

AMERICAN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PARTNERS

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NEWS RELEASE

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WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON WILDLIFE POLICY CONCLUDES *TASKS HUNTING AND CONSERVATION COMMUNITY TO CARRY POLICIES FORWARD*

Reno, NV: The historic meeting to launch the next century of wildlife conservation concluded today with an announcement of a new program to increase access for hunters and a challenge to carry forward and implement a far-reaching recreational hunting and wildlife conservation plan. The White House Conference on North American Wildlife Policy was the first time in one hundred years that a sitting President convened a meeting to address the challenges facing conservation and our hunting heritage and only the third time that a nationwide wildlife policy was considered. Over 500 participants, representing wildlife and hunting conservation organizations, the outdoor industry, landowners, and local, state, tribal and federal resource managers, discussed what is necessary to ensure sustainable wildlife populations and promote our nation's hunting heritage.

“Through the leadership of this Administration we were charged with identifying our community's greatest challenges and outlining common-sense solutions that can be embraced by a broad spectrum of stakeholders,” stated Bob Model, Chairman of the Boone & Crockett Club who chairs the Sporting Conservation Council a federal advisory committee chartered to advise the U.S. Departments of the Interior and Agriculture on wildlife and hunting issues. “Their legacy is starting the process and now it is our opportunity to be the bridge to carry these recommendations forward and ensure that they are implemented. The Conference that concluded here today was by no means the culmination of a process it is in fact the beginning of our work for the next decade and beyond.”

One of the greatest barriers identified by the hunting community is access to quality hunting opportunities and one of the recommended solutions to that issue was carried forward by the Conference's keynote speaker. During the closing session of the Conference, Vice President Dick

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Cheney announced a new incentive payment through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) to landowners who allow public hunting access on their property. Landowners who are enrolled in CRP will now be eligible for a \$3 per acre incentive if they sign on to their state's hunting access program; the incentive is expected to open an additional 7 million acres of quality wildlife habitat for hunting.

“Without access to places to hunt, there will be an erosion of people who go hunting - this is one of the most fundamental issues we face today,” commented David Nomsen Chairman of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners and Vice President for Government Affairs with Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever. “Enhancing a program like CRP that has been so successful at protecting critical wildlife habitat by encouraging landowners to open that land for hunting creates a win-win-win situation for private landowners, habitat conservation and hunter access.”

Over the course of the last year, the Sporting Conservation Council and members of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners have worked closely with other experts in the wildlife conservation community, the shooting and hunting industry, state and federal management agencies, and congressional leaders to outline major issues facing wildlife and hunting and to make recommendations to address these challenges. The issue analysis and recommendations are documented in a series of white papers that formed the foundation for a preliminary ten-year Recreational Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Plan that was discussed at the Conference. The goal of the Conference was to ground-truth the action plan and to allow participants to take ownership of the implementation.

“We believe this has been an inclusive process and that the action plan is something that will carry forward through the next decade and beyond, no matter who is in the White House or controlling Congress or state houses,” remarked Jeff Crane, Vice Chairman of the Sporting Conservation Council and President of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation. “We are grateful for the leadership of this Administration in starting the discussions and ‘teeing up’ the action plan, but the success of this plan is dependent on all those who care about wildlife and the great outdoors, in particular the wildlife and hunting community and sportsmen in general, embracing the recommendations and carrying it forward.”

The Sporting Conservation Council (SCC) and the wildlife conservation community have been important partners with the Administration on developing the Recreational Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Plan. In order to ensure their continued involvement in the implementation of the action plan, Vice President Cheney called on Congress to reauthorize the SCC for a ten year term.

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The American Wildlife Conservation Partners (AWCP) is a network of more than forty organizations that work together to conserve wildlife and wildlife habitat as well as to preserve the traditions of hunting and trapping. The partnership is a loose affiliation with partner organizations retaining their

autonomy and respecting each other's differences. For more information on the AWCP and the White House Conference on North American Wildlife Policy go to: www.wildlifepartners.org.