



**Questions from Rep. Mike Ezell for Ryan “Cal” Callaghan, President and CEO,
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers**

1. Mr. Callaghan, sportsmen and women have always been America’s original conservationists. Hunters and anglers fund conservation, support habitat restoration, and have a vested interest in keeping ecosystems healthy for future generations. But access can be undermined when agencies prioritize paperwork over stewardship or restrict use without sound science. That’s not conservation — that’s mismanagement. Can you speak to how expanding responsible hunting and fishing access actually strengthens conservation outcomes, and why policies that promote multiple use and active management are more effective than restrictive approaches that shut people out of public lands and waters

Hunters and anglers have been at the heart of American conservation for more than a century. Long before conservation became a widely used term, sportsmen and women recognized that healthy wildlife populations depend on healthy habits and habitats. Landmark bipartisan laws such as the Pittman Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and the Dingell–Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act created a durable, user-pay, public-benefit model that continues to fund wildlife management, habitat restoration, public access, and conservation science nationwide. We at Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA) know that hunting and angling traditions are built on an ethic of fair chase, restraint, and stewardship. These values coupled with license purchases, excise taxes, volunteer habitat work, and advocacy for public lands demonstrate that hunters and anglers are not just users of our greatest resources, but the long-term investors in our nation’s future.

At BHA, we view access as more than simply the ability to enter our public lands and waters. Instead, we believe that access means ensuring that public lands, waters, and wildlife populations remain healthy, resilient, and available for future generations to hunt and fish. That outcome, in part, depends on the work of federal land management agencies and professionals who manage on-the-ground stewardship to manage complex ecosystems.

Access and management are not opposing forces. They are interdependent. Without healthy habitats and sustainable game population levels, access is temporary. Yes, regulations can go too far, and there are times when seasonal closures or use limitations can reduce short-term hunting or fishing opportunities. These decisions can be frustrating, but they are often grounded in sound science and designed to respond to changing conditions such as habitat loss, drought, wildfire, disease, or declining wildlife populations. When implemented thoughtfully, these measures are not an attack on access; they are an investment in the long-term health of wildlife and the outdoor heritage we all value.

Expanding responsible, well-managed hunting and fishing access strengthens conservation by increasing public engagement, generating dedicated funding, and fostering a constituency that supports habitat protection and active management. When people are meaningfully connected to the land, they are more likely to advocate for conservation, understand how to better read the health of an ecosystem, and participate in stewardship. Policies that promote multiple use, as directed by existing public land laws, are highly effective when they are grounded in science and implemented with clear conservation objectives.

Ultimately, the strongest conservation outcomes come from partnerships between sportsmen and women, land management professionals, and policymakers all working together to ensure public lands and waters remain healthy, accessible, and productive for Americans in perpetuity.

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