

TESTIMONY OF SAFARI CLUB INTERNATIONAL AND SAFARI CLUB
INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

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Before the: House Natural Resources Committee

Hearing: Planning for a Changing Climate and its Impacts on Wildlife and Oceans: State
and Federal Efforts and Needs

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Key points:

- 1) Wildlife and wildlife habitat are essential components in the debate about Climate Change policy.
- 2) Hunters will be part of the solution.
- 3) Climate Change policy needs to be based on sound science.
- 4) Funding for conservation has historically come from hunters but more support is needed to ensure fish and wildlife populations are sustained.

Good morning. My name is Dr. William Moritz, Director of Conservation for Safari Club International Foundation (SCIF) and acting Director of Governmental Affairs for Safari Club International (SCI). SCI protects the freedom to hunt and promotes wildlife conservation worldwide. SCIF funds and manages worldwide programs dedicated to wildlife conservation, outdoor education and humanitarian services. Thank you for allowing me to testify today on their behalf.

Mr. Chairman, the most important point that we would like to make to the Committee is that wildlife and their habitats are critically important considerations in the discussion of potential implications of climate change. Although Congress has learned the difficulty of finding common ground in the climate change debate, we believe that most citizens would agree that fish and wildlife resources are vital to the health and wellbeing of the nation and the world. The needs of the world's fish and wildlife should be considered when determining policy direction.

Emotions have run high when discussing the potential impacts of climate change. We encourage Congress to use science rather than emotion in developing policies to respond to climate change questions, and to create appropriate funding mechanisms to ensure researchers are able to address critical gaps in our current understanding of the possible impacts of climate change on fish and wildlife. Since our understanding of climate change relies heavily on scientific modeling, SCI and SCIF recommend that adequate time and resources be allowed to enhance climate change models to minimize the amount of uncertainty that is associated with the predictions and input variables.

The hunting community has always been and will continue to be an integral part of wildlife conservation, nationally and worldwide. Sport hunters have a long and proud tradition of supporting wildlife conservation, including the enforcement of hunting

seasons and quotas for harvest. Through the Pittman-Robertson Act in the United States, revenue from hunting licenses and federal excise taxes on equipment paid by hunters have been distributed to all fifty states for more than seventy years. Funds used by the states for matching grants under Pittman-Robertson are largely funded by license fees. However, support from the broader public community will be needed to adequately manage the potential impacts of climate change and to ensure states have the necessary resources to monitor and manage fish and wildlife.

Although there is no analogue to the Pittman-Robertson program in any other country, the money spent by sport hunters goes to provide operating funds for wildlife agencies in many countries. Perhaps more importantly, the benefits of sport hunting that flow to local people provide incentives for them to value wildlife and to help sustain wildlife populations. These benefits include: jobs, direct payments to villages, the provision of funds from hunting for civic projects in rural villages, and the provision of meat from game animals. As human populations increase and more pressure is placed on wild lands from a variety of sources, it will be critical to emphasize the value of wild lands and wildlife when compared to alternative land uses. Whether future impacts are caused by climate change or other stressors, sport hunting will continue to advance sound conservation measures in countries around the world.

In recognition of the important role of sport hunting in wildlife conservation, Safari Club International Foundation was recently granted non-government observer status by the United Nations and the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). SCIF also participates in the deliberations of the CITES treaty on wildlife trade and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Let me end by reiterating our main points: Wildlife and wildlife habitats are essential components in the debate about Climate Change policy. Some groups will try to convince you that hunting will exacerbate the problems of climate change. But the truth is that hunters will promote science based conservation programs that ensure wildlife populations are sustained for future generations. Climate Change policy needs to be based on sound science. Funding for conservation has historically come from hunters, and we will continue to contribute, but more support is needed to ensure fish and wildlife populations are sustained.

SCI and SCIF, in partnership with the hunting community, thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important conversation.