

Committee on Resources

Full Committee

Witness Statement

CARA - H.R. 701

Testimony before the House Resources Committee

By Ryan Foutz

Manager, Sportsman's Warehouse

Ogden, Utah

Honorable James V. Hansen

Honorable Christopher B. Cannon

Dear Congressman,

My name is Ryan Foutz, Manager of the Sportsman's Warehouse store in Ogden, Utah. We also have stores in Salt Lake and Provo. Thank you for taking time to hold hearings on an important piece of legislation, the Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1999 (CARA).

The Utah Governor's office of planning and budget estimates the economic impact of hunting, fishing and wildlife recreation is in excess of \$550 million in Utah annually. This generates over \$40 million a year in sales tax for Utah, and provides thousands of jobs. Unfortunately, the Utah legislature has only seen fit to re-invest \$3 million a year of this \$40 million to preserve this large industry. This number slipped to less than \$200,000 in 1993 before sportsmen rose up by the thousands and requested more attention to our outdoor heritage.

While some may question the economic impact of wildlife in Utah, let me assure you we know the impact is huge. Our three stores alone generate over \$35 million a year in retail sales and we employ over 180 people. Our stores alone pay in excess of \$2.2 million a year in sales tax. Our stores sell hunting, fishing, and camping equipment and accessories. We do not sell ATV's, horse trailers, camp trailers, boats, and many other large ticket items used in outdoor recreation activities. Hundreds of thousands of Utah citizens enjoy hunting, fishing, and interaction with wildlife on a yearly basis. Additional funding is required to protect wildlife habitat.

Support of Public Ownership of land

I would like to testify in favor of public ownership of land, and funds from CARA to be used to acquire land. We are appreciative that the legislation gives as much control as possible to local states. We can manage federal lands better from Utah, with Utah's than the federal government can do from Washington D. C. There are two main reasons why we support ownership of public land, and the acquisition of more.

We support private property rights and private property owners to have economic incentives to support publicly owned wildlife on private lands. However, more and more private land in Utah is being posted with no trespassing signs. Hunting, fishing, and recreation by the locals is no longer being allowed. The vast

majority of our customers, some 100,000 plus Utahns, hunt, fish, and recreate on public land and public waters. It is the only place they can go and enjoy the western heritage of hunting and fishing. Some greedy property owners try to exert control by blocking access to vast acreage of public land, because they own small ribbons of private lands surrounding national forests. CARA funds should be allowed to be used to secure easements, access, or even title to key private holding that allow access to public lands.

The second reason is to protect critical winter range habitats. It does no good to set aside millions of acres of public land on the high elevation summer ranges, and have no winter ranges, mostly private lands, to support animals in the winter. One specific example. There are hundreds of thousands of acres of summer range in the High Uintas. There used to be a large elk herd there, which was the most popular elk hunting in northern Utah. In the early 90's, the Wyoming ranchers successfully lobbied for nearly unlimited elk hunts, with seasons extending well into late January. The High Uintas elk herd has been dramatically reduced, and that reduces hunters, which reduces our business. CARA dollars could be used to find solutions with landowners controlling only a few thousand private acres, that are the bottleneck for elk populations on hundreds of thousands of acres of public lands.

There are millions of acres of existing federal lands that could be improved for wildlife by using habitat manipulation techniques such as chaining, burning, and re-seed efforts. Water development projects such as guzzlers are also critical for wildlife populations of all varieties in the arid west. In stream flow projects protect our fisheries.

The public shooting grounds such as Farmington Bay, Ogden Bay, Locomotive Springs and others provide tremendous opportunity for the public to have a place to enjoy waterfowl hunting, and provide tremendous habitat for many species of birds.

Public ownership of land is a great blessing. It is a place where all of us can recreate. Even though public ownership of land is a challenge to manage, and we strongly support as much local control over federal land as possible, it is far better than the alternative of no trespassing signs where only the wealthy few are allowed in.

CARA funds, if properly invested, will protect wildlife habitat. That protects a \$500 million dollar industry in Utah. CARA funds will protect a great family heritage of hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation. We encourage congress to pass this legislation.

While we take great pride in taking care of ourselves out west, the west is growing to rapidly. There is too much pressure upon our natural resources. We encourage all Americans to look at the tremendous contribution sportsmen have made up to this point. BILLIONS of dollars to restore wildlife and protect their habitats. Sportsmen can no longer fund the wildlife conservation bill for all animals, for all people. CARA funds, which if properly invested, via a public input process as called for in Title III, section 302, will help preserve all wildlife, our quality of life, and our businesses.

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