

Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council

December 15, 2023

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland,

The Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council (Council) would like to thank you for continuing to support the conservation of fish, wildlife, and our public lands and waters. In that same vein, the Council would like to urge the Department of the Interior to issue a statement of position in support of the Tax Stamp Revenue Transfer for Wildlife and Recreation Act (H.R. 6352) to bolster wildlife conservation and recreational access across the country. This bipartisan bill will provide significant investments to Pittman-Robertson funds to conserve wildlife, public lands and waters, and to enhance access for sportsmen and women across the country.

As you know, the Pittman-Robertson fund (P-R), combined with the Dingell-Johnson fund and the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, provides the bulk of funding for state fish and wildlife agencies across the country, which is known as the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF), a “user pays – public benefits” structure. On average, 80% of state fish and wildlife agencies budgets come from ASCF, though some states still rely nearly 100% on the funding generated by sportsmen and women under the ASCF. Investments made through the ASCF are unmatched in their value to the operation of state fish and wildlife agencies, and therefore are critical to conservation efforts across the country. Last year alone, hunters and recreational target shooters contributed nearly \$1.2 billion for on-the-ground conservation through P-R. Notably, approximately 80% of the funding generated for the Pittman-Robertson fund is directly attributable to recreational target shooters, who collectively spend far more than hunters on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment.

The Tax Stamp Revenue Transfer for Wildlife and Recreation Act would take 15% (\$30) of the \$200 Form-4 tax stamp required for firearm suppressor purchases and dedicate this money to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) for the processing of suppressor applications. Importantly, the legislation would enhance conservation funding by redirect the remaining 85% (\$170) of the \$200 Form-4 tax stamp and dedicate this revenue to the Pittman-Robertson fund to bolster conservation and access funding across the nation. Specifically, H.R. 6352 would dedicate 15% (\$25.5) of

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the 85% P-R dedicated funding for the development, maintenance, and operation of recreational target shooting ranges. These dedicated ranges enhance safety, reduce environmental impact and contribute to the recruitment and retention of ethical hunters and shooters. Recent data shows that a significant portion of Pittman Robertson funds are generated by recreational shooters, indicating that more ranges would further bolster conservation funding. The remaining 70% Pittman-Robertson dedicated funding through H.R. 6352 would be used for other traditional purposes of P-R such as wildlife conservation, law enforcement, hunter recruitment, hunter education courses, and other important related activities.

Suppressors are increasingly popular accessories that improve ballistics, enhance accuracy, reduce recoil, and alleviate hearing impairment while reducing user conflicts. Suppressors are one of the most vital and effective tools to recruiting and retaining new demographics of hunters and shooters, particularly women and young people, to shooting sports.

Under current law, the revenue generated from Form-4 applications are deposited into the U.S. Treasury without any specific direction or allocation, and provide no benefit for wildlife conservation efforts. In recent years, revenues generated by Form-4 tax stamp have grown 40% annually. With the increase in demand by hunters and target shooters across the country, Form-4 tax stamp revenues are expected to approach \$200 million in 2023, meaning a potential increase of roughly \$170 million to the Pittman-Robertson Fund.

In summary, the Council strongly recommends that the Department of the Interior issue a supportive statement of position on the Tax Stamp Revenue Transfer for Wildlife and Recreation Act to improve wildlife conservation, bolster target shooting opportunities, and to enhance the overall funding level of the Pittman-Robertson fund.

Thank you for your consideration of this recommendation. Should you have any questions or need more information regarding this matter, please contact Doug Hobbs, the Council's Designated Federal Officer at doug_hobbs@fws.gov or (703) 358-2336.

Sincerely,



Collin O'Mara
Chair



John Devney
Vice Chair

Cc: HWCC members
Matt Strickler, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of the Interior
Martha Williams, Director – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Paul Rauch, Assistant Director – Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service