

American Woodcock Society * Archery Trade Association
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies * Camp Fire Club of America
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation * Conservation Force
Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports * Houston Safari Club
Izaak Walton League of America * Masters of Foxhounds Association * Mule Deer Foundation
National Wildlife Federation * National Deer Alliance * Orion - The Hunters' Institute
Quality Deer Management Association * Pope and Young Club * Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Ruffed Grouse Society * Sportsmen's Alliance * Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Whitetails Unlimited * Wild Sheep Foundation * Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Management Institute * The Wildlife Society

September 26, 2018

Chairman Pat Roberts
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition
& Forestry

Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition
& Forestry

Chairman Rob Bishop
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources

Ranking Member Raul Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources

Chairman Mike Conaway
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture

Ranking Member Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture

Dear Chairmen Roberts, Bishop, and Conaway, and Ranking Members Stabenow, Grijalva, and Peterson,

Chronic Wasting Disease, or CWD, is a crisis that threatens the future of hunting in North America and the health of big game populations. It is an always-fatal disease affecting deer, elk, and moose that is spreading across the country and is now found in half of the states. On behalf of the millions of hunters and wildlife professionals our organizations represent, we urge your Committees and Congress to take action against CWD *this year*.

CWD, first discovered in Colorado in 1967, is a prion disease that affects deer, elk, and moose: <https://www.cdc.gov/prions/index.html>. It may take over a year before an infected animal develops visible symptoms, which can include drastic weight loss (wasting), stumbling, listlessness and other neurologic symptoms. There are presently no treatments or vaccines available to treat animals infected with CWD, and research has already shown that both white-tailed and mule deer are experiencing negative population effects as a result of the disease. The lack of resources and comprehensive funding is leading to rising costs as agencies struggle to address the spread of the disease. For example, Wisconsin has spent over \$50 million battling the disease since the state first discovered CWD in 2002. Further, the resources that state fish and wildlife agencies direct towards CWD are most often being diverted from other conservation efforts.

Additionally, research suggests that CWD prevalence is likely to suppress participation in hunting, which will further exacerbate the funding concerns. Through the "user pays, public-benefits" American System of Conservation funding, hunting provides critical funding for management of all wildlife management

through license sales and excise taxes on hunting equipment. Ungulate hunting is also a major contributor to the U.S. economy. According to the 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, big game like elk and deer attracted 9.2 million hunters – 80% of all hunters - who spent 133 million days afield. Overall, hunters in the US spent \$25.6 billion on trips, equipment, licenses, and other items to support their hunting activities in 2016, much of it the result of big game hunting.

Three pieces of CWD legislation deserve Congress' attention and support this year.

1. The *Chronic Wasting Disease Management Act* (H.R. 4454), sponsored by Representatives Ron Kind and Jim Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin, one of the states hit hardest by CWD.
2. The *Chronic Wasting Disease Support for States Act* (S. 2252), sponsored Senator Jon Tester of Montana, one of the most recent states to find CWD in its deer herd.

State wildlife agencies are on the front lines of the fight against the growing threat of CWD, but lack the funding to be effective. These two companion bills would provide funding to state and tribal agencies to develop and implement management strategies to effectively manage the disease and combat its increasing spread. They will also support much-needed research into methods to detect CWD in pre- and post-mortem circumstances, in addition to strategies for halting the spread of the disease.

3. The *Chronic Wasting Disease Transmission in Cervidae Study Act* (H.R. 6272), is sponsored by Representative Abraham of Louisiana, a state with CWD knocking at its door. It would require research into how CWD is transmitted between both wild and captive deer and elk to improve strategies for halting its spread.

The above pieces of legislation will address the lack of adequate funding, research gaps, and patchwork of authorities and oversight responsibilities that are currently hindering management efforts.

It is important that Congress help states tackle this emerging crisis before the threat continues to spread across the country and costs increase. Please support and pass this much needed legislation.

Sincerely,

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