



**To: Honorable Members of the Indiana Natural Resources Commission**

**Re: Listing of Ruffed Grouse as a State Endangered Species**

**Position: Support**

**Date: July 28, 2020**

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Honorable Members of the Natural Resources Commission:

The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation's (CSF) supports the listing of the ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) as a state endangered species.

Since 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) has dedicated itself to the mission of working with Congress, governors, and state legislatures to protect and advance hunting, angling, recreational shooting and trapping. The unique and collective force of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus, and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses, working closely with CSF, and with the support of major hunting, recreational fishing and shooting, and trapping organizations, serves as an unprecedented network of pro-sportsmen elected officials that advance the interests of America's hunters and anglers.

In 2015, the ruffed grouse hunting season was suspended in Indiana, and ruffed grouse are currently listed as a Species of Special Concern by the state. Ruffed grouse are nearly extirpated from Indiana. To arrest the further decline of the ruffed grouse's population within the state, we support the listing of the ruffed grouse as a state endangered species.

Historically, ruffed grouse inhabited all 92 counties in Indiana. By 1983, it was confirmed that 43 counties in the state had no ruffed grouse population. Today, it's believed that these birds only inhabit a very small portion of the state, and in recent years, no ruffed grouse have been heard during the spring drumming surveys which are conducted across the State.

The ruffed grouse population decline happened rapidly over the span of only a few decades. The chief cause of the population decline has been the lack of suitable habitat created by young regenerating forests. Without significant timber harvests across the state to regenerate forests, the extirpation of ruffed grouse will be unavoidable. Creating young forests through active management not only benefits grouse conservation, but also helps regenerate quality habitat for the American woodcock (which is also in sharp decline in the state), a variety of songbirds, and a multitude of other game and non-game species.

Traditionally, ruffed grouse were a popular game bird in Indiana and remain highly sought after in many

states across the country. **When the endangered species status is granted, we encourage the development and swift implementation of a strong action plan focusing on sound scientific wildlife and forest management practices with clearly defined goals and benchmarks for recovery.**

As you know, sportsmen and women are one of the largest contributors to conservation efforts in Indiana and across the nation. In 2019, sportsmen and women in Indiana, purchased 772,598 hunting and fishing licenses and permits, and combined with the excise taxes on their gear, sportsmen and women provided over \$35.7 million to conservation of both game and non-game species in the state through the “user-pays, public-benefits” structure known as the American System of Conservation funding. The Indiana sportsmen’s conservation community is committed to conserving the ruffed grouse and other species that depend on young forests that are currently experiencing declining populations.

In conclusion, we appreciate the consideration you have given this issue and support the listing of ruffed grouse as a state endangered species as part of the effort to save this important game bird in Indiana. An immediate return to science-based forest management practices across Indiana is necessary to prevent total extirpation of ruffed grouse and the extirpation/decline of numerous other species from the state for any hope of restoring these species for future generations of Indianans to enjoy.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nicholas Buggia". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name below.

Nicholas Buggia  
Upper Midwestern States Manager  
Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation  
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