres of land are contained within public rights-of-way, making transportation agencies land managers on a grand scale. While rights-of-way are not always high quality habitat, they have substantial conservation value when managed correctly. Best practices such as reduced mowing regimes and native plantings can reduce maintenance costs while establishing conservation corridors. With direction, guidance and incentives, IRVM programs can be the standard, resulting in more sustainable roadside vegetation patterns, meeting identified goals.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. We look forward to working with you and your staff as consideration of the Transportation Reauthorization bill continues to move forward in your respective Committees.

Sincerely,

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