

Committee on Resources

Full Committee

Witness Statement

Testimony of Donald K. Peay

Executive Director, Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife

House Resource Committee

June 12, 1999, Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Utah Delegation Members,

The organized sportsmen groups of Utah, strongly support the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA), and offer some additional suggestions to create the best legislation possible for wildlife conservation.

For the past 100 years, sportsmen have carried the burden for ALL wildlife conservation. Literally billions of dollars have been invested. When hunting and fishing license fees are not enough, sportsmen support excise taxes such as Pittman Robertson and Wallop Breaux to generate billions more. Four years ago, the sportsmen of Utah requested the Utah legislature to create an additional habitat license that generates approximately \$3 million additional dollars annually for habitat preservation in Utah. It is still not enough money, so sportsmen annually donate tens of millions more dollars to private organizations such as Ducks Unlimited, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, National Wild Turkey Federation and others.

Last year, Congress considered passing an excise tax similar to Pittman Robertson for non-hunting and non-fishing items (Teaming with Wildlife). The non-consumptive folks resisted this effort and the idea was defeated. These people absolutely refuse to directly pay for wildlife conservation, yet demand a huge voice in wildlife management.

CARA is an alternative funding source, and the funds are badly needed to protect wildlife habitat, as human populations continue to grow. Many groups feel that this "free money" should be used only or primarily for species that are not hunted or fished. We completely disagree: For decades sportsmen have funded millions of non-hunted species projects. Additional dollars are needed for species that are hunted and fished.

When you protect habitat for species that are hunted and fished, you protect habitat for all species.

Perhaps one additional line should be added to legislation under intended uses, Title III, Section 302 to indicate:

"To augment existing hunting and fishing programs"

Core components of the Legislation

Because of the additional need to protect habitat for all species including those that are hunted and fished, we support CARA, H.R. 701. However, because of the historical funding for wildlife management, and the anti-hunting and anti-fishing agenda of some in the non-consumptive groups, we hope that the following core recommendations are in the legislation:

1. 100 % of the control of how the money is spent is given to states
2. States retain title for all water, land and easements acquired with CARA money.
3. A local public input process into how the CARA dollars should be spent.
4. Clearly indicate CARA dollars are for game and non-game species.
5. No Money - 0%- of CARA dollars may be used to purchase lands and waters that would restrict hunting or fishing beyond normal limits established by the state wildlife commission. No money may be used to create non-hunting and non-fishing preserves.
6. 501 C 3 Wildlife Conservation organizations may obtain CARA dollars as part of on the ground or in the water matching funds for private wildlife conservation organization projects.

The best suggested use of CARA dollars in Utah:

Primary Uses

1. At least 50% of the CARA dollars in Utah go into securing winter range for large game species. The CUP project has hundreds of millions of dollars for wetlands and fisheries. The CRP program provides funding for upland game. Protecting Utah's big game winter range is Utah's greatest need, and is being most significantly impacted by human population growth. Securing big game winter range helps multitudes of other species.
2. Improve, enhance and rehabilitate existing federal lands. There are millions of acres of Forest Service and BLM lands that could be greatly improved by the use of chaining, burning, re-seeding, and other habitat manipulation projects.
3. Acquisition of critical School and Institutional Trust Lands, that are being sold of in the thousands of acres on an annual basis in Utah.
4. Acquisition of water rights to protect in stream flows, wetlands, and riparian systems.
5. Acquisition of grazing permits from retiring ranchers. This will allow for resolving conflicts between wildlife and livestock on public lands.

Secondary Uses

1. Perform studies and monitoring of species.
2. Hire more employees for specific species protection.
3. Law enforcement and education programs.

For the past ten years, we have worked to protect wildlife populations, and to resolve conflicts between livestock and wildlife. There can be win/win solutions, as retiring ranchers are fairly compensated for their assets in a willing seller and willing buyer arrangement.

We appreciate your support of this critical piece of legislation to protect the industry of hunting and fishing, and the intrinsic value and quality of life associated with Utah's great wildlife heritage. However, if this legislation becomes nothing more than another federal program, administered from Washington D.C. with bureaucracy and red tape, use the money to reduce the deficit.

Sincerely,

Donald K. Peay

Executive Director

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