

OPENING STATEMENT

The Honorable Paul Broun M.D. (R-GA), Chairman

Subcommittee on Investigations & Oversight

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

The Science of How Hunting Assists Species Conservation and Management

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As a hunter who was first introduced to the sport by my father when I was 6 years old, I am personally aware of the positive impacts of managed hunts in America and overseas. I have been involved in hunting for almost 60 years and I am Life Member #17 in the Safari Club. However, there may be some who are not aware of these positive impacts and how the science of hunting assists species conservation and management. Today's hearing is part of my effort to ensure that legal hunting is properly recognized for its positive impacts upon domestic and international animal populations, as well as conservation in general.

We have several witnesses testifying today who can speak first hand of the positive impact of hunting and the science behind it. Represented today by its Director, Dan Ashe, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has repeatedly highlighted the positive impacts of hunting. Also testifying today is the Executive Director of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Nick Wiley. One of his responsibilities is management of legal harvests of American Alligators, a species that was listed as endangered from 1967 to 1987. It only took twenty years for an incredibly successful managed harvesting program to end the endangered status of the American alligator. Similar efforts overseas are ongoing for other species as a representative from the Safari Club will testify.

Legal hunts use scientific studies to determine the proper amount and type of hunting to be permitted for each species. In some cases, hunting may be used to address an overpopulation of one species that is harming other species or the environment as a whole due to overcrowding. In an urban environment like Washington, DC, the overpopulation of deer in places like Rock Creek Park is apparent to anyone who drives on Rock Creek parkway. The only real threat to these deer are automobiles. Less visible reminders are the lack of young shrub and tree growth due to deer desperate for food.

Hunting generates significant revenues through taxes on hunting equipment, duck stamps, and other hunting permits. The duck stamp program alone is approaching \$1 billion in total funds for conservation management, land acquisitions, and research. This research includes extensive studies of animal populations, threats to their survival, and species survival rates. All of this research helps ensure that society has a solid understanding of how best to manage a species to its highest sustainable level. Hunters also spend money throughout the economy through airfare, lodging, and food. This means jobs for Americans.

However, I am disappointed that some in our society are opposed to any legal hunting, even in the face of its apparent widespread benefits. A recent 60 Minutes story highlighted the positive benefits of American game ranches that have invested significant resources of their own to boost populations of the scimitar-horned oryx, the addax, and the dama gazelle - all endangered species or extinct in their native habitats. These game ranches rely on the hunting of a limited number of the older animals to fund their operations and investments in the growth of their stocks. Several of these ranches have even been able to export a portion of their stock to reintroduce them into

the wild using policies that rely upon these captive animals. Yet as a result of litigation, hunters must now go through a needless paperwork process in order to spend their own money on a legal hunt.

Ultimately, chasing paperwork doesn't benefit anyone or any animal. In fact, paperwork delays divert needed funds away from the very species that need them. One person interviewed in the 60 Minutes piece stated that she would rather see a species become extinct, than see it hunted. If this doesn't highlight the irrationality of some, I don't know what does.

Our witnesses today understand the importance of hunting and I look forward to hearing their testimony. I do have some concerns about how the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service handles permit applications for the importation of legal hunts. For example, paperwork delays related to importation threaten the viability of a hunting plan for rhinoceros that is backed by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species as well as groups such as the World Wildlife Fund. I am also interested in learning what Director Ashe thinks of the requirement for individual takings permits for legal hunts of endangered species on American game ranches. Would it be better from a regulatory and wildlife conservation perspective if individual permits were replaced by an alternative system? Finally, what we can do as a society to continue to build upon the tradition of hunters being the greatest advocates for species conservation and management? Their critical role in conserving and managing species cannot be ignored.