

Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council

November 6, 2012

The Honorable Ken Salazar, Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

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

Dear Secretary Salazar and Secretary Vilsack:

The Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council (Council) would once again like to express its sincere thanks and appreciation for your continued perseverance and strong support for land, water and wildlife conservation programs, especially in light of the ongoing budget and debt reduction challenges the federal government and your agencies face.

Like each of you, the Council has many, many concerns about future funding levels for all conservation programs in your respective agencies. We plan to stay in communication with you on these funding concerns as the federal budgeting process continues, and as the Administration and Congress move forward to deal with the Sequestration Transparency Act of 2012. However, today we are writing to highlight a particular concern and funding need discussed at our full Council meeting on October 16-17, 2012 in Washington, D.C.

It is critically important for many reasons that the Department of Interior and the Department of Agriculture maintain and adequately fund their existing science-based research programs and projects. We feel strongly that up-to-date scientific data and information is vital for effective planning and decision-making processes. Sound scientific information provides the foundation for understanding the relationships between wildlife species, their habitats and management actions ... and is the key to well-reasoned, defensible management strategies.

One example, in the Department of Agriculture, of ongoing research initiatives providing invaluable information are the elk nutrition and habitat management studies conducted at the U.S. Forest Service Starkey Experimental Forest and Range research facility in the Blue Mountains of northeastern Oregon. In another example, at the Department of Interior, 40 Cooperative Research Units (in 38 states) administered by the U.S. Geological Survey conduct important research on renewable natural resource questions and provide technical assistance and consultation on natural resource issues. In addition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's research capacity was curtailed years ago; however, their species biologists and land managers, along with those of the agencies of the Department of Agriculture, have been confronted with increasingly difficult scientific issues. The

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new research findings and bodies of science accumulating from these and other scientific endeavors in your agencies are core components of well-rounded natural resource management programs, and contribute significantly to partners' management efforts as well. We encourage your support for these science programs within your respective Departments.

The Council is deeply interested in the effects of the upcoming budget and debt reduction processes on your departments and will continue to discuss these effects as they unfold. Thank you for considering the Council's input at this time on the importance of science and scientific research in your agencies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Tomke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

John Tomke, Chair
Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council

Cc:
Tom Tidwell, Chief U.S. Forest Service
Dan Ashe, Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Marcia McNutt, Director U.S. Geological Survey