

October 2023 Commission Testimony

Good morning, Commissioners and thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Marie Neumiller, I represent the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, and I am a resident of eastern Washington.

Over this past year we have seen growing calls from members of this Commission to name wildlife as stakeholders of WDFW and the Commission. An idea that was memorialized in the draft conservation policy's proposed definition of conservation. There it states a goal to "provide equitable benefits to current and future generations of human and non-human life." Sportsmen care deeply about wildlife, and we place high value in working for the betterment of their populations and habitats. However, having worked so long with the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation we recognize the danger in shifting wildlife from being "property of the state" to a stakeholder with equal rights at the table.

During his recent presentation, Dr. John Organ cautioned that doing so would put everyone in this room out of a job and make it open season on wildlife. The seven tenets of the North American model are what make our nation's conservation plan so strong. Removing any of those 7 tenets, including hunting and fishing or wildlife as property of the state, could jeopardize the entire system. Wildlife is a public trust resource managed for all citizens for purposes that include food, fur.

As Commissioners have pointed out we are facing climate change and increasing populations which are impacting natural systems. However, that does not mean that we automatically end consumptive use and balk at the best available science. It means that we work with our traditional partners to preserve and improve habitats. Something that is already taking place through partnerships with our states hunting and fishing based organizations. From wetlands projects with DU, to land purchases with RMEF, to habitat restoration with INWC and BHA.

The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation founded a coalition that brings all these great groups together to find proactive solutions to issues in Washington State. Through this diverse panel we are able to debate and plan for innovative ways to conserve wildlife and our traditions at the same time. We call on the commission to do the same. Work with your citizen panels like the Wolf Advisory Group (WAG) to find solutions that work for all of your actual stakeholders. This will help you solve problems like wolf-livestock conflict. Instead of leaning on wolf protection petitions that circumvent collaborative processes and topple some of the 7 tenets of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. The model is made strong by its anchor in the seven tenets, just as this Commission is strong by its anchor to Department science, collaboration with organizations like CSF, and advice from your citizen advisory groups. The existing processes and policies of this Commission do not need to be changed; they just need to be followed in good faith. Doing so will bring continued conservation of and improvements to our wild populations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.