Hunting and Shooting Heritage on Public Lands. The hunting community has strong representation in Executive Branch decision-making. In 2008, Executive Order (EO) 13443 was issued to reaffirm the key role that hunters play in restoring and conserving our wildlife resources, to address modern challenges to conservation, and to shape wildlife conservation and wildlife dependent recreation in the 21st century.

The EO directed public land management agencies to work with the Sporting Conservation Council (Council) to “facilitate the expansion and enhancement of hunting opportunities and the management of wildlife species and their habitat.” It also called for a White House Conference on North American Wildlife Policy to facilitate the exchange of information and advice needed to fulfill the purposes of the EO. The Recreational Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Plan, known as the 10-year Action Plan, was the product of the conference and identified 58 actions to implement the EO. Additionally, the EO intended that such conferences would be convened periodically to update the 10-year Action Plan to reflect evolving hunting and wildlife policies and to recommend changes through succeeding Administrations. In 2018, the first ten years will have passed since the development of the Action Plan. The time is right for the Administration to convene a conference to update the Plan.

In 2010, the Council was renamed and reorganized as the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council (WHHCC) and, like its predecessor, this federal advisory committee provides advice to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture on vital issues to wildlife conservation, hunters and recreational shooters. The Council and WHHCC have proven to be indispensable links between hunters and recreational shooters and the federal land management agencies.

The hunting community has strong representation in legislative decision-making as well. The Congressional Sportsmen’s Caucus, the largest bicameral caucus of any kind in Congress, provides hunters with a significant link to the development of sound wildlife conservation policies. Caucus leadership has worked with sportsmen and sportswomen to prioritize the importance of carrying forward the innovative and visionary work of hunters in the 20th century.

The hunting and recreational shooting sports community plays an active role in protecting the interests of its constituency. In 2014, the Administration renewed the Federal Lands Hunting, Fishing and Shooting Sports Roundtable Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU formalizes an agreement...
between 43 national hunting, fishing, wildlife conservation and recreational shooting organizations and the public land management agencies. It is a framework of cooperation for planning and implementing mutually beneficial projects and activities of importance to sportsmen and sportswomen. The Roundtable complements the EO and the 10-year Action Plan and provides a forum for regular discussions between the sportsmen and sportswomen’s community and federal land managers on issues associated with access and opportunities for hunting, fishing and recreational shooting.

**Access to Hunting and Recreational Shooting on Public Lands.** Public lands throughout much of the nation provide opportunities for sportsmen and sportswomen to hunt and shoot. These opportunities are now more precious as access to private lands is progressively reduced by urban sprawl. Loss of access is a leading impediment to public participation in hunting and recreational shooting. When areas are closed or made inaccessible to public hunting or recreational shooting, sportsmen and sportswomen are forced to relocate, which can overpopulate wildlife in areas previously open to hunting and cause excessive pressure on wildlife in areas where hunters are redirected. This can complicate wildlife management by state wildlife agencies and diminish the quality of the hunting experience for many. In addition, access loss places greater burdens on hunter recruitment and retention. The loss of accessible areas means fewer people are able to join mentors in learning and enjoying hunting and recreational shooting activities.

Loss of public access also has indirect impacts on recreational use. Access loss discourages participation and triggers a decline in hunting licenses, reducing revenue used by state fish and wildlife agencies for conservation. Loss of access also hinders the ability of state agencies to use hunting to maintain wildlife populations at desired levels and robs rural economies of small business income and tax revenue that hunters generate by purchasing food, lodging and gear.

The 621 million acres held and managed by the federal land management agencies—27 percent of the land area of the nation—must continue to be managed for the enjoyment of the public in these traditional and historic activities. Efforts to provide access must not stop with the public lands. Many public lands are inaccessible as a result of being surrounded by private lands. Therefore, government purchases, from willing sellers, of conservation easements, other rights-of-way, or fee-title acquisition of these private lands must be made to improve access.

3. Utilize the bicameral interest of the Congressional Sportsmen’s Caucus to build a strong future for hunting, recreational shooting and wildlife conservation in the 21st century.

4. Support active and meaningful participation by federal land managers in meeting the goals and objectives of the Federal Lands Hunting, Fishing and Shooting Sports Roundtable.

5. Analyze the impacts of federal land management proposals on hunting and recreational shooting access and assess opportunities for these activities in planning and decision-making.

6. Support legislation to enhance opportunities and access for hunting and recreational shooting on public lands.