



March 21, 2019

The Honorable Jared Huffman  
Chairwoman  
House Natural Resources Subcommittee on  
Waters, Oceans and Wildlife  
1331 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom McClintock  
Ranking Member  
House Natural Resources Subcommittee on  
Waters, Oceans and Wildlife  
1329 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Huffman and Ranking Member McClintock:

On behalf of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA), the fastest growing organization that represents sportsmen and women in North America, I write in support of Congressman Mike Thompson's (D-CA) Authorizing Critical Conservation and Enabling Sportsmen and Sportswomen Act (ACCESS Act, H.R. 1326). The ACCESS Act provides critical provisions that will support hunting, fishing, public access, address complex conservation challenges and create economic opportunities in important communities throughout our nation.

The legislation includes the following provisions strongly supported by BHA:

**Title I: Reauthorization of NAWCA**

The North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) will be reauthorized until fiscal year 2024 at \$75 million annually. NAWCA is an incentivizing grant program that quadruples non-federal dollars for each federal dollar invested to protect migratory birds' habitats. Since 1989, the program has conserved more than 29.8 million acres of habitat with over 2,833 grant projects.

**Title II: USFWS Resource Protection Act**

H.R. 1326 establishes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Resource Protection Act, which allows the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to seek compensation from damaged lands or resources. Currently, the funds from misconduct or penalties go into the U.S. Treasury, not back to the Service. Making these funds available will reduce the USFWS maintenance backlog, which is at more than \$1.4 billion.

**Title III: USGS Great Lakes Research**

This provision requires the U.S. Geological Survey to establish a sound-science program that compliments existing conservation programs and initiatives in the Great Lakes Basin. The program will be authorized until fiscal year 2024 at \$15 million. This program is essential to the health of fish and wildlife and the general public who depend on clean water for agriculture and municipal needs at home.



#### **Title IV: Reauthorization of NFWF**

This provision reauthorizes the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) until fiscal year 2024 at \$25 million annually. Since NFWF was created by Congress in 1984, it's grown to become our nation's largest conservation grant-maker to conserve fish and wildlife habitat on private and public lands and waters. Ensuring the authorization of this program provides certainty that conservation and restoration efforts are being created or maintained.

#### **Title V: Fish Habitat Conservation**

The USFWS National Fish Habitat Partnership is a coalition of outdoor, hunting, angling, industry and other conservation organizations that work together to address the loss and depletion of fish habitat in critical waterways throughout our nation. This provision encourages partnerships between federal and state entities and other stakeholders to conserve fish habitat and increase angling opportunities.

#### **Title IX: Chesapeake Bay**

The Chesapeake Bay Initiative will be reauthorized until fiscal year 2024 at \$3 million. This program provides necessary federal investments that leverage state and local dollars to improve water quality and fish and wildlife habitat for Canada geese, speckled trout and other game species residing in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

#### **Title X and XI: Chronic Wasting Disease**

Both provisions provide solution-orientated approaches to addressing the rapid spread of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in wild and captive cervid (i.e. deer, elk and moose) populations. CWD is a deadly transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE), which is long-lived in soils and affects cervids. Title X, the CWD Management provision requires the Department of Agriculture to provide \$35 million annually to states and tribal communities combating, maintaining or preventing CWD.

Title XI, the CWD Transmission in Cervidae Study, provision requires the United States Geological Survey and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to collaborate and research how the disease is transmitted, why it's spreading quickly and how it infects other species.

The presence of CWD and other wildlife disease have been found to contribute to the depression of hunter participation. These two provisions create thoughtful approaches to begin combating the disease with greater urgency.

Thank you for considering these priority provisions and critical conservation programs so key to driving our nation's \$887 billion annual outdoor recreation economy. Please support the Authorizing Critical Conservation and Enabling Sportsmen and Sportswomen Act. Your support is critical to improve fish and wildlife habitat and safeguard our hunting and angling traditions.

Sincerely,



*John W. Gale*

John W. Gale  
Conservation Director  
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers



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