

Schmitz MAPWaters (H.R. 6127) QFR Answers

1. **Mr. Schmitz**, thank you for joining us today. In your testimony, you mentioned the challenges with outdated and inconsistent record-keeping practices among federal agencies. How will the digitization and modernization of public water mapping information through the *MAPWaters Act* improve the overall experience for those who engage in activities like fishing and boating.
 - a. Access is often thought of only as lines on a map or spatial areas that are open to a particular activity, such as fishing and boating. However, access often includes the ability to have certainty on when, where, and how you can enjoy an activity. Unfortunately, it is often difficult with antiquated record keeping practices to have this degree of certainty. By digitizing not only geospatial data but also any regulatory restrictions within specific boundaries, the MAPWaters Act will alleviate this by facilitating 21st century methods to have more certainty while on the water. The MAPWaters Act will improve pre-trip planning and day-of decision-making, which will make it easier for anglers and boaters to get on the water.

2. **Mr. Schmitz**, you highlighted the significant economic contribution of outdoor recreation. Could you discuss how the *MAPWaters Act* could potentially boost this economic impact, especially in terms of encouraging more participation in outdoor activities?
 - a. Access is often cited as the number one reason why sportsmen and women no longer participate in a particular activity. As mentioned in the answer above, access includes the ability to have certainty on when, where, and how you can enjoy an outdoor pursuit. Unfortunately, this information can often be challenging to find. Because of the challenges associated with finding access information, such as closures, restrictions, available outdoor pursuits, etc., the public may be unaware or even deterred from engaging in an activity for the first time or exploring a new activity, which hinders future economic contributions.

For example, as I mentioned in my testimony, during my trip to Yellowstone National Park this past summer, I noticed that fishing was not listed as an activity on the National Park Service (NPS) app on my phone. If visitors to Yellowstone National Park were new or interested in fishing, they may not be aware of the fishing opportunities that exist within the park because of lack of information on the app. If NPS was to incorporate the requirements of the MAPWaters Act, this could lead to increased fishing opportunities, and therefore enhanced economic contributions.

As a regular user of public lands and waters, I can attest to the fact that exploring new areas, especially for hunting and fishing opportunities, can be intimidating. Due to the lack of readily accessible information about our public lands and waters, I find myself hesitant to explore new areas out of fear that I may unknowingly commit a violation simply because the regulations and restrictions were inconsistent, unclear, or outdated. With access information readily available, I and thousands of other hunters and anglers

would be more likely to explore new areas in new states or locations, expanding our economic footprint.

3. **Mr. Schmitz**, given the strong bipartisan support and the success of the similar MAPLand Act, how do you see the *MAPWaters Act* furthering bipartisan collaboration in Congress, particularly in supporting outdoor recreation and conservation efforts.

- a. First, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation would like to thank Rep. Moore for his leadership on the bipartisan and innovative MAPLand Act, which passed Congress with near unanimous support.

When you examine the track record of Congress for the last five years, you will notice that this period has been one of the most successful and meaningful for sportsmen and women and conservation across the country in terms of seeing legislation signed into law. The MAPWaters Act represents another bill that could and should be added to the list of meaningful victories for sportsmen and women and other conservationists in recent years. Hunting, fishing, and other forms of outdoor recreation have a unique ability to transcend partisan lines. One of the primary reasons for this from the perspective of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation is that these activities offer something to everyone regardless of political affiliation. These activities resonate in all areas and Congressional districts across the country, which means that Members of Congress often take pride in efforts to bolster outdoor opportunities for their constituents. With that in mind, this is the reason the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus is one of the largest, most active bipartisan caucuses on Capitol Hill, which you know as an active member yourself.

4. **Mr. Schmitz**, can you elaborate on how the *MAPWaters Act* will directly contribute to increasing outdoor recreational opportunities for America's nearly 55 million sportsmen and women?

- a. More access, both spatial and informational access, leads to more opportunities for sportsmen and women. As noted in the answer to question 2, lack of access is often the number one deterrent to hunting and fishing. The MAPWaters Act will alleviate this by providing certainty to sportsmen and women while they are on the water.

Furthermore, sportsmen and women are the greatest stewards of conservation across the country. Hunting and fishing are largely self-regulated activities because sportsmen and women inherently seek to find unpressured, out of sight locations. Providing increased certainty to sportsmen and women as to regulations, closures, restrictions, etc. will improve the overall experience of sportsmen and women and enhance the comfort level of sportsmen and women to explore new areas. Increased participation equals increased conservation funding through excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment through the American System of Conservation Funding.

5. **Mr. Schmitz**, the *MAPWaters Act* involves collaboration with non-federal partners. Can you speak to the importance of this aspect in terms of good governance and how it might enhance public engagement and stewardship of our nation's waterways.

- a. There are a number of non-federal partners that have years and sometimes decades of experience with translating water mapping information into a digestible and usable format for users of our nation's waterways. Sportsmen and women and other recreationists know and trust these partners. Because of this, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation believes it is important for our federal agencies to collaborate with non-federal partners to leverage their years of experience and trust with sportsmen and women and other recreationists.

Furthermore, federal waters cross multiple federal agency jurisdictions, making it difficult to collect information for all agencies in one location that is easy for the public to access. Non-federal partners, like smartphone application developers and marine electronic companies, have the expertise, technology, and experience needed to take standardized digital data and incorporate it in a useable format, regardless of the agency responsible for managing any given waters.