

Chairman Rob Bishop
Opening Statement
Full Committee Markup
Committee on Natural Resources
September 12-13, 2017

Today, the Committee will consider several important bipartisan bills, beginning with H.R. 3668--the Sportsmen's Heritage and Recreational Enhancement, (or SHARE), Act. This legislation strengthens the foundation of our country's hunting and fishing heritage and helps ensure the next generation of sportsmen and women continue to enjoy access to our nation's federal lands and waterways to carry out these activities and traditions.

Sportsmen and women depend on reliable access to the more than 640 million acres of federal public lands to participate in recreational activities like hunting. Unfortunately, these lands are not being managed to facilitate consistent, open access for hunters. A 2004 report found that over 35 million acres of BLM and Forest Service land lacked adequate access for hunting. H.R. 3668 will ensure millions of American sportsmen and women can continue their enthusiastic participation in traditional outdoor sporting activities—including hunting, shooting and angling—unimpeded by federal bureaucrats and burdensome regulations.

This legislation also includes several common-sense provisions outside this Committee's jurisdiction—that preserve and protect Second Amendment liberties fundamental to outdoorsmen and everyday Americans alike, including my legislation, the Lawful Purpose and Self Defense Act. This provision removes the ATF's authority to distort the "sporting purposes" clauses in federal law to undermine the Second Amendment. This provision would ensure that any firearm legal to own in the U.S. would also be legal to import into the U.S. from abroad. The bill also ends the ATF's abuse of the "sporting purposes" clause to ban the importation of popular and inexpensive ammunition from abroad.

In addition, the bill incorporates a provision to help hunters and recreational shooters better protect their hearing by removing suppressors from regulation under the National Firearms Act, replacing the onerous and outmoded federal transfer process and instead utilizing the modern National Instant Criminal Background Check system. Not only has science shown suppressors reduce hearing damage for sportsmen and hunters, they also reduce noise at shooting ranges located near residential areas. Unfortunately, special interests have attempted to distort this provision's purpose as part of a broader anti-Second Amendment campaign.

We also will consider H.R. 210, bipartisan legislation to promote energy development by Native American tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, sponsored by Congressman Young. This legislation will provide tribes, some of whom experience high unemployment, opportunities to boost jobs and revenue by developing resources on their lands.

Finally, we will consider five commonsense bills to advance the Committee's longer-term goal of updating and improving the Endangered Species Act—which was last reauthorized in 1988. Most of these measures enjoy bipartisan support and a few have previously passed the House as part of other measures.

H.R. 1274, sponsored by Representative Newhouse, will foster greater cooperation between the federal government and states by ensuring state, local, and tribal scientific data is properly factored into ESA species listings decisions and by increasing transparency in such decisions.

H.R. 424, a bipartisan measure sponsored by Agriculture Committee Ranking Member Peterson, reissues the final rule from the Fish and Wildlife Service to delist the gray wolf in the Western Great Lakes region and to maintain effective state wolf management in Wyoming.

H.R. 717, the Listing Reform Act, sponsored by Representative Olson, allows for consideration of economic factors in certain species listing decisions, provides flexibility to agencies' prioritization in processing of listing petitions, affords relief from excessive litigation and allows for more resources to be focused on core missions of species conservation and recovery.

H.R. 2603, the SAVES Act, sponsored by Vice Chairman Gohmert, is a bipartisan bill that will remove duplicative permitting requirements for interstate movement of nonnative endangered species, enhancing opportunities for conservation of such species.

Lastly, H.R. 3131, sponsored by Representative Huizenga, discourages the recent proliferation of ESA-related litigation by capping attorneys' fees to the same reasonable levels allowed for other types of citizen lawsuits against the government and ensure they are awarded to prevailing parties only.

I thank the sponsors of these bills for their work and appreciate the opportunity to advance these measures today.