



To: The Honorable Joan Carter Conway
Chair, Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West Wing
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Re: SB 748

Position: OPPOSE

Date: March 16, 2015

Chairman Conway:

My name is Brent Miller, and I am the Northeastern States Director for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF). As a passionate outdoorsman living in Northern Virginia, and working in Washington, DC, I am a regular non-resident license buyer in Maryland and have made many trips to the Old Line State to pursue whitetail and sika deer, geese, ducks, and rockfish. Further, I serve as a Steering Committee Member for the Maryland Sportsmen's Marketing initiative – an effort to increase fish and wildlife associated tourism throughout the State. **I am writing to express the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation's strong opposition to SB 748 which, if passed, would authorize the commercial sale of wild venison harvested through crop damage permits.**

Since 1989 the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation has maintained a singleness of purpose that has guided the organization to become 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 (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC) and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), working closely with CSF, and with the support of major hunting, recreational fishing & shooting, and trapping organizations, serves as an unprecedented network of pro-sportsmen elected officials that advance the interests of America's hunters and anglers.

During the early years of our nation there were few game laws or regulations in place that limited harvest and market hunting - whereby individuals were able to make a profit from the sale of animals they shot - was rampant. As a result, the American bison was nearly eliminated from the landscape



during the 19th and early 20th centuries^{1,2}. Similarly, deer^{3,4}, trumpeter swans⁵, wood ducks⁶, and many other species have all experienced periods in which over-hunting or market gunning led to the collapse of populations throughout much of their historical range.

The result of this period of unregulated market hunting was that many species throughout the nation were either extirpated or threatened. Eventually, game managers and hunters alike began to realize that this type of harvest was not sustainable and some form of regulation would be necessary to protect the resource and to ensure future use⁷. This awareness led to banning the practice of market hunting and the creation of the first wildlife management agencies at the state level in the late 19th and early 20th centuries⁸.

The resulting North American Model of Wildlife Conservation – the guiding principles of fish and wildlife management in the United States for the past century – holds a prohibition on the commerce of dead wildlife and their parts as one of its seven tenets. Markets for wildlife privatize a public resource, and lead to precipitous population declines⁹ by financially incentivizing harvest. The North American Model, and its guiding principles, are lauded as the most successful model of wildlife management in the world.

Although the darker period of unregulated market-hunting did occur and cannot be ignored, hunting in the United States today is largely a portrait of stewardship for the land that centers on the sustainable use of our nation's resources. Regulated hunting and game management programs sponsored by hunter dollars through the American System of Conservation Funding have a nearly century-long track record of success in providing active and sustainable management of game species, and have proven successful for the restoration of imperiled species¹⁰ as well.

¹ Flores, D. (1991). Bison ecology and bison diplomacy: The southern plains from 1800 to 1850. *Journal of American History*, 78(2), 465-485.

² Isenberg, A. C. (2000). *The destruction of the bison: An environmental history 1750–1920*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

³ DeCalesta, D. S. (1997). Deer and ecosystem management. In *Ecosystem management for deer* (pp. 267-279).

⁴ Woolf, A., and Roseberry, J. L. (1998). Deer management: Our profession's symbol of success or failure? *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, 26(3), 515-521.

⁵ Shea, R. E., Nelson, H. V., Gillette, L. N., King, J. G., and Weaver, D. K. (2002). Restoration of trumpeter swans in North America: A century of progress and challenges. *Waterbirds: The International Journal of Waterbird Biology*, 25(Special publication 1: Proceedings of the Fourth International Swan Symposium 2001), 296-300.

⁶ Bellrose, F. C. (1976). *Ducks, geese and swans of North America. Second edition*. Harrisburg: Stackpole, and Washington, DC: Wildlife Management Institute.

⁷ Woolf, A., and Roseberry, J. L. (1998). Deer management: Our profession's symbol of success or failure? *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, 26(3), 515-521.

⁸ Duda, M. D., Jones, M. F., & Criscione, A. (2010). *The Sportsman's Voice: Hunting and Fishing in America*. State College: Venture Publishing Inc. ISBN-10: 1-892132-90-7.

⁹ Organ, J.F., V. Geist, S.P. Mahoney, S. Williams, P.R. Krausman, G.R. Batcheller, T.A. Decker, R. Carmichael, P. Nanjappa, R. Regan, R.A. Medellin, R. Cantu, R.E. McCabe, S. Craven, G.M. Vecellio, and D.J. Decker. (2012). The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. *The Wildlife Society Technical Review 12-04*. The Wildlife Society, Bethesda, Maryland, USA.

¹⁰ Duda, M. D., Jones, M. F., & Criscione, A. (2010). *The Sportsman's Voice: Hunting and Fishing in America*. State College: Venture Publishing Inc. ISBN-10: 1-892132-90-7.



I urge you to consider this history when evaluating SB 748. As conservationists, we must learn from past lessons to ensure a return to the darker days of exploitation of our wildlife resources does not occur. SB 748, which sets a dangerous precedent through allowing the sale of game meat harvested through crop damage permits, flies in the face of one of the primary principles of the most successful wildlife management model in the world, and brings us one step closer to ushering in a new era of wildlife markets.

Further, should SB 748 be enacted, it would negatively affect programs such as the Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry (FHFH) which relies on donated venison from farmers and hunters to provide much needed food for the less fortunate. Maryland has invested hundreds of thousands of tax-payer dollars into this program that is renowned throughout the nation as a model for other states. Since 2002, FHFH has received grants from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and then appropriations through the state budget. Regardless of taxpayer support, this program relies on the charity of hunters and farmers to donate their surplus harvest. Financially incentivizing the sale of venison will negatively impact this program, as donations will decrease, and by extension, more Marylanders will go hungry. Each deer sold, rather than donated, will result in an estimated 200 less meals for the hungry.

I encourage the Committee to support alternatives to SB 748 that will promote additional collaboration between landowners concerned about crop damage and willing and qualified hunters to assist with deer management goals. Such alternatives may include: creating a database of qualified hunters and facilitating public access to the private lands most affected by overpopulation concerns; developing public-private partnerships with local and municipal governments holding lands surrounding the most affected areas; and, providing landowners additional opportunity for harvest through increasing Sunday hunting allowances, to name a few.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this discussion. Should you require any additional information on this matter, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

Brent Miller

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CC: Committee Members:

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, *Vice Chair*

The Honorable Gail Bates

The Honorable Cheryl Kagan

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The Honorable Johnny Salling

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