



October 8, 2020

Honorable S. Reed Morian, Chairman
Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission,
4200 Smith School Road,
Austin, TX 78744

Regarding: Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission's Proposed Amendment to Hunter Education Rules

Chairman Morian and Members of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission:

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission's proposed amendment to Texas' hunter education rules. Following the passage of Texas House Bill 547 in 2019, which permitted sportsmen to display hunting, fishing, and combination licenses on wireless communications devices, we support this amendment to allow hunters to display proof of their hunter education certification on these same devices. In addition to supporting this proposed amendment, we encourage the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission to consider amending the current hunter education deferral framework to allow interested hunters to take advantage of this program for more than one year.

Since 1989, CSF has maintained a singleness of purpose that has guided the organization to become one of the most respected and trusted sportsmen's organization in the political arena. CSF's mission is to work 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.

The ability for hunters to electronically display proof of hunter education certification represents an important next step in allowing Texas' sportsmen to conveniently maintain and display their necessary information in a paperless manner while participating in their outdoor endeavors. Since hunters are already permitted to display their hunting, fishing, and combination licenses on their mobile communication devices, we agree with this amendment to increase consistency among all

information that hunters are required to carry. Likewise, we support the development of a system to allow hunters to obtain a replacement proof of hunter education certificate online.

While amending the name of Texas' deferred hunter education option to "hunter education deferral," we encourage the Commission to consider increasing the number of years during which an interested person may obtain a hunter education deferral. Though the "try it before you buy it" deferral program provides an excellent recruitment opportunity for beginners to participate in hunting activities before completing their hunter education, there are limitations associated with a single-use system. For example, hunters who are only able to participate once during their deferral may not have the opportunity to experience an enjoyable hunt. As a result, these hunters are less likely to take the next step and complete their hunter education and become a lifelong hunter.

To most effectively recruit new hunters, several states currently allow beginners to participate in apprentice hunting opportunities for multiple years before they are required to complete their hunter education. This includes neighboring states like Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana. In these states, hunters, as is the case in Texas, are required to remain under the supervision of a qualified mentor until hunter education is completed. However, by increasing the years of eligibility beyond a single year, participants have increased opportunities to truly experience hunting, thereby increasing the likelihood of successfully recruiting and facilitating the long-term participation of new hunters.

Again, we fully support the amendment to allow hunters to show proof of hunter education certification electronically. We also urge the Commission to consider expanding the number of years of eligibility for a hunter education deferral to increase the likelihood of a recruiting new hunters. Thank you for your time and consideration on these matters. If you have questions or would like any additional information, please feel free to contact me using the information below.

Sincerely,



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