

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate

The Honorable John Boehner  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives

July 28, 2015

Dear Speaker Boehner, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Pelosi, and Minority Leader Reid,

The undersigned sportsmen, conservation, outdoor recreation business and resource professional organizations, collectively representing millions of American hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts would like to urge the Congress to start in earnest the process of a bipartisan and bicameral budget deal that lifts the sequester and can begin to reinvest in absolutely critical conservation funding priorities.

As you know, the expiration of the Murray-Ryan budget deal in just a few short months raises the distinct possibility of a return to sequester-level funding for the domestic discretionary programs that are essential to so many segments of economic growth and job creation. When it comes to the outdoor recreation economy, Budget Control Act funding levels are simply inadequate, and in many cases push a backlog of costs onto future generations of Americans.

As conservation has shrunk as a percentage of the federal budget by half from 1978 until today, the outdoor recreation economy has continued to grow; but that phenomenon is unlikely to endure. If investments in recreation, habitat restoration, access improvement, and facility maintenance continue to fall, we can likely expect the health of the American \$646 billion outdoor recreation economy, which employs millions, and puts billions into federal, state, and local tax coffers to suffer.

The impact of insufficient funding is clear: shuttered visitor's centers, unmaintained trails, closed campgrounds, reduced staff, and degraded habitat. These reductions in service keep Americans from enjoying the outdoors to their fullest potential, and in so doing, unnecessarily constrain an entire segment of the American economy, perhaps most pointedly in the rural countryside most dependent on the annual spending of hunters and anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts.

Furthermore, the Wildlife Restoration and Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Funds (Trust Funds) are a user pays – public benefits system of fish and wildlife conservation derived from hunters, recreational shooters, anglers and boaters instead of federal income tax dollars. As mandatory programs, the Trust Funds are already being sequestered, and the sequestration rate is expected to increase to 8.5% in FY2016. These Trust Funds are the lifeblood of many state resource agency operating budgets, and any bipartisan budget deal should address the issue of sequestering these critical trust funds.

Many of our organizations applauded the Murray-Ryan budget deal, and likewise we stand ready to support the next iteration of the bipartisan budget leadership necessary to keep American outdoor traditions alive for many future generations.

American Fisheries Society  
American Fly Fishing Trade Association  
American Sportfishing Association  
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers  
B.A.S.S.  
Berkley Conservation Institute – Pure Fishing  
Coastal Conservation Association  
Dallas Safari Club  
Delta Waterfowl  
Ducks Unlimited  
Izaak Walton League of America  
Land Trust Alliance  
Mule Deer Foundation  
National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative  
National Wildlife Refuge Association  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
Outdoor Industry Association  
Pheasants Forever  
Pope and Young Club  
Public Lands Foundation  
Quail Forever  
Snook and Gamefish Foundation  
The Billfish Foundation  
The Nature Conservancy  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
The Wildlife Society  
Trout Unlimited  
Western Landowners Alliance  
Wildlife Management Institute  
Wildlife Mississippi