



May 9, 2023

The Honorable Cliff Bentz
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and
Fisheries
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and
Fisheries
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Bentz and Ranking Member Huffman,

In advance of your Subcommittee's legislative hearing on Tuesday, May 10, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) would like to express our strong support for H.R. 2872, the Duck Stamp Modernization Act of 2023, and H.R. 615, the Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act of 2023. CSF would like to thank you for holding a hearing on these pieces of legislation and we thank Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC) Vice Chair Rep. Garret Graves and CSC Member Rep. Mike Thompson as well as CSC Member Rep. Rob Wittman for respectively leading these bills.

As the Subcommittee is aware, migratory waterfowl hunters aged 16 and older must possess a current Federal Duck Stamp to hunt legally. Not only is the Federal Duck Stamp a legal requirement to hunt migratory waterfowl, but it is also a vital source of conservation funding that is overwhelmingly supported and cherished by America's waterfowl hunters. Support for the Federal Duck Stamp from the hunting community is not unique. Through the American System of Conservation Funding (System), a user pay – public benefit structure, sportsmen and women pride themselves in being the primary source of fish and wildlife conservation funding in the country. Funding for the System is generated through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, excise taxes of firearms, ammunition, archery equipment, fishing tackle, trolling motors, and motorboat and small engine fuels. Through the System, sportsmen and women provided over \$1.6 billion for state-based conservation funding in FY23.

Signed into law in 1934, the Federal Duck Stamp has generated over \$1.1 billion for wetlands conservation and helped conserve over 6 million acres of wetlands within the National Wildlife Refuge System. In 1934, there were roughly 635,000 stamps sold. Today, that number has grown to over 1.5 million stamp purchases, which generates more than \$37.5 million for wetlands conservation. Importantly, approximately 98% of the Federal Duck Stamp purchase price is spent directly on the management and acquisition of wetlands to bolster habitat for wetland dependent species such as ducks, geese, shorebirds, fish, turtles, and countless others.

The Duck Stamp Modernization Act of 2023, a top priority for CSF, will modernize the Federal Duck Stamp process by allowing hunters to have an electronic duck stamp on their smartphone for the entirety of the hunting season. Under current law, when a hunter purchases an electronic federal duck stamp (e-stamp), the e-stamp is only valid for a period of 45 days to allow for the

actual stamp to be mailed. Once the actual stamp is received by the e-stamp purchaser, the actual stamp must be signed by the respective hunter across the face of the stamp and be in the hunter's possession while afield. To ensure the continuance and integrity of the Federal Duck Stamp art contest, a longstanding tradition for waterfowlers and non-consumptive bird enthusiasts alike, H.R. 2872 will ensure that purchasers of e-stamps still receive the actual stamp in the mail. Specifically, the legislation will provide that actual stamps will be mailed to purchasers from March 10 to June 30. This legislation will not preclude the use and acceptance by law enforcement of actual stamps, but rather modernizes the e-stamp process to provide more certainty and regulatory ease to waterfowl hunters.

Additionally, CSF appreciates the Subcommittee considering the Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act. H.R. 615 would prohibit the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior from banning the use of lead ammunition and fishing tackle on select federal lands and waters unless certain science-based triggers are met. Specifically, the federal lands of focus include lands and waters managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service.

It is important to note that with very few exceptions, fish and wildlife are successfully managed at the population level by state fish and wildlife agencies, who are best positioned to manage our fish and wildlife. Furthermore, if data determines a causal relationship between the use of traditional ammunition or fishing tackle and local fish and wildlife population health, states already have the inherent ability and resources necessary to quickly implement regulations on the use of method of take.

H.R. 615 would require that any claims indicating a decline in fish and wildlife populations at a specific unit of land or water where lead ammunition and tackle is being restricted must be substantiated through field data from that unit. Secondly, any restrictions on the use of lead ammo and tackle must be consistent with the regulations of the impacted state fish and wildlife agency. Lastly, any restriction on the use of lead ammunition and tackle within the federal lands of focus must have the support of the respective state fish and wildlife agency.

Efforts to restrict lead ammunition and fishing tackle often ignore many of the existing variables that must be weighed and considered when examining lead ammo and tackle as a method of take. CSF maintains that any decision that seeks to restrict the use of lead ammunition and tackle must be rooted in a science-driven process rather than based on assumptions and unsubstantiated claims that lack scientific justification. Additionally, non-lead ammunition and tackle alternatives often are much more costly than lead products and are not widely-available, and as markets continue to show (primarily for ammunition), supply is still struggling to meet the demand. Lastly, the inability to locate non-lead options, especially those that are reasonably affordable, has the potential to stave-off participation, which in return may result in loss of revenue for the state fish and wildlife agencies through the aforementioned American System of Conservation Funding.

In closing, CSF thanks the Subcommittee for holding a hearing on the Duck Stamp Modernization Act of 2023 and the Protecting Access for Hunters and Angler Act; both of which are strongly supported by CSF and the nation's leading sporting-conservation organizations. We

look forward to working with the Subcommittee and the bill sponsors to see H.R. 2872 and H.R. 615 signed into law to support America's nearly 55 million sportsmen and women.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jeff Crane". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jeff Crane
President and CEO