

Hunters And Anglers Pay For Conservation In Usa

The American System of Conservation Funding as a unique "user-pays, public-benefits" program has generated billions of dollars for conservation since 1937; Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) programs are a key component.

Hunters and anglers are the primary funders of wildlife conservation, providing upwards of 80% of the funding for state fish and wildlife agencies. They also financially support conservation through the purchase of hunting and fishing licenses and permits, Duck Stamps, firearms, ammunition and archery equipment, philanthropy, and the creation of organizations whose sole mission is the restoration and enhancement of wildlife species.

The tremendous contribution toward the restoration and conservation of our wildlife resources remains largely unknown to the general public. This situation is exacerbated by the media's broad-based use of the term "conservationist." They are unable to distinguish between individuals and organizations that financially support wildlife conservation and those that don't. The latter include animal rights and anti-hunting organizations, those whose funding is spent primarily on litigating resource management decisions and those that promote a preservationist "don't touch" philosophy in wildlife management. These groups and through their interaction with the media seized upon the term "conservationist" in order to cloak their preservationist, anti-consumptive use philosophy and to reverse the political and societal credibility that they were beginning to lose in the 1990s.

It is critical that we educate the American public about the fact that hunting, angling, recreational shooting, and trapping are closely related to fish and wildlife conservation. The term "conservationist" must be rightfully applied. Using phrases like "hunters and other conservationists," or "hunter-conservationists" when describing ourselves accurately characterizes the relationship between hunters and anglers, and natural resources. "Conservationist" is a title hunters and anglers helped create, work hard to maintain, and are proud to rightfully claim. They truly earned and deserve this distinctive designation. The community of hunters and anglers must take every available opportunity to educate the public and the media on what the term "conservationist" means, who the conservationists are, and what conservationists have achieved in making American wildlife resources the envy of the world.