



Date: 23 September 2019

To: United States House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources

RE: Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Legislative Hearing

From: The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Jeffrey S. Crane
President

Dear Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member McClintock, and Members of the Subcommittee:

The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) supports two bills that are being discussed during your Subcommittee's legislative hearing on September 24, 2019.

Established in 1989, CSF works with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the largest, most active bipartisan caucus on Capitol Hill. With nearly 250 Members of Congress from both the House and Senate, current House CSC Co-Chairs are Representatives Marc Veasey (TX) and Austin Scott (GA) and Vice-Chairs are Representatives Debbie Dingell (MI) and Richard Hudson (NC).

The following two pieces of legislation are critically important to increasing public access for hunting, fishing, and to conserve critical fish and wildlife habitat:

H.R. 925: North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA)

Introduced by Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus Member Representative Mike Thompson (CA), H.R. 925, the North American Wetlands Conservation Extension Act, is an important program that will provide funding to ensure the conservation of critical wetland habitat. H.R. 925 authorizes \$60 million for each fiscal year from 2020-2024 to conduct on-the-ground, long lasting wetland conservation projects. Originally passed in 1989, NAWCA helps support the conservation efforts of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan by providing financial resources to carry out wetland conservation projects in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Now in its 30th year, NAWCA has completed more than 2,833 on-the-ground conservation projects while conserving more than 29.8 million acres in all 50 states, Canada, and Mexico.

NAWCA requires that for every federal dollar contributed to the program, a non-federal source must equally match the federal contribution. However, the program is often matched at a rate of \$3 of non-federal money for every \$1 of federal money, a sign that conservation groups, including sportsmen and women, are willing to have skin in the game. In the last 30 years,

NAWCA has received over \$1.6 billion in federal funds while being leveraged with more than \$4.68 billion in non-federal funds.

NAWCA was originally enacted, in part, in 1989 to support the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, signed in 1986 by the United States and Canada, and in 1994 by Mexico. This plan serves as the blueprint for wetland conservation across North America. Prior to distribution, the funds provided through NAWCA must be approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, which is currently Chaired by Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt, and made up of CSC Vice-Chairs Senators John Boozman (AR) and Martin Heinrich (NM), CSC Members Representatives Rob Wittman (VA) and Mike Thompson (CA) as well as the Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue and Environmental Protection Agency Andrew Wheeler.

A recent publication on September 19, 2019 in the Journal Science reported the United States and Canada have lost nearly 3 billion birds, or 29 percent of the entire population, since 1970. While Congressional passage of NAWCA will not address this issue in its entirety, it will in fact play a substantial role in conserving critical wetland habitat for many iconic migratory bird species such as ducks, geese, swans, and other species that are largely dependent on wetland habitat for their survival. Additionally, passage of H.R. 925 will help improve flood mitigation in addition to air and water quality as wetlands serve as a critical tool to filter toxins coming off the land and air.

H.R. 1747: National Fish Habitat Conservation Through Partnerships Act (NFHP)

H.R. 1747, introduced by Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus Member Rep. Rob Wittman (VA), will statutorily authorize the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) concept, which was first developed in 2006 by the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council to enhance public-private partnerships for fisheries conservation efforts. This title will provide Congressional oversight of NFHP by authorizing the current level of \$7.2 million in funding for this important conservation program.

Today, the NFHP has grown to 20 partnerships with numerous stakeholders, including federal, state, and local agencies; conservation and other sportsmen's groups; private landowners; and businesses. Working together, the partnership mission is to implement the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, protect and restore fish populations and enhance recreational fishing opportunities. To date, more than 840 projects in 50 states have been completed, and non-federal dollars have been leveraged at a 2:1 ratio for every federal dollar spent.

It is important to note that this legislation does not seek to establish a new program, but rather ensure the existing program and partnerships are state and locally driven through a bottom up, grassroots approach. Congressional authorization of NFHP through H.R. 1747 would codify the roles of involved parties and help secure an avenue for consistent funding for on-the-ground fish and aquatic habitat conservation in the states. Providing Congressional oversight over the financial resources will also help ensure long term, dedicated funding is provided to the Partnership.

Summary

In summary, H.R. 925 and H.R. 1747 are common sense, non-controversial pieces of legislation. These bills are good for the American economy, our treasured lands and waters, and our nation's fish and wildlife. The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation urges the House Natural Resources Committee to build off of the success of S. 47, the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, which was one of the most significant and overwhelming bipartisan victories for conservation in the last few decades.

CSF would like to thank Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member McClintock, and the members of the Subcommittee for holding a hearing on these critically important pieces of legislation. We look forward to working with you to pass these bills out of Committee, out of the House, and enacted into law. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Crane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeffrey S. Crane
President