

NEWS RELEASE

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WILDLIFE GROUPS CELEBRATE CENTENNIAL OF CONSERVATION CONFERENCE; SET THE STAGE FOR 2008 NORTH AMERICAN WILDLIFE POLICY CONFERENCE

Washington, DC: The leaders of the nation's top hunting and wildlife conservation organizations celebrated the visionary leadership of President Theodore Roosevelt at the Department of the Interior today while laying the groundwork for a plan to carry conservation efforts forward in the 21st Century. Together with the Chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality and the Secretaries of the Department of the Interior and Department of Agriculture, the groups reflected on Roosevelt's 1908 Conference of Governors that marked a turning point in natural resource conservation in this nation. More importantly, the centennial celebration set the stage for a fall conference on wildlife policy that will include the Administration, bi-partisan Members of Congress and others to establish a plan to enhance wildlife conservation and perpetuate the tradition of hunting in this nation.

"Today's centennial celebration honors the vision of our forefathers in protecting this country's precious natural resources, and highlights the work that we need to continue in order to ensure we have healthy wildlife populations and continued opportunities for hunting," stated Sporting Conservation Council Chairman and Boone and Crockett Club Chairman, Bob Model. "Hunters have long led the charge on protecting wildlife and their habitat, and it is with this perspective that we are once again laying the foundation for the future of wildlife conservation and our hunting traditions." The Sporting Conservation Council is a federal advisory committee created to advise the Department of the Interior and Department of Agriculture on conservation issues of interest to the hunting community.

At the turn of the last century, the rapid industrialization of the nation was resulting in the exploitation of what had once been perceived as our inexhaustible natural resources. To

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stem the tide of the losses and focus on the benefits of sustainable resource use, President Theodore Roosevelt called the nation's governors, members of his Cabinet and the Supreme Court, members of Congress, scientists, industrial leaders and conservationists together in May of 1908. Never before had such a broad group of individuals been convened by a president to consider issues affecting the nation; the fact that what brought such a diverse group together was the matter of natural resource conservation shows how fundamental President Roosevelt believed the issue of conservation to be.

The *North American Wildlife Policy Conference* looks to take the values and lessons learned from a century of conservation efforts and stems directly from an Executive Order signed by President Bush in August 2007. The *Facilitation of Hunting Heritage and Wildlife Conservation* Executive Order called for the federal agencies to facilitate the expansion and enhancement of hunting opportunities and the management of game species and their habitat. Specifically, the Departments of Interior and Agriculture were tasked to evaluate the effects of their actions on trends in hunting participation, consider the economic and recreational values of hunting, manage wildlife and wildlife habitats to expand and enhance hunting opportunities, and work collaboratively with state and tribal wildlife managers to foster healthy and productive wildlife populations. In addition the executive order calls for the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and the federal agencies, in collaboration with the Sporting Conservation Council, to convene a wildlife policy conference within one year that would be the foundation for a ten-year Recreational Hunting and Wildlife Resource Conservation Plan.

"We believe that the *North American Wildlife Policy Conference* will be as pivotal to wildlife conservation and hunting as President Roosevelt's conference was one hundred years ago," commented Dave Nomsen, Chairman of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners and Vice President of Government Affairs for Pheasants Forever. The American Wildlife Conservation Partners is a loose affiliation of hunting and wildlife conservation organizations that work together on issues of common ground.

Members of the Sporting Conservation Council, after working with the broad group of partners in the American Wildlife Conservation Partners, have set forward five primary topics that have been accepted by the Administration as the focus of the 2008 wildlife policy conference:

- Discussions on the North American Conservation Model
- State/Federal/Tribal Wildlife Management
- Habitat Conservation and Management
- Funding for Wildlife Conservation
- Perpetuating Hunter Traditions

Working groups have been established to fully flesh out these concepts and develop real, attainable policy objectives that they recommend to be included in the final ten-year plan. In early April, the working groups met at a technical meeting in Denver, CO to further develop the approaches that can be taken. The reports that stem from these working groups were presented to the Chairman of CEQ and the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior prior to the centennial celebration on May 15. Through the summer, the SCC and partners will present the issues to Congress, States and Tribes, and continue work with bi-partisan leaders of Congress and the Administration on proposals for final approval and a blueprint that will take hunting and wildlife conservation forward into the next decade and beyond.

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