

March 19, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy,

The undersigned organizations representing hunters, anglers, and outdoor recreationists are writing today to request that 501(c)3 non-profit conservation organizations are included in any economic relief legislation related to the COVID-19 crisis.

As reported by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, outdoor recreation accounted for 2.2% of the GDP in 2017 and contributed \$778 billion in economic impact. This is more than the mining industry and public utilities and on par with the broadcasting and telecommunications industry. Within this, conventional outdoor recreation, which includes hunting, shooting, fishing and boating accounted for 30% of the economic impact. Supporting activities such as travel, accommodations, and food service account for another 50% of the total. The outdoor recreation economy supported 5.2 million jobs in 2017 and many of these jobs are in the service and manufacturing sector.

Conservation organizations play a critical role in driving this \$778 billion economic engine. The money we raise each year facilitates private investment for state agencies to match federal funding and cost-share for federal agencies, all for work that provides quality recreational opportunities for the American public. These matching dollars amplify federal investment on the landscape and result in tangible projects supporting thousands of jobs across the country.

In addition, our organizations directly employ hundreds of individuals that work directly with FSA and NRCS offices to implement farm bill programs that assist rural producers while improving habitat that directly benefits wildlife-based recreation. We work with USFS and BLM to implement critical forest management that helps protect our communities from wildfire and protects important watersheds. We work with the USFWS to restore and enhance wetlands to improve water quality and retention. These projects employ hundreds of local contractors and benefit many rural communities.

The COVID-19 crisis has struck at the worst possible time for our organizations. The months of March to May are the most important fundraising season for our organizations. Much of this revenue comes from fundraising events held in local communities. Despite the critical importance of these gatherings we have done our part, by postponing these events, but we fear that much of the revenue lost will not be recovered. As non-profit organizations, we operate on thin margins and this loss of revenue is a real threat to the viability of our organizations. Collectively, we estimate that we will lose \$100 million in revenue as a result of the COVID -19 crisis. Additionally, as non-profit organizations, we stand to suffer long-term consequences should this become an ongoing recession.

Our organizations are inextricably linked to the long-term success of our nation's outdoor heritage and recreation economy. The failure of our organizations will have a profound negative impact on this growing sector of our economy and diminish the amount of work that federal agencies can complete to assist rural producers, prevent wildfire and protect water quality. As you consider economic relief for all sectors of the country, we urge you to also include relief for 501(c)3 non-profit conservation organizations. At the very least, as you consider support for small businesses, we ask that organizations like ours are fully eligible to compete for these funds.

Sincerely,

American Woodcock Society  
Delta Waterfowl  
Ducks Unlimited  
Mule Deer Foundation  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
Pheasants Forever  
Quail Forever  
Quality Deer Management Association  
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
Ruffed Grouse Society  
Wild Sheep Foundation

cc: Members of Congress