



June 15, 2022

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and
Wildlife
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Cliff Bentz
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and
Wildlife
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Huffman and Ranking Member Bentz,

In advance of your Subcommittee's legislative hearing on Thursday, June 16, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) would like to express our opposition to H.R. 7398, the Prohibit Wildlife Killing Contests Act of 2022, on the basis of upholding state wildlife management authority and science-based management decisions.

As you are aware, H.R. 7398 seeks to ban certain wildlife contests and tournaments on federal public lands managed by the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the U.S. Forest Service. Should this legislation be enacted, it would undermine the authority of state fish and wildlife agencies, who are the best equipped and proper entities for managing our nation's fish and wildlife populations, including on federal lands. Unfortunately, this bill, which is based on emotion rather than the very science that is the lynchpin to sustainable fish and wildlife conservation, is nothing other than a federal attempt at undermining state management authority.

State fish and wildlife agencies have long been recognized as the primary and most effective managers of fish and wildlife in the United States. These agencies are staffed by well-trained specialists with professional and educational expertise ranging in biology, ecology, environmental science, law enforcement, land management, and other critical disciplines that are necessary to properly manage the complexities of our fish and wildlife resources. State fish and wildlife agencies carry out on-the-ground conservation efforts and possess an intimate understanding of their respective states' conservation priorities. These state agencies engage with sportsmen and women and other constituents that value wildlife to ensure that our natural resources are being maximized for the benefit and enjoyment of the public.

In recent years, state fish and wildlife agencies have increasingly come under attack of those seeking to provide federal regulators with greater control of fish and wildlife management decisions. Not only is this inconsistent with how we have successfully managed our fish and

wildlife for the last century, but it is also inconsistent with the positions routinely upheld by Congress. This can be demonstrated by numerous examples, including the establishment of the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Acts, which provide state fish and wildlife agencies with funding generated on the backs of sportsmen and women. Since 1939, state agencies have received well over \$71 billion from the contributions of sportsmen and women – money that is largely spent on fish and wildlife conservation efforts. When these two cornerstone conservation programs were enacted, Congress recognized the need to support state agencies in their respective conservation efforts and ensured this funding would be apportioned to the states, not held by the federal government.

Additionally, there is a long history of case law and federal statute, dating back to the 19th century, that has repeatedly held that the Supremacy, Property, and/or Commerce Clauses of the Constitution grant states the authority to manage their fish and wildlife as they see fit for the benefit of the people of their states. Notably, this includes the management of fish and wildlife on the federal lands this very bill would impact. For example, the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (NWRSA) states:

Nothing in this Act shall be construed as affecting the authority, jurisdiction, or responsibility of the several States to manage, control, or regulate fish and resident wildlife under State law or regulations in any within the System. Regulations permitting hunting or fishing of fish and resident wildlife within the System shall be, to the extent practicable and consistent with State fish and wildlife laws, regulations, and management plans.

With this in mind, H.R. 7398 is clearly inconsistent with the position of Congress as upheld through the NWRSA and other federal land management statutes such as the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

The Findings Section of H.R. 7398 specifically mentions carnivores, including foxes, bobcats, and coyotes. Importantly, these species, which are managed almost exclusively by state agencies, are by and large thriving throughout their range, and are expanding their ranges in many places. CSF maintains that, with certain exceptions such as listing under the Endangered Species Act, management decisions related to fish and wildlife should be left to the states. These decisions should be based on sound, science-based rationale rather than subjected to federal legislative decision-making that is inconsistent with how our nation manages fish and wildlife.

Furthermore, the Findings Section of this legislation also states, “Because participants often wastefully discard targeted wildlife, wildlife killing contests do not embody the hunting principles set forth by the North America Wildlife Conservation Model, which includes a requirement that wildlife only be killed for a legitimate purpose”. The Findings Section of H.R. 7398 conveniently ignores another significant pillar of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation (Model), which is that scientific management is the proper means for wildlife conservation. By failing to include this critically important component of the Model in the Findings Section, H.R. 7398 represents a mischaracterization of the Model to build emotional support for this legislation.

Finally, the bill mentions a number of states that have instituted bans of certain wildlife contests. What H.R. 7398 fails to recognize is that this is a prime example of how states already maintain the authority to manage their wildlife as they see fit. Again, fish and wildlife management decisions should be made at the state level by the professionals who are tasked with managing these species.

In closing, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation urges the Committee to support state fish and wildlife management authority and to reject H.R. 7398 should it come up for a Committee vote at a later date.

Sincerely,



Jeff Crane
President and CEO