

## **White House Orders National Hunting Conference**

The American Wildlife Conservation Partners, AWCP, is a forum begun by 38 of America's leading sportsmen's conservation organizations in 2000. The proof of its worth to the hunting community and wildlife conservation has never been in doubt. On August 16th, 2007, at AWCP's annual forum taking place at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute and the King Ranch in Texas a historic announcement was made. Two White House representatives read from an Executive Order signed that day by President Bush. The title of the Order is Facilitation of Hunting Heritage and Wildlife Conservation in full recognition of hunting and the force it is for wildlife conservation.

The Executive Order has four (4) relevant sections. The first is the "purpose" which is "to facilitate the expansion and enhancement of hunting opportunities and the management of game species and their habitat." The second commands that federal agencies take "actions that expand and enhance hunting opportunities," "address declining trends" and "manage wildlife and wildlife habitats in a manner that expands and enhances hunting opportunities." The third is to hold a "White House Conference on North American Wildlife Policy (Conference) within one year to facilitate these goals." Fourth, the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality is to prepare a Comprehensive Recreational Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Plan that establishes a "10-year agenda for fulfilling the actions identified in section 2..." The Chairman is to do that within one year of the Conference.

This historic Order steps up the Governor's Hunting Heritage Conferences of the past to a Presidential hunting heritage summit for the express purpose of devising a plan of action to expand the number of hunters, hunting opportunities, game and habitat. This is the result of the collective effort of the AWCP partners and the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation held in August, 2005. The collective actions of the finest hunting conservation organizations of our time have lead to this opportunity. It is the crowning achievement of the AWCP. Conservation Force and many of its supporting organizations like Dallas Safari Club, Houston Safari Club, FNAWS and QDMA are all members of AWCP.

The full Order follows so that the reader can revel in its message. It reads like an award and the inherent recognition of the conservation role of hunting is welcome and reason to celebrate. The document by itself is a historic one. We are going to put a copy on the wall. It provides the greatest and most comprehensive opportunity in our lifetimes. There is no parallel in our lifetimes, but it follows in line with those conferences of President Teddy Roosevelt and Aldo Leopold. It does not directly cite international hunting or conservation, but perhaps there is still time for those worsening concerns as well.

No date or place has yet been selected for the Conference. A federal advisory committee that is made up of representative partners of AWCP called the Sporting Conservation Council is expected to take the conference planning lead for the hunting community along with federal, state and tribal representatives. The Executive Order is available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/08/20070817.html>.

### *EXECUTIVE ORDER*

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### *FACILITATION OF HUNTING HERITAGE AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION*

*By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:*

*Section 1. Purpose. The purpose of this order is to direct Federal agencies that have programs and activities that have a measurable effect on public land management, outdoor recreation, and wildlife management, including the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture, to facilitate the expansion and enhancement of hunting opportunities and the management of game species and their habitat.*

*Sec. 2. Federal Activities. Federal agencies shall, consistent with agency missions:*

*(a) Evaluate the effect of agency actions on trends in hunting participation and, where appropriate to address declining trends, implement actions that expand and enhance hunting opportunities for the public;*

*(b) Consider the economic and recreational values of hunting in agency actions, as appropriate;*

*(c) Manage wildlife and wildlife habitats on public lands in a manner that expands and enhances hunting opportunities, including through the use of hunting in wildlife management planning;*

*(d) Work collaboratively with State governments to manage and conserve game species and their habitats in a manner that respects private property rights and State management authority over wildlife resources;*

*(e) Establish short and long term goals, in cooperation with State and tribal governments, and consistent with agency missions, to foster healthy and productive populations of game species and appropriate opportunities for the public to hunt those species;*

*(f) Ensure that agency plans and actions consider programs and recommendations of comprehensive planning efforts such as State Wildlife Action Plans, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and other range-wide management plans for big game and upland game birds;*

*(g) Seek the advice of State and tribal fish and wildlife agencies, and, as appropriate, consult with the Sporting Conservation Council and other organizations, with respect to the foregoing Federal activities.*

*Sec. 3. North American Wildlife Policy Conference. The Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality (Chairman) shall, in coordination with the appropriate Federal agencies and in consultation with the Sporting Conservation Council and in cooperation with State and tribal fish and wildlife agencies and the public, convene not later than 1 year after the date of this order, and periodically thereafter at such times as the Chairman deems appropriate, a White House Conference on North American Wildlife Policy (Conference) to facilitate the exchange of information and advice relating to the means for achieving the goals of this order.*

*Sec. 4. Recreational Hunting and Wildlife Resource Conservation Plan. The Chairman shall prepare, consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations, in coordination with the appropriate Federal agencies and in consultation with the Sporting Conservation Council, and in cooperation with State and tribal fish and wildlife agencies, not later than 1 year following the conclusion of the Conference, a comprehensive Recreational Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Plan that incorporates existing and ongoing activities and sets forth a 10-year agenda for fulfilling the actions identified in section 2 of this order.*

*Sec. 5. Judicial Review. This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right, benefit, trust responsibility, or privilege, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities, or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.*

*GEORGE W. BUSH*

*THE WHITE HOUSE,*

*August 16, 2007.*