

Committee on Natural Resources

Rob Bishop Chairman
Mark-Up Memorandum

April 13, 2018

To: All Natural Resources Committee Members

From: Majority Committee Staff – Brandon Miller
Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x6-7736)

Mark-Up: **H.R. 788 (Rep. Duncan D. Hunter)**, To amend the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to facilitate the establishment of additional or expanded public target ranges in certain States.
April 18, 2018, at 10:15 AM; 1324 Longworth House Office Building

Summary of the Bill

H.R. 788, introduced by Representative Duncan D. Hunter (R-CA-50), amends the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act (PRWRA) to facilitate the construction and expansion of public target ranges by: (1) authorizing a State to pay up to 90% of the costs of acquiring land for, expanding, or constructing a public target range; (2) authorizing a State to elect to allocate 10% of a specified amount apportioned to it from the federal aid to wildlife restoration fund for those costs; (3) limiting the federal share of those costs under the PRWRA to 90%; and (4) requiring amounts provided for those costs under the PRWRA to remain available for expenditure and obligation for five fiscal years. H.R. 788 also instructs the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to cooperate with State and local authorities, and other entities, to implement waste removal and other practices on federal land used as public target ranges to encourage continued use for target practice or marksmanship training.

Cosponsors

[56 Cosponsors](#)

Background

Enacted in 1937, the PRWRA (16 U.S.C. 669 et seq.) uses federal excise taxes on firearms ammunition and archery equipment to fund grants to State fish and wildlife agencies for wildlife resource projects and to conduct hunter education programs. These taxes are deposited into a federal aid to wildlife restoration fund in the U.S. Treasury. The excise tax is set at 10% of the wholesale price for pistols and revolvers, 11% for other firearms (as well as shells or cartridges), and is collected by the manufacturer. An 11% tax on archery equipment is also deposited into the fund. The tax is applied whether the equipment is likely to be used for hunting

or not. Total apportionments to the States and territories were \$780,031,696 in Fiscal Year 2017 and \$695,141,699 in Fiscal Year 2016.¹

Prior to passage of the PRWRA, many species of wildlife were driven nearly to extinction by commercial market hunting pressure and habitat degradation.² The taxes paid by hunters and recreational shooters provide funds that support the management of wildlife populations and their habitats for both game and non-game animals. Preserving and enhancing this volunteer revenue source has enabled State agencies to provide additional outdoor recreational opportunities. These funds are also used by the States for basic hunter education programs. This “user pay/public benefits” approach aids hunters, recreational shooters, and all citizens through the delivery of on-the-ground wildlife and habitat conservation by State fish and wildlife agencies.

Increasing urbanization and suburbanization has made it more difficult for the public to participate in hunting and recreational shooting than when the PRWRA was first enacted in 1937. Without a steady flow of fees paid by these sportsmen, PRWRA will fail to meet the conservation challenges of the future. One of the primary reasons for the decline in the number of hunters and recreational shooters is the growing lack of access to quality shooting and target ranges.

To address the growing difficulty States have had recruiting and retaining hunters and recreational shooters who fund wildlife conservation, H.R. 788 would give States greater flexibility to use their PRWRA funds for the creation and maintenance of shooting ranges on public lands. Specifically, this bill increases the cap on federal funds for the creation and maintenance of shooting ranges from 75 to 90 percent. This will allow States to begin work on public ranges with 10 percent matching funds, instead of the current 25 percent. It would also allow PRWRA funds to accrue for five years for land acquisition or range construction.

The language contained in this stand-alone legislation is also included in H.R. 3668, the Sportsmen’s Heritage and Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Act reported from the Committee.

Cost

A Congressional Budget Office cost estimate has not yet been completed for this bill.

Administration Position

The Administration’s position is currently unknown.

[Effect on Current Law \(Ramseyer\)](#)

¹ United States Fish and Wildlife Service [Certificates of Apportionment](#) for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017.

²Bolen, Eric (2003). *Wildlife Ecology and Management*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall. Pp. Chapter.