



July 14, 2017

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

On behalf of the 230,000 members and volunteers of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF), I write to express strong support for S. 1514, the Hunting Heritage and Environmental Legacy Preservation (HELP) for Wildlife Act and urge its expeditious consideration. We stand ready to assist you in your efforts.

Founded in 1973, the NWTF is a national non-profit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to the conservation of the wild turkey and preservation of our hunting heritage. With the successful restoration of the wild turkey complete, the NWTF has focused its efforts on our “Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt.” initiative, which connects both parts of our mission by recognizing the importance of quality habitat for wildlife conservation and its significance to our hunting tradition. Through this initiative, our goal is to conserve or enhance 4 million acres of wildlife habitat for turkeys and other wildlife, provide access to 500,000 additional acres for hunters and other wildlife enthusiasts, and grow the hunting population by 1.5 million individuals. The NWTF doesn’t just advocate for conservation, we deliver conservation on the ground through our work with federal land management agencies, state fish and wildlife agencies, and other partners. The HELP for Wildlife Act is particularly important because it will result in the delivery of fish and wildlife conservation on the ground. The success of our partners through adequate funding is essential to the NWTF reaching our goals.

We support the reauthorization of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), which utilizes voluntary, non-regulatory partnerships to conserve wetlands and their associated upland habitats for waterfowl, shorebirds, and other wildlife. These habitats provide many benefits due to flood remediation and wetlands purification in improving water quality. Federal dollars are matched 1:2 with state, landowner, business, and conservation NGO partners through competitive grants approved by a Technical Committee, the Council, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Since its inception, more than 2,600 NAWCA projects have conserved 33.4 million acres of wetlands habitat in North America.

Modeled conceptually on NAWCA, the National Fish Habitat Conservation Partnerships (NFHCP), reauthorized by the HELP for Wildlife Act, have established 599 partnerships in 20 regions covering the nation since 2006, conserving millions of miles of riparian and coastal ecosystems. Since 2006, \$63 million of federal funding has been matched by over \$102 million from state and local governments, private landowners, agricultural businesses, and conservation NGOs to put conservation on the ground through voluntary, non-regulatory partnerships. Conservation of riparian and coastal watersheds benefits anglers, wildlife enthusiasts, and the citizens of our nation by providing high quality wildlife habitat, and ensuring the quality of our waters.

National Wild Turkey Federation

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The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is an important component to leveraging additional conservation funding. For example, the NFWF has been able to restore more than 20,000 acres of longleaf pine habitat across the Southeast in partnership with the NFWF. The NFWF supports the NFWF's reauthorization.

The NFWF is a strong supporter of the authority of the state fish and wildlife agencies to manage fish and wildlife within their borders, including on federal lands. We therefore strongly support the two provisions in the HELP for Wildlife Act regarding wolf conservation, and protecting state authority to manage delisted populations. In both the Great Lakes states and in Wyoming, according to the USFWS, gray wolves have been biologically recovered and warrant delisting from the Endangered Species Act. Unfortunately, environmental activist groups have misused the process provisions of the Endangered Species Act to thwart delisting actions by the USFWS. Protection from egregious judicial review is long overdue - we should embrace the successes of delisting recovered species, not continue to allow it to be thwarted.

Finally, the NFWF strongly supports the provision that incentivizes the state fish and wildlife agencies to use Pittman-Robertson funding to develop, construct, and maintain shooting ranges on public lands. Recreational shooters contribute significantly to the Pittman-Robertson Fund through federal excise tax dollars paid on firearms, ammunition, and bows and arrows. Additional opportunities for recreational shooting will help recruit and retain hunters and recreational shooters, thus preserving this nation's great tradition of hunting - a high priority of the NFWF. Additionally, this will ensure the long-term viability of the Pittman-Robertson Fund, which along with state hunting license sales, is the principle source of funds for the wildlife conservation programs delivered by the state fish and wildlife agencies. These programs benefit not only hunters and recreational shooters but all citizens of the respective states.

The NFWF strongly supports the expeditious consideration and enactment of the HELP for Wildlife Act. This legislation will enhance the delivery of fish and wildlife habitat conservation on the ground, provide recreational opportunities for hunters, recreational shooters, and anglers, and improve the quality of life for all of our citizens. The NFWF sincerely appreciates your leadership on this bipartisan conservation and outdoor recreation bill and stands ready to assist you in its ultimate enactment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rebecca A. Humphries". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "H".

Rebecca A. Humphries
Chief Executive Officer