



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS**

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June 24, 2019

Testimony of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations hearing on “Chronic Wasting Disease: The Threats to Wildlife, Public Lands, Hunting, and Health”

Organization: Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
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The Honorable TJ Cox
Chairman
House Natural Resources Subcommittee
on Oversight and Investigations
H2186 Ford House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Louie Gohmert
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Subcommittee
on Oversight and Investigations
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cox and Ranking Member Gohmert:

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA) is the fastest growing conservation organization representing hunters and anglers in North America. Over the past six years, BHA has doubled its membership annually and 68 percent of our members are between the ages 18 and 45 making BHA the only hunting and fishing organization that represents younger generations. With over 350,000 sportsmen and women supporting our mission in total, we are the voice for our wild public lands, waters, and wildlife.

Please accept these comments for the record on the hearing to address threats to cervid—deer, elk and moose—populations from Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), a deadly transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) found in long-lived soils. We applaud your efforts to bring awareness to this urgent matter as wild herds have tested positive for CWD in 26 states and two Canadian provinces.

The presence of CWD and other wildlife diseases have been found to contribute to the depression of hunter participation. According to the 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Associated Recreation, 8.1 million hunters participated in during hunting, while 712,000 hunters pursued elk. White-tailed deer, mule deer, moose and elk are primary game species for North America’s hunters and contribute to the sustainable economic health of local communities and wildlife management agencies alike. The potential loss of wild cervid populations paired with already declining hunter numbers across the continent places the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation itself at risk.

BHA supports science-based wildlife management practices to limit the spread of CWD and allow healthy wildlife populations held in the public trust to thrive. There are two bipartisan and bicameral bills that



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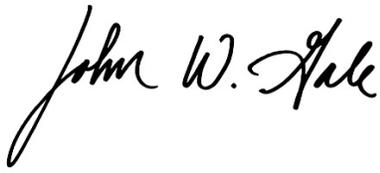
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do just this. The first one, the Chronic Wasting Disease Transmission in Cervidae Study Act (H.R. 837) was introduced by Reps. Marc Veasy (D-TX) and Ralph Abraham (R-LA) and the second bill, the Chronic Wasting Disease Management Act (H.R. 1550) was introduced by Reps. Ron Kind (D-WI) and James Sensenbrenner (R-WI). We support both bills and encourage swift passage through the House Natural Resources Committee.

H.R. 837 expands the responsibility of research on our wild cervids herds outside of privately-owned land agencies to the Department of the Interior. H.R. 1550 compliments H.R. 837 by providing funds to state fish and wildlife agencies and tribes to ensure effective management and regulatory responses for CWD are coordinated efficiently. These bills are important steps toward identifying and isolating the root causes and transmission of CWD in North America and halting the rise of the disease on our public lands.

Thank you for your attention and for the opportunity to submit testimony for the record. We appreciate your consideration of our recommendations to combat the continental spread of Chronic Wasting Disease in wild cervid herds.

Sincerely,



John W. Gale
Conservation Director
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

Cc: House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Bishop

