

FOREWORD

In the heat and smoke of a major fire season in August 2000, thirty-five wildlife organizations with nearly 4.5 million total members, gathered in Missoula, Montana, at the Wildlife Conservation Partners Summit (WCPS) as guests of the Boone and Crockett Club. These dedicated hunter/conservationists met for one purpose: To identify how best to work collectively to help chart the course for the future of wildlife conservation in the United States.

In assessing current wildlife conditions, the partners found many positives. For example, big-game populations and habitats are generally in good shape and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan is working well. We also discussed a “short list” of issues which, we agreed, if not properly resolved soon could put American wildlife and wildlife management at risk. That list includes:

- Habitats of federal forests and rangelands are deteriorating; especially those at risk of uncharacteristic wildfire.
- The authority of state natural resource agencies to manage fish and wildlife populations within their borders is eroding.
- Actual and projected declines in hunter participation indicate that America’s hunting heritage is at risk, and along with it, the tradition of American game management.
- Public conflict and polarization over wildlife issues are increasing.
- Incentives for wildlife conservation on private lands are inadequate.
- The stewardship of federal lands is hampered by the web of laws and regulations guiding the management of these lands.

The recommendations offered here in *Wildlife for the 21st Century* represent a general agreement of the partners and are, in our judgment, necessary to successfully resolve these and other issues and ensure the continued success of wildlife and wildlife management in America. While unity is a goal of the partners, each reserves the right to establish independent positions on any issue. In addition, not all partners necessarily support each and every position or recommendation. Together, we stand ready, as never before, to assist in this critically important work.

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