



February 26, 2015

TO: Committee on Natural Resources
Sen. Ken Schilz, Chairperson

RE: Hearing on LB 127 – Hunting Mountain Lions - OPPOSE

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

As a frequent Nebraska non-resident hunter, I want to personally thank you for all that you do for our hunting and angling heritage, and for the conservation of Nebraska's fish and wildlife resources. You are truly blessed to live in a state with such a rich outdoor heritage, and I gladly purchase non-resident licenses for the opportunity to spend time afield in Nebraska each year.

The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation is very concerned with any attempt to manage wildlife species based on opinion and sentiment, rather than on science, which is exactly what LB 127 looks to do. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has an exceptional track record of managing the state's natural resources based on sound science and through the expertise of professional fish and wildlife biologists. In fact, the successful restoration, and resulting need for management, of the mountain lion population is a testament to their ability to effectively manage wildlife populations in the state. Yet, LB 127 looks to remove hunting as a tool in the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's toolbox for effective management of the species. No matter how trivial the elimination of a handful of hunting permits may seem, this represents a serious threat to not only hunting, but also the sustainability of wildlife populations in the state.

A vote for this bill is actually a vote against mountain lion conservation. Around the turn of the 20th century, it became apparent that our fish and wildlife populations were in trouble, and state agencies alone could not afford the hefty price of restoration. Fortunately, hunters, shooters and the firearms and ammunition industry stepped up and assumed the burden. They volunteered to divert an 11% excise tax on the sale of firearms and ammunition to a separate trust fund for wildlife restoration in 1937 with the passage of the Wildlife Restoration Act, also known as the Pittman-Robertson Act. Those funds were appropriated back to the states for science-based wildlife management, and combined with hunting license sales, the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF) was born. A model unique to the rest of the world, the ASCF is the reason we have the abundant fish and wildlife populations that we have today. The Pittman-Robertson Act, along with a similar model for fishing tackle known as the

Dingell-Johnson Act (which passed Congress in 1950), has been amended several times over the years – always with the support of sportsmen and women and always amended to add more products and more revenues that support the natural resources we cherish. It’s a “user pays - public benefits” model that restored and continues to provide science-based management of game species populations (including mountain lions), to the benefit of all of Nebraska’s wildlife. To date, more than \$16 billion dollars have been distributed back to the states’ fish and wildlife agencies because of hunters, anglers, trappers and the industries they support through these excise tax programs; hunting and fishing license revenue adds additional hundreds of millions of dollars each year.

LB 127 sets a dangerous precedent if passed and signed into law. It would effectively usurp the successful science-based wildlife management of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and open the door for the misinformed opinion of a few to dictate how fish and wildlife will be managed for the rest of Nebraska. We urge you to vote against this bill and keep fish and wildlife management in the hands of professionals so that future generations of Nebraskans can continue to enjoy the state’s bountiful natural resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris Horton".

Chris Horton
Midwestern States Director
Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation