

December 4, 2019

Honorable Raul Grijalva, Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
1511 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Rob Bishop, Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
123 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Bishop,

On behalf of the millions of hunters, anglers, recreational target shooters, professional scientists, and outdoor enthusiasts our organizations represent, the American Wildlife Conservation Partners write to encourage your continued strong bipartisan support for H.R. 3742, the bipartisan *Recovering America's Wildlife Act*, and for H.R. 877, the bipartisan *Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow's Needs Act*. As a coalition of sporting-conservation organizations representing many millions of Americans who support the conservation of fish and wildlife, we thank Representatives Dingell and Fortenberry for introducing H.R. 3742, and Representatives Scott and Veasey for introducing H.R. 877. Both are priority pieces of legislation to our community.

Recovering America's Wildlife Act, H.R. 3742

Wildlife conservation efforts are at a critical point, with more than one-third of American species at-risk and in need of proactive recovery. State Wildlife Action Plans, developed with the best available science in collaboration with federal, local and tribal agencies, collectively identify more than 12,000 "Species of Greatest Conservation Need." The *Recovering America's Wildlife Act* would provide necessary funding to implement these congressionally mandated plans, conserving wildlife populations before they become threatened or endangered, while helping to recover those that already are.

For over 80 years, state-led conservation efforts have proven to be incredibly effective at restoring species, some of which were once on the brink of extinction -- from national symbols such as the American bald eagle to vital game animals like white-tailed deer, waterfowl, and striped-bass. Today, we face a new wildlife crisis; one in which the magnitude of the solution must match the magnitude of the challenge. By prioritizing passage of the *Recovering America's Wildlife Act*, this Congress will ensure that our fish, wildlife and outdoor recreation traditions and their associated national economic benefits will endure for the benefit of future generations. The *Recovering America's Wildlife Act* represents an historic opportunity to simultaneously benefit wildlife, conservation, sportsmen and women, the economy and taxpayers.

The collaborative, non-regulatory approach of this bill will empower conservation for the full diversity of American's wildlife as well as critical natural resources. Failure to fund these conservation efforts will not only endanger many more at-risk species, but threaten the local, state, and federal economies bolstered by the \$877 billion outdoor industry, which employs 7.1 million Americans. Without healthy habitats and thriving species, more than 140 million outdoor enthusiasts, including nearly 40 million hunters and anglers, would not be able to fuel this important sector.

The *Recovering America's Wildlife Act* has attracted broad bipartisan support and from a full range of conservationists, organizations, businesses and industries. It is vital to our nation's outdoor heritage, and therefore, we urge you to support this most important legislation for wildlife, sportsmen and sportswomen, the economy, and the American taxpayer by advancing the *Recovering America's Wildlife Act* through the legislative process and supporting its passage. We urge you to support passage of this bill.

Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow's Needs Act, H.R. 877

This important legislation enjoys strong bipartisan support and is supported by all 50 state fish and wildlife agency directors. Without a federal mandate or any increase in user fees or taxes, the bill preserves the current "user pay-public benefit" American model of wildlife conservation funding for future generations by giving state and territorial fish and wildlife agencies (state agencies) the flexibility needed in today's information exchange environment to more effectively communicate with and educate hunters and the public about important wildlife conservation activities, outdoor recreation opportunities, and programs designed to meet the needs of today's citizens while continuing traditional and critical wildlife and habitat conservation efforts.

Many mature adult hunters are becoming physically challenged to continue hunting. The increasing urbanization and suburbanization of our nation's growing population makes it more difficult for the public to participate in hunting, and people are becoming more disconnected from the benefits that wildlife management activities provide our citizens like clean air, clean water, and outdoor recreation activities that promote active lifestyles. Many citizens desire to locally source their own protein, reconnect with their roots, and carry-on or start new traditions of hunting with family and friends but do not know where to start or who to call. As a result, fewer people are hunting and the associated nonfederal funding that is required to match Pittman-Robertson Funds for wildlife and habitat conservation is declining. To compound the problem, the state agencies are prohibited from marketing, outreach, and communication to the public because currently "public relations" are prohibited by the 1937 law, making it difficult to connect with their citizens and address today's challenges. However, H.R. 877 provides an opportunity to address these modern-day challenges.

Reconnecting our citizens to important wildlife conservation actions, hunting, and recreational target shooting opportunities will help prevent the imminent decline in the Pittman-Robertson Fund and license revenues, sustaining the current "user pay-public benefit" funding model for the conservation of wildlife and their habitats nation-wide. The state agencies have this existing flexibility with aquatic resources education, fishing, and boating, and H.R. 877 mirrors those existing provisions in current law, creating equity for wildlife resources education, hunting, and recreational target shooting.

The provisions in H.R. 877 will provide state agencies the flexibility needed to adapt to better meet the needs of the public and develop tools and techniques to recruit, retain, and reactivate hunters and other outdoor recreationists. The future of wildlife conservation needs the provisions in this bill to build a future that continues wildlife and habitat conservation while at the same time provides the opportunity to engage more and diverse participants in hunting and America's outdoor recreation heritage. The passage of H.R. 877 will ensure a continued legacy of hunting and the conservation of wildlife populations for the benefit of future generations.

Again, we ask for your support and passage of H.R. 877 and H.R. 3742. These important pieces of legislation are both necessary to secure the future of America's wildlife and our nation's outdoor and hunting heritage.

Thank you for your commitment to conservation.

Sincerely,

American Woodcock Society
Archery Trade Association
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Boone and Crockett Club
California Waterfowl Association
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
Mule Deer Foundation
National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Wild Turkey Federation
National Wildlife Federation
Orion – The Hunter's Institute
Pheasants Forever, Inc.
Pope and Young Club
Professional Outfitters and Guides of America
Quail Forever
Quality Deer Management Association
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Ruffed Grouse Society
Sportsmen's Alliance
Texas Wildlife Association
The Conservation Fund
The Wildlife Society
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Whitetails Unlimited
Wild Sheep Foundation

Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Management Institute
Wildlife Mississippi