

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 12, 2022

Martha Williams
Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Director Williams,

We write with great concern regarding the Biden Administration's commitment – or potential lack thereof – to ensuring access on our nation's wildlife refuges for hunters, fishers, and sportsmen and women. It has recently come to our attention that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has initiated settlement discussions with the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) regarding a lawsuit seeking to eliminate hunting access expansion on nearly 100 national wildlife refuges. This information is deeply disappointing and flies in the face of the Biden Administration's recent actions to further expand hunting access on wildlife refuge lands.

As you know, CBD's complaint alleges that FWS failed to comply with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the Administrative Procedure Act in promulgating the Final 2020-2021 Station Specific Hunting and Sport Fishing Rule (2020 Rule).¹ Shockingly, rather than defending the 2020 Rule in court, FWS initiated settlement discussions with this litigious special interest group, whose long track record of filing frivolous lawsuits has done nothing to further effective conservation efforts across the country. We are aware that CBD sent an opening settlement offer on January 13, and on February 7, the Court granted FWS and CBD's publicly-filed joint motion to stay the proceedings for 60 days, which expires on April 8, 2022.

We are deeply concerned by these settlement discussions and the fact that the Administration has chosen not to publicly declare their intent to defend the expansion of access to our nation's wildlife refuges, as this is in direct contradiction to the Biden Administration's own recent actions. In the 2020 Rule, the Trump Administration expanded hunting on 2.2 million acres of national wildlife refuges. Late last year, the Biden Administration further expanded access on an additional 2.1 million acres.² In light of CBD's lawsuit opposing the 2020 Rule, it is hard to imagine any settlement would not involve the loss of hunting opportunities on lands included in both of these executive actions. We are especially concerned that the settlement may invoke policies set during the Obama Administration banning the use of traditional ammo and tackle on all refuge lands. This is unacceptable. If invoked, this will greatly limit hunting and fishing

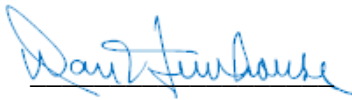
¹ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/08/31/2020-16003/2020-2021-station-specific-hunting-and-sport-fishing-regulations>

² <https://public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2021-18426.pdf>

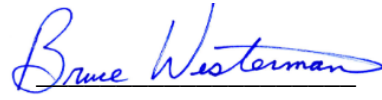
access on national wildlife refuges across the United States and effectively nullifies the Biden Administration's public access expansion efforts.

There has traditionally been bipartisan support for hunting expansions on refuges, which is one of six statutorily-designated priority uses of the nearly 100 million acre-system as described in the 1997 National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act. It is our strong hope that this Administration will protect ongoing and continued access to our nation's wildlife refuges and ensure that our sportsmen and women have the opportunity to access our great outdoors. We urge the Administration to abandon these settlement discussions and strongly defend this access for Americans.

Sincerely,



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



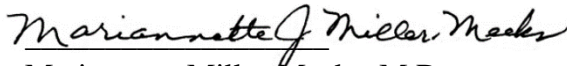
Bruce Westerman
Member of Congress



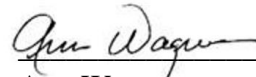
Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress



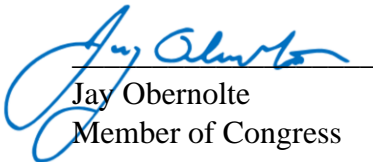
Chris Stewart
Member of Congress



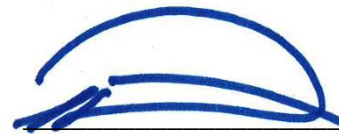
Mariannette Miller-Meeks, M.D.
Member of Congress



Ann Wagner
Member of Congress



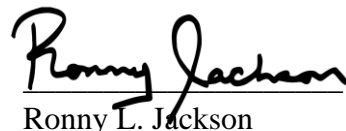
Jay Obernolte
Member of Congress



Scott DesJarlais, M.D.
Member of Congress



Joe Wilson
Member of Congress



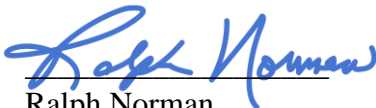
Ronny L. Jackson
Member of Congress



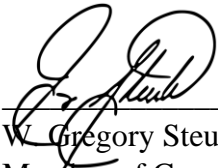
Adrian Smith
Member of Congress



Warren Davidson
Member of Congress



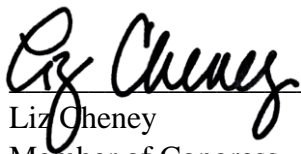
Ralph Norman
Member of Congress



W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress



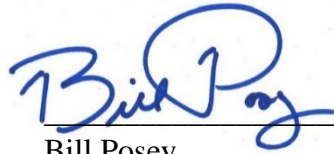
Michelle Fischbach
Member of Congress



Liz Cheney
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David G. Valadao
Member of Congress



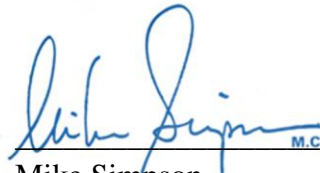
Bill Posey
Member of Congress



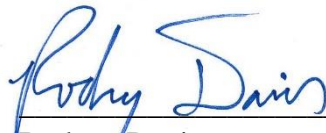
Guy Reschenthaler
Member of Congress



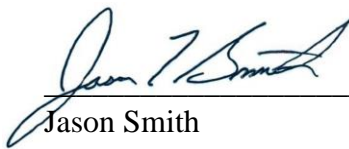
Andy Harris, M.D.
Member of Congress



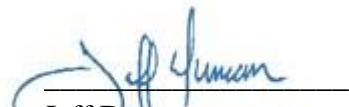
Mike Simpson
Member of Congress



Rodney Davis
Member of Congress



Jason Smith
Member of Congress



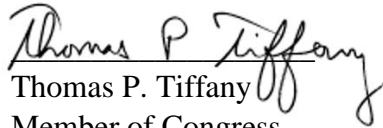
Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress



Markwayne Mullin
Member of Congress



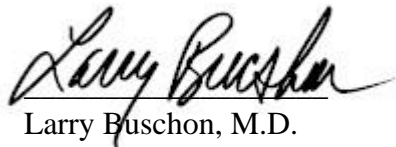
Tom McClintock
Member of Congress



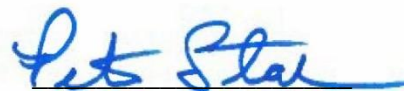
Thomas P. Tiffany
Member of Congress



Ben Cline
Member of Congress



Larry Buschon, M.D.
Member of Congress



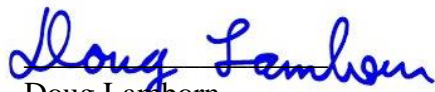
Pete Stauber
Member of Congress



Matthew Rosendale, Sr.
Member of Congress



Burgess Owens
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Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress