

Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council

December 7, 2011

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

The Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council (Council) would like to express its sincere thanks and appreciation for your continued perseverance and strong voice for land, water and wildlife conservation programs in the ongoing federal budgeting process. As you well know, America's conservation legacy is woven into the fabric of our culture and heritage ... and our national economy.

As federal budget debates continue the Council would like to underscore the importance of information that can contribute significantly to the discussion about adequate funding for conservation programs, particularly concerning three key points:

- 1) Leveraging federal conservation dollars with matching funds and in-kind resources from non-federal sources
- 2) Job retention and growth
- 3) Positive local economic impacts in communities across America

A new study conducted by Southwick Associates, entitled "The Economics Associated with Outdoor Recreation, Natural Resources Conservation and Historic Preservation in the United States," concludes that outdoor activities, including hunting, fishing and other wildlife related recreational pursuits, and historic preservation generate *annually*:

- 1) A conservative estimate of more than \$1 trillion in total economic activity
- 2) 9.4 million American jobs
- 3) A total in federal, state and local tax revenues of \$107 billion

Specific to outdoor sports, the study states that in 2006, the total economic contribution from outdoor sports in the U.S. was nearly \$730 billion per year, generating more than 6.4 million U.S. jobs and \$88 billion in federal and state tax revenues. Such activities included hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, hiking, camping, skiing, paddle sports, and bicycling.

Likewise, and as an example regarding the Council's interests and charge, in 2006 the combined spending effect of hunting, fishing and wildlife watching exclusively associated with U.S. Forest Service land totaled \$9.5 billion in annual retail sales, supported 189,400 jobs and provided \$1.01 billion in annual federal tax revenues.

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Both the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture provide successful conservation initiatives that are often leveraged as much as three or four to one by private and state resources. In addition to many positive economic impacts, these conservation programs also foster "preventative conservation". This year, the flood-ravaged Upper Missouri and Lower Mississippi rivers demonstrated that conservation programs that protect wetlands and flood plains are cost-effective in mitigating disaster impacts and protecting local and national economies.

We hope you will use these findings and information to continue to fight the good fight for critical conservation funding, and we offer our support to assist your efforts. Thank you so much for your focus on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Tomke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Tomke, Chair
Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council

Cc:
Secretary Ken Salazar, DOI
Robert Bonnie, Senior Advisor to Secretary Vilsack
Bruce Nelson, Administrator, Farm Service Agency
Dave White, Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service
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