

# Committee on Resources

## Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans

---

### Witness Statement

---

Testimony of Michael Rogers, Sr., President  
Safari Club International  
Before the  
Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans  
Of the  
Committee on Resources  
United States House of Representatives  
July 20, 2000  
Delivered on Behalf of Safari Club International by the  
Honorable Ron Marlenee

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee. Safari Club International appreciates this opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee today to testify in support of H.R.4790, the Hunting Heritage Protection Act.

Safari Club International and the sportsmen that it represents hold the belief that nothing is as important to the future of wildlife and its habitat than the 15 million sportsmen who fund and protect it. This is enforced with wildlife statistics and vast amounts of habitat acquired and protected with sportsmen's dollars. This legislation supports and reinforces that premise. We applaud and support this effort.

This bill is identical in many regards to the Sportsmen's Bill of Rights Act of 1996, H.R. 4144, which was introduced by Bill Brewster in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, and the Sportsmen's Bill of Rights, H.R. 1719, which was introduced by Duke Cunningham in the 105<sup>th</sup> . Congress. We are very glad to see the bill back in this incarnation as H.R. 4790. H.R. 1719 had fifty co-sponsors, including Messrs. Young, Tanner, Chambliss, Peterson, Smith, Pombo, Goode, Hill, Barcia, John and Hunter. There was also a Senate version in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, S. 751, introduced by Senator Shelby, and cosponsored by Senators Murkowski, Craig, Burns, Lott, Cochran, bond and Grams. Safari Club International was part of a coalition of sportsmen's organizations that supported all of these previous bills, and we support this bill for the same reasons.

The previous bills noted that there are more than 15 million hunters and 30 million fishermen in the United States and that they have generated more than six billion dollars for wildlife research and conservation. Those bills had language virtually identical to Sections 3 and 4 of H.R. 4790. These are the key provisions of the bill and we support them wholeheartedly.

Section 3 sets the Congressional policy that the federal public lands shall be managed so as to "support, promote and enhance recreational hunting opportunities...". H.R. 4790 adds the provision that land management decisions shall not result in a net loss of hunting opportunities. We feel that this is a valuable addition to the legislation.

Section 4 requires that "federal public land and water shall be open to access and use for recreational hunting..." with certain exceptions. This is a core provision, especially considering the activity that we have seen during this Congress to extend some variety of federal protective status to more and more land or to make sweeping modifications of the regulations under which federal lands are managed.

H.R. 4790 adds a new concept in Section 6 - the requirement for the development of recreational hunting resources conservation plans. We support this novel concept. We have just filed our comments on the Forest Service proposal to prohibit road construction or reconstruction in roadless areas, and we noted the appalling lack of information in the voluminous papers produced by that agency about the use of the National Forests by hunters. While the Forest Service noted that the use of the Forests by hunters was significant and was increasing, it cited no information about the nature of access required for hunting to occur. This is a major issue to sportsmen, as identified in a questionnaire that SCI administered to all 150 of its chapters around the country. Yet the Forest Service appears to be ignoring it.

When you consider the enormity of the landholdings of the federal government, the importance of a bill like H.R. 4790 becomes obvious. The United States contains approximately 2.3 billion acres of land. More than one-quarter of that land - 650 million acres - is managed by the Federal government, primarily by the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service.

We recommend to the Subcommittee that it consider and evaluate the earlier versions of this legislation to determine if there were provisions that could be incorporated into this bill.

# # #