

Potential House and Senate Funding for Chronic Wasting Disease

By Erin Blair

Chronic Wasting Disease, or CWD, is a prion disease that is currently affecting cervids such as deer and elk across North America. CWD is a highly transmissible neurological disease that leads to drastic weight loss, stumbling, and ultimately fatalities of our beloved game species. According to Colorado Parks and Wildlife 57% of our deer herds, 37% of our elk herds, and 22% of our moose herds are infected by CWD as of 2018. These numbers have increased 10-fold since the 2000s and as a result, the CPW developed a state-wide [Chronic Wasting Disease Response Plan](#) in 2018. This adaptive management plan seeks to monitor Colorado's spread and effects of CWD through actions local managers can implement at an individual herd level and through a 15-year surveillance plan. However, as most objectives in wildlife management, there are associated costs.

On December 2, 2019, The Wildlife Society sent a [letter](#) along with other members of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners coalition to the Senate asking for support on CWD funding. This funding has already been allocated to the USDA's Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS) through a bipartisan amendment of the House's Fiscal Year 2020 Agriculture appropriations bill. If the Senate were to also adopt this bill, there would be \$15 million available for state agencies to fund CWD efforts. These funds would assist in the monitoring, testing, and surveillance of our wild cervids. The current funding for CWD investigations and management is supported largely through Sportsmen, a group that has dwindled 30% since the 1970s. Managers in Colorado also fear that if CWD is not reigned in, nonresident hunting tags will decrease as hunters are apprehensive of the increased time it takes for them to receive their animal after CWD sampling must take place. A combination of both of these effects makes it harder every day to manage CWD as most of Colorado's funding comes from these nonresident tags. In order to move forward with CWD efforts and to prevent largescale spreads and outbreaks, state wildlife managers need support on this bill.

We urge you to contact your lawmakers and make it known how important this bill is to protect our state's wildlife and the important American Tradition of hunting. The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, another signer of the letter to the Senate, has drafted a letter that can be used to contact officials and decision-makers, which can be found [here](#). Together, TWS can make a difference!