

Hunting Heritage Action Plan

Concept Paper

The Hunting Heritage Action Plan proposes to create a coalition of like-minded organizations and agencies to address the difficult task of retaining our hunting heritage. The proposed process borrows administratively from the successful models of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, North American Bird Conservation Initiative and National Fish Habitat Plan where detailed assessments are made of the issues involved, the roles of various organizations, and existing efforts, and systematically identifies a way forward to resolve this dilemma.

Lead Organization: Wildlife Management Institute, Inc.

The Wildlife Management Institute (WMI), founded in 1911, is a private, 501(c)(3) non-profit, scientific and educational organization. Its mission is to provide leadership to conserve, restore and enhance North American wildlife populations and habitats through science and professional management. WMI is headquartered in Washington, DC, with five regional field representatives.

Collaborating Agencies and Organizations:

- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- Texas Wildlife Association
- Association for Conservation Information
- Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
- Conservation Vision, Inc.
- International Hunter Education Association
- Bowhunting Preservation Alliance
- National Shooting Sports Foundation
- American Wildlife Conservation Partners

Background:

During the early 1900s, many wildlife species were in serious decline. The continent's early conservation-minded politicians, organizations, industry leaders, and hunters rallied to enact public support for and laws to conserve wildlife resources. Ever since, hunters and wildlife professionals have been at the forefront of a conservation model that is the envy of the world.

However, many challenges face hunting and conservation in the 21st century, including projected:

- population growth rate of 7 to 9 percent per decade for the next three to four decades, will geometrically intensify the demand for and consumption of natural resources;
- increased loss and/or fragmentation of forest, upland, and wetland habitats; and
- increased conflicts between humans and wildlife.

A particularly insidious problem is the rapid urbanizing of North America, especially in the United States. In addition to the geographical sprawl of cities and suburbia, there will be serious

encroachment on rural community values. General understanding of natural elements and processes is certain to diminish, as will appreciation for management of wildlife resources. Policy makers, legislators, and the judicial system will best be prepared to address these challenges by working with professional wildlife conservationists, engaged hunters, and an educated public.

No organization or coalition presently exists to ensure that hunting remains an enjoyable and safe recreation, an economic mainstay for many communities, and an essential wildlife management strategy and tool. The Hunting Heritage Action Plan proposes such an entity and borrows administratively from the successful models of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, North American Bird Conservation Initiative and National Fish Habitat Plan.

Objectives:

The Hunting Heritage Action Plan proposes to:

- identify, define, and assess hunting heritage investments and efforts of federal, state and provincial agencies, conservation organizations, academic institutions, and hunting and shooting sports industry;
- in collaboration with those same entities, develop and implement a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, practical strategy to protect, preserve and improve North America's hunting heritage; and
- create and sustain greater public recognition of and support for the values of recreational hunting, its role in conservation and conservation funding.

The plan will feature seven targets of assessment, including their focus areas and current projects (see attached schematic). These targets include: conservation, education, hunter recruitment and retention, socio-economics, political and legal issues, outreach, and funding. The project entails four phases:

Phase 1. Scoping

Starting March 2006, the project coordinator will work with an advisory committee to define and identify major factors bearing on the preservation of North America's hunting heritage. The findings and preliminary assessment will be outlined in September 2006.

Phase 2. Assessment

State, provincial, and federal government agencies, conservation organizations, academia, hunting industry and business representatives, will be surveyed to establish a data base of past and current research, education, project, study, political and legal action, outreach, and funding efforts that relate directly to the plan's targets. An assessment report will be prepared by September 2007.

Phase 3. Strategic planning

Working groups will be identified and assigned to address the effectiveness and priority of each target, focus area and project, and develop ideas, goals, and mechanisms to advance each in concert with those of the other groups. A comprehensive strategic plan will be prepared and distributed in March 2009. Actions identified during the strategic planning process that could be implemented in an earlier time frame may be shared before the final plan is completed.

Phase 4. Implementation, evaluation, and feedback

Implementation of the strategic plan, with buy-in by stakeholder agencies, organizations, academia and industry will be based on identified “best management practices”, research results, and available and future funding. Each action will have measurable outcomes and long-term monitoring and evaluation processes. The first annual implementation report will be produced by September 2009.

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