

DETAILS MATTER FOR THE 30X30 CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

THE FIREARM AND AMMUNITION INDUSTRY HAS LONG-SUPPORTED WILDLIFE AND HABITAT CONSERVATION.

American hunters have the unique position of being the original conservationists. In the early 20th century, many wildlife species in the U.S. were facing an uncertain future due to unregulated over-harvesting of many species and habitat destruction. Sportsmen and women watching this unfold led the call for new approaches for the responsible management and use of these resources.

Seasons, game limits and funds for wildlife conservation programs all originated with the hunting community. These efforts were able to turn the tide and save populations that were once disappearing, including white-tailed deer, pronghorn antelope, elk, wild turkeys and wood ducks.

Part of this effort was a push for legislation to create a funding mechanism to implement the principles of what is known as the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Hunters were successful and in 1937 the landmark Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act was signed into law, including an excise tax on all sales of firearms and ammunition. To date, hunters and recreational shooters have contributed more than \$13

billion to wildlife conservation through the excise tax paid by manufacturers of firearms and ammunition. The tax revenue is distributed to state fish and wildlife agencies, which combine the funds with those raised through the sale of hunting licenses to conserve and manage wildlife populations, including non-game species, and to help create opportunities for all Americans to enjoy wildlife recreation.

30X30 LEGISLATION REPRESENTS LAUDABLE GOALS, BUT NEEDS SPECIFICS

A recent initiative, often referred to as 30x30, is well-intentioned, but lawmakers must be aware of potential abuses of this shared social goal by gun control advocates.

Originating with the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators, the concept is to help conserve 30 percent of the world's land and oceans by 2030. This goal is taking the form of state and federal legislation in the United States. Unfortunately the legislation introduced so far, including measures in South Carolina, lack the detail necessary to ensure that hunting and the shooting sports will not become targets of the unelected officials charged with filling in the details to implement the legislation.

While the goal of conservation

is one we all share, sportsmen and women must be cautious of the following issues and ensure each is explicitly addressed in legislation:

- Who controls implementation? What agencies or officials will oversee the creation of definitions and implementation regulations?
- Will there be legislative oversight?
- What explicit protections exist for hunting and target shooting on public land? On private land?
- What specific rules will be put in place to conserve public land? Private land?
- What is the funding source? Will license and Pittman-Robertson funds be diverted from projects that benefit hunters and shooters?
- How is progress toward the goal measured?

Answers to these questions, clearly delineated in legislation, will help avoid potential problems with unelected government employees setting new rules for the use of public and private lands and waters. As 30x30 measures appear in states legislatures and in Congress, NSSF urges lawmakers to ensure the details are in place to protect the ability of Americans to hunt, shoot and enjoy our precious natural resources in other sustainable ways.