

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans

Witness Statement

Statement to the U.S. House of Representatives

Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife, and Oceans

Congressman Charles W. "Chip" Pickering

July 20, 2000

Chairman Young, I very much appreciate the privilege to convey my thoughts and opinions before the committee today. Being an avid sportsman myself, I have a strong interest, as do you, in protecting the interests and rights of American hunters.

The Hunting Heritage Protection Act, the subject of today's hearing before the committee, represents all that is precious to sportsmen across the United States. I believe this legislation will serve a vital role in protecting the rights and traditions of hunters while preserving and promoting wildlife preservation and enhancement.

Some of the greatest memories I have are those spent while enjoying the beauty of the outdoors while hunting. I have been a hunter all of my life and consider it a sacred right that I am now passing on to my five young boys. Hunting provides a marvelous opportunity to pass on traditions and lessons to young people. Through hunting and related outdoor experiences, my own children are learning the necessity to respect our outdoor ecology. They learn values that many other children who are not exposed to hunting and the outdoors don't have the opportunity to learn. My children understand the importance of wildlife conservation, preservation, and enhancement. Perhaps even more importantly during this day and age, they learn firearm safety and develop respect for their weapons. I consider these indispensable values that young people cannot learn in any other forum.

While hunting provides many recreational benefits for adults and young people, it serves a vital role in protecting wildlife and wildlife habitat. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service acknowledges the importance of this fact. Hunters provide over \$730.7 million annually for wildlife conservation and hunter education. This money becomes available to wildlife through excise taxes paid by hunters when weapons and ammunition are purchased and through permit fees and licenses. Without hunters taking on this role of providing these dollars, wildlife and conservation efforts would suffer tremendously. Since 1923, the sale of licenses and permits have given more than \$8 billion to wildlife conservation and enhancement. This is much more assistance than anti-hunting and self-proclaimed environmental groups have provided to promote these same efforts. In addition to providing necessary habitat and revitalization to the outdoors, hunting provides necessary wildlife population management ensuring the health of these animals and affirming that they are provided the opportunity to thrive.

Mr. Chairman, it is without question that hunting offers benefits and resources to both humans and animals which cannot be obtained from any other source. By promoting the essence of this sport, the Hunting

Heritage Protection Act will assist in ensuring that these benefits and resources are protected and enhanced for generations to come. I, again, appreciate the opportunity to offer my thoughts to this committee today and I appreciate your support of the language provided in this very important legislation. I strongly urge the committee to lend its support to this bill. Thank you.

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