



Date: October 16, 2019

To: United States House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee

RE: Oversight Hearing on Chronic Wasting Disease

From: The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Jeffrey S. Crane
President

Dear Chair McCollum, Ranking Member Joyce, and Members of the Subcommittee:

I write today to express strong support and gratitude for the Subcommittee's efforts to address Chronic Wasting Disease.

Established in 1989, CSF works with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the largest, most active bipartisan caucus on Capitol Hill with approximately 250 Members of Congress from both the House and Senate. Fifteen years ago, CSF extended the legislative network from Washington, DC to states across the country, establishing the bipartisan National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses, which today is made up of 49 state legislative caucuses, and includes over 2,500 legislators. Ten years ago, CSF established a bipartisan Governors Sportsmen's Caucus, which includes more than half the governors from throughout the country. Together, this collective force of bipartisan elected officials works to protect and advance hunting, angling, recreational shooting and trapping for the nearly 40 million sportsmen and women who spend \$90 billion annually on our outdoor pursuits.

Cervids, such as deer, elk, and moose, are some of the most popular big game animals in North America. Recent surveys indicate that approximately 80% of our hunting culture and economy is based on the pursuit of these animals. The recovery of these species from their historically low numbers at the close of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century is a battle that was hard-won on the backs of our nation's original conservationists – sportsmen and women – through investments of time, resources, and capital through the American System of Conservation Funding, which has contributed over \$62 billion to the conservation work of state fish and wildlife agencies since 1939 as a direct result of financial contributions of hunters, anglers, boaters, and recreational shooters. However, deer, elk, and moose populations including both farmed and free-ranging now face a different challenge known as Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD).

CWD is a progressive, degenerative, and always-fatal neurological disease affecting both farmed and free-ranging cervids. Since first identified in 1967, CWD has been detected in wild and/or

farmed cervid populations in 26 states and several Canadian provinces, and has recently been detected in areas and facilities that had previously been CWD-free. Because of the lengthy incubation period of the disease, infected deer, elk, and moose may not present visible symptoms until years after the time of infection. Even as visible symptoms, such as weight loss, stumbling and tremors, become observable, the commonality of these symptoms among cervid maladies, such as epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD), prevents CWD from being readily diagnosed. As it currently stands, there is no way to conclusively identify the presence of CWD within an animal until a necropsy has been performed. With no known treatment or vaccine available, CWD continues to prove fatal in all documented cases.

Therefore, the number one objective in the management of CWD must be to prevent its spread into areas that are presently CWD-free. However, a lack of reliable information about the disease and its transmission pathways presents this objective as an arduous task. As state agencies strive to prevent the spread of CWD into their state, or work to control or eliminate existing CWD-positive areas, we recognize that one of the primary challenges in these efforts is securing adequate funding to carry out the necessary work. Generally, the state agencies that are responsible for combating CWD in cervid species have seen a very limited influx of new funding over the last several decades, if they've seen any at all.

The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation urges Congress to work in concert with all interested parties to develop a pathway forward that would provide state agencies with the necessary resources to effectively combat this disease. Each stakeholder has the opportunity to play a unique role in combatting and stopping the spread of CWD.

Finally, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation applauds the House for approving a number of CWD specific amendments to H.R. 3055, the Commerce-Justice-Science, Agricultural-Rural Development-FDA, Interior-Environment, Military Construction-Veterans Affairs, and Transportation-Housing and Urban Development minibuss in late June. However, with differing appropriations bills in the House and Senate for the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture, CSF urges the House Appropriations Committee to maintain or increase funding levels for CWD related research, surveillance, and monitoring efforts if the bills come before a conference committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Crane". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeffrey S. Crane
President