

August 2, 2013

Congressman Robert E. Latta (OH-5)

Testimony on:

- H.R. 2798 -To amend Public Law 106-206 to direct the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to require annual permits and assess annual fees for commercial filming activities on Federal land for film crews of 5 persons or fewer
- H.R. 2799 – The Sportsmen’s Heritage and Recreational (SHARE) Act

Before the

Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs
House Committee on Natural Resources

Good morning Chairman Fleming and Ranking Member Sablan and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify on behalf of two pieces of legislation that I have recently introduced: H.R. 2798 -To amend Public Law 106-206 to direct the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to require annual permits and assess annual fees for commercial filming activities on Federal land for film crews of 5 persons or fewer; and H.R. 2799 – The Sportsmen’s Heritage and Recreational Act.

I am honored to be Co-Chairman of the Congressional Sportsmen’s Caucus for the 113th Congress. This Caucus is the largest bipartisan caucus in Congress, with nearly 300 members of the House and Senate representing almost all 50 states. I have introduced these bills in conjunction with the Sportsmen’s Caucus, as these two bills are a priority for the sporting and conservation community.

First, H.R. 2798 is legislation that will direct the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, for any film crew of five persons or fewer, to require a permit and assess an annual fee of \$200 for commercial filming activities or similar projects on federal lands and waterways administered by the Secretary. The bill also prohibits the Secretary, for persons holding such a permit, from assessing any additional fee for commercial filming activities and similar projects.

This bill is needed to ensure that public lands are open to being filmed for enjoyment by all Americans. The current rules for filming and photographing on federal lands and waterways place a severe burden on individual journalists and small film crews wishing to participate in these activities on federal lands. This legislation will address the inequities, enforcement and process confusion that result from the current regulations. In some instances, small crews, such as a cameraman following an elk hunter in a national forest, is being treated the same as a major Hollywood production with exorbitant fees and regulations. This common-sense legislation provides certainty and removes regulations that are currently placed on smaller film crews involved with a project on these federal lands. It is essential that federal lands are accessible to these smaller film crews and thus accessible to the American public through their coverage and depiction of wildlife, conservation, and public lands issues. This legislation ensures that these crews are properly and fairly managed by the Departments of Interior and Agriculture.

Secondly, H.R. 2799, The Sportsmen’s Heritage and Recreational (SHARE) Act, is important legislation that has the original cosponsorship of all of the House Sportsmen’s Caucus leadership – fellow Co-Chair Congressman Thompson, and Vice-Chairs, Congressmen Wittman and Walz. At this time, I would like to submit into the Committee record the Dear Colleague letter that the Sportsmen’s Caucus leadership sent out in support of this legislation. This legislation is also supported by the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation.

This legislation will authorize the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council (WHHCC), which serves as an official advisory board to the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture on policies that benefit recreational hunting and wildlife resources. Hunting, fishing and conservation activities are enjoyed by millions of Americans each year. By enacting H.R. 2799, we will ensure that America’s hunting and conservation heritage remain a top priority in the federal government for years to come. Authorization of the Council is vital to ensuring that

hunters maintain an advisory capacity role across future Administrations, and doing so will retain the ability of sportsmen to provide consensus recommendations to federal agencies who will benefit from the Council's vast experience and expertise.

In 2010, the Administration extended the charter of the Sporting Conservation Council Federal Advisory Committee renaming it the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council. Under this bill, the Council will consist of no more than 16 discretionary members and 7 ex officio members. The discretionary members will be appointed by the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to serve either 4, 3, or 2 year terms that are staggered. These members will be comprised of at least one from each of the following: state and wildlife agencies; game bird hunting organizations; wildlife conservation organizations; big game hunting organizations; the tourism, outfitter, or guiding industry; the firearms or ammunition manufacturing industry; the hunting or shooting equipment retail industry; tribal resource management organizations; the agriculture industry; and the ranching industry. The 7 non-voting, ex officio members will represent five federal agencies (the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Farm Service Agency) and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

This legislation will provide the levels of certainty and stability necessary to ensure the Council's ability to engage in assisting the government in devising and implementing the innovative, long-term solutions that are often necessary to address policy issues important to sportsmen for years to come.

Thank you.