

June 21, 2019

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Bishop,

We the undersigned organizations representing millions of hunters, and other wildlife conservationists and professionals, urge Congress to help address Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Specifically, we request that you, as leaders of the House Natural Resources Committee, take action against CWD *this year* by advancing the following bills out of Committee and to the House floor for further action:

1. **H.R. 837 the Chronic Wasting Disease Transmission in Cervidae Study Act**, sponsored by Representatives Ralph Abraham (LA) and Marc Veasey (TX). H.R. 837 would help address the issue of a lack of reliable information surrounding CWD. This bill would direct the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to enter into an agreement with the National Academy of Sciences to conduct a study on CWD which will build upon and synthesize prior research on transmission pathways and management strategies.
2. **H.R. 1550 the Chronic Wasting Disease Management Act**, sponsored by Representatives Ron Kind (WI) and Jim Sensenbrenner (WI). This bill would provide much needed financial resources to state and tribal agencies to enhance surveillance and monitoring efforts, develop and implement management strategies and control methods, and provide funding for additional research on CWD.

Since first identified in 1967, CWD has been detected in 26 states as well as several Canadian provinces. CWD is a contagious, neurological disease affecting members of the cervid family, including deer, elk, and moose. The disease is easily spread and is always fatal. Detections of CWD are becoming more common across the country, and the alarming spread of this disease is likely to increase in the coming years. As many states have learned, early detection and rapid response to the detection of the disease is critical.

New detections of CWD in both wild populations and farmed herds in locations previously CWD-free has brought increased attention to the lack of reliable data on the predominant CWD transmission pathways on which state fish and wildlife agencies can base their response and management strategies. As noted above, CWD is always fatal, and there is no known cure. Ongoing attempts to develop a vaccine have thus far proven unsuccessful. Without reliable information about the disease and its transmission, preventing the spread of CWD is a daunting task. H.R. 837 will help address this issue by ensuring that our nation's professional wildlife managers and agencies have accurate and reliable scientific information at their disposal on which to base future management decisions.

Additionally, as state fish and wildlife agencies strive to prevent the spread of CWD into their state, or work to contain existing CWD positive areas, we recognize that finding adequate funding will be difficult to come by. State fish and wildlife agencies, which are responsible for combating CWD in wild cervid species, have seen a limited influx of new funding over the last several decades. Thus, we were greatly encouraged to learn that H.R. 1550 had been introduced to provide the states with much needed additional financial resources to fight this disease and provide critical support for research. Currently, state fish and wildlife agencies are forced to divert funding from other wildlife and habitat conservation projects in order to address the threats of CWD. H.R. 1550 will help ensure funds for other important wildlife and conservation programs are not redirected to conduct CWD-related research, surveillance, and monitoring.

In summary, the aforementioned pieces of legislation are critically important to addressing CWD by addressing gaps in information regarding the disease, research, and funding, all of which are significant to combatting this always fatal disease. We strongly encourage your support in moving these priority bills out of Committee and to the House floor for further action as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

American Woodcock Society
Archery Trade Association
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Boone and Crockett Club
Camp Fire Club of America
Catch-A-Dream Foundation
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Conservation Force
Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports
Ducks Unlimited
Houston Safari Club
Izaak Walton League of America
Masters of Foxhounds Association
Mule Deer Foundation
National Deer Alliance
National Rifle Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Wild Turkey Federation
National Wildlife Federation
North American Falconers Association
Orion – The Hunter's Institute
Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever
Pope and Young Club
Professional Outfitters and Guides of America
Pope and Young Club

Quality Deer Management Association
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Ruffed Grouse Society
Safari Club International
Sportsmen's Alliance
Texas Wildlife Association
The Wildlife Society
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Whitetails Unlimited
Wild Sheep Foundation
Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Management Institute
Wildlife Mississippi

Cc: Speaker of the House Pelosi
Majority Leader Hoyer
Minority Leader McCarthy
Minority Whip Scalise
Chairman Peterson
Ranking Member Conaway
Congressman Ralph Abraham
Congressman Ron Kind
All Members of the House Committee on Natural Resources