

Hi Everyone,

Hope that you are all doing well. Last year, many of us survived fires, smoke, plenty of almost drought-like - hot and dry - conditions. The new year brought the storms that we are used to receiving in late October - early November. If those rains had come on schedule, the Camp Fire may not have occurred, or its severity may have been lessened. So far, in the space of a very few months, we have received the amount of rain, or more, that we can usually expect during our entire rainy season. Who knows what the rest of the year will bring? So, after fire, floods, landslides, avalanches, ice, winds, falling trees, skeletal vegetation, lack of forage, rockslides, inconsistent power, etc., the 2018-2019 year has been very interesting. The rest of the year ought to be a piece of tasty cake. Time to think about picnics and exploring the wilderness again.

When you go out into the wilderness areas, do you really think that you are alone? You may want to check for cameras the next time you want private moment. Hunters are not the only ones to put up cameras to watch the wildlife and the environment. Some of the observers may be more friendly than others. Keep your eyes open. Pay attention. Protect yourself and those with you. Be honorable.

California R3

The California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife is working to implement R3 program strategies to encourage more hunting in California. R3 refers to recruit, **retain & reactivate hunters and anglers** - future, present and past. This is a national issue, but as with a lot of things, in California, it is more pronounced.

Conservation is the practice of maintaining balance in nature. Nature on this world is a closed system of limited resources. If nature appears as a series of feast-famine sine waves, conservation management is the practice of leveling the extremes so that starvation is less likely.

Everything that lives will someday die and return its energy to the ecosystem. This is nature's way of transferring energy from one generation to the next. Everything that is alive needs some form of energy - food - to continue living. In nature, food does not naturally come in plastic and Styrofoam. If something wants to eat, they have to go out and do some work to harvest it. This is seldom pretty and rarely without pain.

Hunting is a tool to maintain the balance so that few of the ecosystem's inhabitants feels the pangs of hunger or thirst, or the stress of sharing their territories with another critter who keeps pushing the intraspecies boundaries. It is easy to adjust the amount of take harvested in order to maintain the relative balance and still fill some freezers.

Hunters are conservationists and work very hard to protect and enhance the environments that the wild critters like. Hunters follow the rules as to what is best for different species in different environments. Hunters are not poachers who care only for themselves - not the wildlife or their environments.

Natural does not necessarily mean pain-free. Starving is rarely pain-free. It may be caused by insufficient resources, suffering an injury that makes getting food difficult, such as locking antlers, disease, unfortunate encounters with vehicles, etc. There are a lot of ways to almost die that are

lingering and "natural" (i.e. not directly caused by people) that would make death preferable to a life of hardship on way to becoming a scavenger's meal - whether dead or not quite.

Habitat loss and degradation is a bigger threat to wildlife and hunting. This may be the primary influence by humans. As the population increases, there is a push for more human housing throughout California. Suitable land is a limited resource with many demands placed on it. The more that people take, whether for development or infrastructure, the less that is available for habitat and wildlife.

Agriculture is unique in that it may both be developed to support human needs and act as havens and transition areas for wildlife. Without our agricultural lands, many species that have been brought back from the brink would still be hovering there or worse.

There are a lot of animals that have found, through the generations, that it is easier to live near us. This is not always a mutually beneficial relationship. Nor is it without conflict. But it can be managed so that lethality is a last resort.

The most egregious and dangerous threat to our wildlife and our wilderness areas are from illegal marijuana grows. This is a threat not only to the wilderness and its inhabitants, but also to recreationists who are casually riding or hiking into the woods, our public lands, with their friends, kids or both.

Illegal marijuana grows are notorious for devastating the ecosystems in the areas radiating miles from where they exist. They are known to divert creeks and other water sources for their own use. This dries out the former homes of fish, frogs, newts and any other critter that depends on clean water close to their traditional homes. They use poisons that not only kill the rodents, but the animals up the food chain that eat the rodents or that eats them and so on. These are not pleasant deaths and they contaminate the ecosystem long term.

Additionally, this theft of our natural resources for illegal pot grows damage the environment and the wildlife and endanger the public. The public expects, and is entitled, to be able to enjoy their public lands without having to be concerned about booby traps or hazards created by lawbreakers.

The most intangible threat is the also the most difficult to confront. At some point it appears there has been a cultural shift that demonized hunting and hunters. There are many media savvy organizations that are doing everything they can to reward this belief, regardless of the consequences in the real world. This may be because some people mistakenly confuse hunters with poachers with no regard to the facts, data or the truth. Hunters are not poachers. Poachers are criminals with no regard for critters or ecosystems. Hunters are honorable stewards of wildlife and the environments they inhabit.

At one time game wardens and hunters worked more closely together to foster and protect wildlife and the environment. It almost seems like this was another world. The reality is that the world was very different 50+ years ago. There were fewer people and those that were here, lived closer to the land and had gardens, pets, livestock and they hunted and fished to supplement what they grew - plant or animal. The cycle of life and death was the life they lived every day.

Another insidious obstacle in today's world is the lure of the virtual, the digital, worlds where we can create and change the worlds on a whim. It is easy to get what you want by merely pushing a button or saying the word and having it delivered soon after. It is easy to create worlds or be waited on. This leads to the question: Is it real or is it illusion? Which world will people choose to live in?

The R3 program is designed to reintegrate hunters & anglers, and their knowledge and skills, back into their rightful place of honor as stewards of the wilderness in the tapestry of the worlds' cultures.

This is a long-term project. Getting involved is the best way to determine its configuration and ensure its success. This is a huge undertaking that will require the efforts of a diversity of talents and perspectives. We need you. Every hunter, angler and outdoorsperson is an ambassador to the rest of the public who are not as familiar with the tenets of conservation. Welcome. Let's see what we can accomplish together.

CDFW Magnifies Efforts to Recruit Hunters and Anglers

In an effort to get more Californians involved in fishing, hunting and outdoor recreation, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is partnering with the recreational fishing and hunting communities, state and federal agencies, and others to address barriers and opportunities to hunting and fishing in the state.

“Our goal is to support and encourage people to get outdoors and enjoy California’s wild places,” said CDFW Director Charlton H. Bonham. “The fishing and hunting opportunities in this state are unparalleled, they belong to all Californians and should be utilized by all of us. This effort is to make sure Californians know that.”

CDFW has formed an executive-level task force, hired a full-time coordinator to head-up the effort, hired a research scientist, and finalized a statewide recruitment, retention and reactivation (R3) action plan. A staff-level working group is working to increase hunting and fishing participation by collaborating with diverse stakeholders to transform barriers to participation into opportunities. Some of the barriers CDFW will look at initially are access and opportunity challenges, public perception of fishing and hunting, and license structure and pricing. The effort will also focus on encouraging more adults to take up hunting and fishing for the first time.

Research shows spending time outdoors improves physical, mental and social well-being. Many hunters and anglers say the reason they participate in these activities is to enjoy the quality time with family and friends and to bring home great memories and healthy food.

California is home to some of the nation’s most diverse hunting and fishing opportunities, but participation in these activities has declined significantly since the 1970s and 1980s. Hunters and anglers play a crucial role in managing natural resources by regulating wildlife populations to maintain ecological and biological diversity, participating in wildlife surveys for scientific data collection, and reporting wildlife crimes. Hunters and anglers also help sustain a multi-billion-dollar outdoor recreation industry and provide the primary funding source for state-level fish and wildlife conservation in California. The decline in participation poses an ever-increasing threat to wildlife conservation, the state’s long-standing hunting and fishing heritage, and Californians’ connection to the outdoors in general.

“The fishing and hunting community has rallied around CDFW, and we are now poised to tackle the challenges before us,” Bonham said.

To get involved or learn more about the state's R3 efforts, please contact Jennifer.Benedet@wildlife.ca.gov.

Media Contacts:

[Jen Benedet](#), CDFW Education and Outreach, (916) 903-9270

[Clark Blanchard](#), CDFW Education and Outreach, (916) 651-7824

Want to Spend the Summer in The Forest?

The following comes from USFS Lassen National Forest www.fs.fed.us. For more information, use the contact information provided.

The Districts of the Lassen National Forest are seeking volunteer campground hosts for the 2019 camping season

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/lassen/news-events/?cid=FSEPRD611922>

Susanville, Calif. — The Almanor and Hat Creek Ranger Districts of the Lassen National Forest are seeking volunteer campground hosts for the 2019 camping season. This is a great opportunity to spend time in a wonderful location and meet fellow travelers.

A campground host is a volunteer who agrees to spend part of the year in a National Forest campground. A host helps other campers by answering questions, posting reservation information, providing information about the local area, and acts as the “eye and ears” for identifying problems when Forest Service employees are not present. Hosts may also be asked to clean and maintain the campground.

Campgrounds in need of hosts include Almanor South, Almanor North, Warner, High Bridge, Elam, Gurnsey, Silver Lake, Butte Meadows, and Cherry Hill, as well as the Hat Creek Campground. The recreation season begins in mid- May and extends through early to mid-September, as conditions allow for the Almanor sites and run mid-April through early to mid-October for Hat Creek sites.

Hosts must have a self-contained RV or trailer and a personal vehicle for transportation (tents are not acceptable). **Free propane and a campsite are provided.** Almanor North Campground and Gurnsey Campground have water at the host site. Almanor South and Hat Creek Campgrounds have full hookups for hosts.

For more information and an application, please contact Soai Talbot, Almanor District Lead Recreation Technician, or Stacy Kronner, Almanor District Recreation Officer at 530-258-2141. For Hat Creek Campground information, please contact Tami Taylor, NEPA Planner, at 530-336-5521.

Land & Water Conservation Fund - S.47

The next section is about S.47 that has just recently been signed into being by President Trump. The first section is from Outdoor Hub at www.outdoorhub.com. The following section is from Congress.Gov at <https://www.congress.gov>. The next section is from the Debbie Dingle website at <https://debbiedingell.house.gov>. The final section is from the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation at www.congressionalsportsmen.org. For those of us who cherish our public lands and enjoying spending time there to recreate with our friends and families, this is a much sought-after gift that permanently authorizes the LWCF. As with any 600+ page political document, the devil is in the details. One should be able to determine what is important to each group by what they emphasize. There seems to be a little something for everyone. It will be interesting to see what the practical ramifications will be.

President Signs Public Lands Bill S. 47 – The John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act

By OutdoorHub Reporters

President Trump inked his signature on the Natural Resources Management Act ([S. 47](#)) reauthorizing the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and earmarking \$900 million to be set aside annually for recreational opportunities and conservation. Honoring the late John D. Dingell Jr., the nation's longest-serving Congress member, the act was renamed the [John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation Management, and Recreation Act](#).

Dingell died last month at the age of 92-years

“John would have been so proud to see Democrats and Republicans come together to sign into law a landmark public lands bill to conserve and protect America's wild plants, fish, animals, and their habitats. Debbie Dingell wrote in a [post on Facebook](#). “Smiles and tears all at once.”

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Written in 662 pages, [S. 47 will create](#) six new National Park Service units, establish new wildlife protections, block certain mining efforts near existing national parks, designate 1.3 million acres of wilderness and more!

“The permanent reauthorization of LWCF marks an historic and important victory for America's wild and cultural resources,” [onX Founder, Eric Siegfried stated](#). “The public lands package of S. 47 will go a long way in helping support critical infrastructure needs, preserving key public lands and helping grow our strong outdoor recreation economy.”

Thanks to the great bipartisan efforts on the passage of LWCF, future generations of hunters and anglers stand to benefit for decades to come from the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act.

From Congress.Gov at <https://www.congress.gov>

S.47 - John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act

Summary: S.47 — 116th Congress (2019-2020)[All Information](#) (Except Text)

There is one summary for S.47. [Bill summaries](#) are authored by [CRS](#).

Shown Here:

Introduced in Senate (01/08/2019)

Natural Resources Management Act

This bill sets forth provisions regarding various programs, projects, activities, and studies for the management and conservation of natural resources on federal lands.

Specifically, the bill addresses, among other matters

- land conveyances, exchanges, acquisitions, withdrawals, and transfers;
- national parks, monuments, memorials, wilderness areas, wild and scenic rivers, historic and heritage sites, and other conservation and recreation areas;
- wildlife conservation;
- helium extraction;
- small miner waivers of claim maintenance fees;
- wildland fire operations;
- the release of certain federal reversionary land interests;
- boundary adjustments;
- the Denali National Park and Preserve natural gas pipeline;
- fees for medical services in units of the National Park System;
- funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund;
- recreational activities on federal or nonfederal lands;
- a national volcano early warning and monitoring system;
- federal reclamation projects; and
- search-and recovery-missions.

In addition, the bill reauthorizes the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Historic Preservation Program and the National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program.

From the [Debbie Dingle website](https://debbiedingell.house.gov/) at <https://debbiedingell.house.gov/>

Congress Sends President Public Lands Package Honoring John D. Dingell

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Congress sent the President a package of bills to protect and conserve public lands to be signed into law. The John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act promotes conservation, recreation, historic preservation, and cultural resource protection in Michigan and across the country.

The package of bills includes a permanent authorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) which is the country's premier program to conserve public land and improve outdoor recreation. Also included in the package are designations for 1.3 million acres of new wilderness, protections for a million acres of public lands from mining, and measures to save taxpayers \$9 million. A summary of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act is available [here](#).

"This landmark public lands legislation is the product of years' of work and months of bipartisan, bicameral negotiations, and includes support from key conservation, sportsmen, and environmental stakeholders. The

provisions in this bill will safeguard our nation’s conservation legacy for decades to come,” **said Dingell.** “John Dingell’s entire life was driven by his love of hunting and fishing, and his passion for the outdoors, protecting our natural resources, and addressing the challenges faced ensuring we conserve America’s wild plants, fish, animals, and their habitats. Had he ever been hired as a full-time park ranger as a young man, he might never have run for Congress.”

“He would be particularly happy that the LWCF has finally been permanently authorized. Almost twenty years ago he started fighting for this with his friends Don Young, George Miller, Billy Tauzin, and Chris John,” **Dingell continued.** “LWCF funding has protected some of this country’s most treasured natural resources, while creating jobs, supporting local economies, and providing countless opportunities for recreation. Since 1965, LWCF has provided over \$3.9 billion for over 40,000 projects in every county across the country with every \$1 invested returning \$4 in economic value. This has benefited every Congressional District, county and state in the country. Preserving our beautiful and iconic places matter to us all—and was the reason for initially establishing LWCF in the beginning.”

“John Dingell is looking down on everyone today and saying well done.”

A photo of Congressional leaders signing the bill at an enrollment ceremony is available [here](#). An archived live-stream is available [here](#).

Under this bill, the MotorCities National Heritage Area will see an authorization increase of \$2 million.

In Michigan, [LWCF has already invested more than \\$329 million](#) to protect forests, wildlife refuges, lakeshores and to increase recreation access. t public lands, historic sites, and increase recreational opportunities. From backcountry trails and boat launches to rivers and community parks, LWCF has protected places like Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, Hiawatha National Forest, Keweenaw National Historical Park, North Country National Scenic Trail, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, Pilgrim River Forest, and Sleepy Hollow State Park.

LWCF – which has funded 42,000 projects across the country, bringing tremendous economic benefits and returns on investment since it was established in 1965 – has expired twice in recent years. Today’s bill reauthorizing the law removes it from future political consideration and prevents any future expirations.

Among other measures, the bill will impact the country in the following ways.

Recreation

- authorize Every Kid Outdoors Act for seven years, providing every fourth-grader in the U.S. free access to public lands; and
- include a bipartisan sportsmen’s package designed to enhance access for hunting, fishing, and other recreation activities on public lands and waters.

Conservation and Job Training

- expand protections under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to over 370,000 riparian acres, including segments along the Lower Farmington, Salmon Brook, Wood-Pawcatuck, and Nashua rivers in New England;
- expand the Ocmulgee National Monument in Georgia;
- designate several new National Heritage Areas in Arizona, Washington, and West Virginia; and
- establish the 21st Century Civilian Conservation Corps to increase job training opportunities for youth, veterans, and Native Americans on public and tribal lands.

Habitats

- reauthorize the Fish and Wildlife Partners program, which would give assistance to private land owners for restoring, enhancing and managing their land to improve fish and wildlife habitats;
- reauthorize the Multinational Species Conservation Fund, which makes targeted investments to protect African elephants, Asian elephants, great apes, marine turtles, tigers, and rhinos; and
- establishes prize competitions for innovative approaches to wildlife conservation, invasive species control, and poaching and trafficking issues.

Public Lands

- designate more than 1 million acres of wilderness on federal land in California, Oregon, Utah, and New Mexico;
- add five new national recreation areas;
- expand Joshua Tree National Park, Death Valley National Park and Mojave National Preserve; and
- cut off new mining activities in areas north of Yellowstone National Park and outside North Cascades National Park.

African American History

- protect the home of Medgar and Myrlie Evers, passionate advocates for justice and equity during the Civil Rights Movement;
- expand the Reconstruction Era National Monument into a National Historic Park;
- create a Reconstruction Era National Historic Network to coordinate historical preservation and education efforts;
- reauthorize the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Historic Preservation Program.

From the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation at www.congressionalsportsmen.org

Senate Passes Natural Resources Management Act, Recognizing Sportsmen's Access Priorities

February 12, 2019 (Washington, DC) - The Senate approved the [Natural Resources Management Act \(S. 47\)](#), which contains many longstanding priorities advocated by the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), on a bipartisan vote of 92 - 8.

[Introduced](#) by Energy and Natural Resources (ENR) Committee Chair and Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC) Member Senator Lisa Murkowski (AK) along with Senator Maria Cantwell (WA), this comprehensive package of legislation includes numerous provisions that will improve access for sportsmen and women and will provide resources for habitat conservation programs. Following introduction in January, nearly 50 organizations submitted a [support letter](#) urging Senate Leadership to consider S. 47. Some of the priority sporting provisions in this bill include:

- Authorizing the transportation of archery equipment through National Park Service (NPS) Units.
- Directing Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands to be open for hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting unless specifically closed.
- Directing the NPS, BLM, USFS, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to annually identify lands where sporting related activities are permitted, but where access is currently unavailable or restricted.

- Permanent reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund with 3% or \$15 million of annual appropriations made available for the purpose of securing additional access for hunting, fishing, recreational shooting, and other outdoor related activities.

"The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation applauds the Senate Leadership for bringing this important legislation for sportsmen and women to the floor for a vote," said CSF President Jeff Crane. "This is common sense legislation that is the result of years of negotiations with Congressional champions to get to this point, and CSF will work with the House of Representatives to pass this legislation and get it signed into law."

Sen. Murkowski [provided a statement](#) on the Senate floor. "This package contains huge wins for Americans." She continued, "It also expands and enhances access for our sportsmen and women on federal lands for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities."

During his [floor speech](#), Ranking Member of the ENR Committee and CSC Vice-Chair Senator Joe Manchin said, "This package enjoys the support of numerous stakeholder organizations across the political spectrum. For example, the National Wildlife Federation and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation are two of its strongest and most dedicated advocates; and I thank them for their support."

He continued, "The Natural Resources Management Act will enhance and expand sportsmen's access by making federal lands in West Virginia and throughout the nation open unless closed for fishing, hunting, recreational shooting, and other outdoor activities. As a hunter myself, and as Vice-Chair of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, I know how frustrated sportsmen's groups have been trying to get their bills passed the last few years."

[Marauders in The Woods: Our Public Lands Are at Stake](#)

The next article is from The Outdoor Wire at www.theoutdoorwire.com. We are under attack by criminals and those who would profit from the destruction of our natural resources for their own personal gain. These marauders are poachers in another guise.

Our legislature should seriously work to protect our natural and heritage resources for the public's use for this and future generations. They could by increasing the number of CDFW wardens and providing them with the funds and tools they need to be successful. This is a problem that needs to be addressed now.

The public should not have to be afraid to visit and use our public lands because of human degenerates. If this situation continues to fester without legislative or congressional actions providing adequate resources to resolve this problem, will wilderness visitors be forced to abandon our public lands and cede them to the bad guys or become de facto vigilantes for their own protection?

War in The Woods: Illegal Immigration, Drugs and Wildlands

—James A. Swan, PhD.

As President Trump and the Congress wage war about building a wall to curb illegal immigration along the southern border, there are some other issues involving illegal immigration that don't seem to be making the news very often, such as cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin and marijuana being smuggled into the US through the southern border, along with people to sell and manufacture drugs in the US. <https://drugabuse.com/featured/drug-trafficking-across-borders/>

Marijuana and its legalization are currently a hot topic. Thirty-three states and the District of Columbia currently have broadly legalized marijuana in some form, and 10 other states have adopted expansive laws legalizing marijuana for recreational use. <http://www.governing.com/gov-data/safety-justice/state-marijuana-laws-map-medical-recreational.html>

Where does the marijuana come from that people are now using? It used to be largely smuggled across the border, but that's been decreasing because people are growing pot here. Supposedly, legalizing marijuana will make illegal marijuana disappear. Actually, as border security has increased, manufacturing meth and growing black market marijuana in the US has increased. Legalization makes it okay for people to openly own and use recreational marijuana, but where they get it is another matter, and how do you track down easily where marijuana comes from? Law enforcement agents in California and Colorado, where recreational marijuana is legal, they say that illegal marijuana is readily available as it's cheaper. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2017/07/31/marijuana-black-market/507417001/>

Passing laws to allow for recreational use of marijuana may be intended to reduce the black market, but in California, less than 1% of the estimated 69,000 growers statewide have received a permit to farm marijuana since the beginning of 2018. And, according to the sheriff of Humboldt County, the epicenter of black-market pot in California, there are at least 10,000 illegal grows in his county alone. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/national/wp/2018/03/16/feature/californias-outlaw-marijuana-culture-faces-a-harsh-reckoning-legal-weed/?noredirect=on>

Some illegal marijuana is grown in homes, abandoned buildings, barns and farms, but the biggest grows are found on wildlands, where the grow is more likely run by an international cartel that uses illegal toxic chemicals to get their pot to grow faster and bigger.

According to Stacey Montgomery, District Attorney of Lassen County, California, “because of the legalization of marijuana in California, now we’re seeing those same individuals working with other criminal groups—the Asian groups, the Russian groups, the motorcycle groups—all kinds of organized crime.... They are killing wildlife. They’re diverting streams. The damage that they’re causing, both to the economy and to our public lands, is going to be generational.” Actually by opening up sales and ownership of recreational marijuana, illegal



timberland conversions to cannabis violations have skyrocketed 200% since the passage of the Medical Marijuana Regulation and Safety Act in 2015. https://www.theepochtimes.com/armed-cartels-decimating-california-wildlife-with-massive-pot-farms-official-says_2528260.html

The US Forest Service says that every National Forest and National Park in California has been claimed by an international cartel, for their use growing marijuana, making meth and smuggling. The same is true for BLM lands, US FWS wildlife refuges and some of the Army Corps of Engineers reservoirs. If cartels don’t agree who runs grows in a certain wildland, the matter is usually settled there, resulting in graves of growers who lost.

This isn’t just a problem in California. Almost four million plants are removed from illegal grows on public lands nation-wide every year, and this is estimated at less than 20% of what’s actually out there. As of 2016 cartel marijuana gardens have been found in 67 National Forests in 21 states. Other states with significant cartel gardens on state and federal wildlands include Colorado, Oregon, Michigan, Wisconsin and Kentucky—especially in the Daniel Boone National Forest. Hundreds of meth labs have also been found on wildlands in all 50 states.

Taking on Protecting Our Wildlands

Just who removes illegal grows? The first things that may come to mind are police SWAT teams or heavily armed DEA agents. They do some eradication, but they have a lot of other things to do. Wildlands law enforcement agents are the primary removers of illegal pot gardens in the woods.

A decade ago there were nearly 1000 Forest Service Law Enforcement Officers (LEO’s). Today there are only 550 to cover all National Forests. The BLM is responsible for managing more land than any other federal conservation agency and yet there are only 300 BLM law enforcement officers for the entire country. There are 1500 Rangers for all the US Army Corps of Engineers made-made lakes and recreation areas for the entire US, and most do not carry firearms. In 2005 there were 1548 National Park Service Rangers. By 2014, there were 1,322 and less than 400 seasonal rangers.

The bottom line: Some of our most active wildlands drug enforcement warriors are game wardens -- who many Americans mistakenly assume spend their time checking fishing and hunting licenses, and limits of fish and game, and looking for poachers. Right now there are approximately 8,000 state game wardens for the entire US and about 1000 in Canada; about

as many men and women as the New York City Police Department deploys on Times Square at New Year's Eve.

In part due to the shortage of wildlands law enforcement officers of all types, the land area where many criminal cartels are growing marijuana in our regional, state and federal forests, parks and wildlife refuges is increasing and California is the leader. The Forest Service reports that in 2012 nearly 83% of the 1,048,768 plants eradicated from national forests were eradicated in California. California is a leader in illegal marijuana grows, but California's game wardens have also become a leader in combating them. Nation-wide there are three states with tactical units of game wardens – Florida, Texas and California. California's tactical unit, the MET squad specifically targets trespass marijuana grows.



MET squad. All photos by Lt. John Nores with permission.

California's MET unit began to form in 2013 but did not become fully operational until 2014. (Previously the wardens worked in an interagency team with other federal and state law enforcement agencies.)

"We estimate less than half of the California trespass grow sites in operation each year are detected and eliminated," says Lt. John Nores, Jr., who has headed the California Fish and Wildlife Department's tactical Marijuana Enforcement Team (MET) until his retirement in December of 2018.

According to Lt. Nores, at least 3,000 to 5,000 organized crime-operated "trespass grows" are identified each year on California's wildlands. Many of these sites are typically in excess of 1,000 plants per site, some have more than 200,000 plants.

The fact that an armed tactical unit is needed for our wildlands may seem surprising but taking down illegal marijuana grow sites in remote areas is dangerous work. Each "grow" is manned by several armed growers. Between 2005 and 2015, California's game wardens were involved in at least six gunfights with armed growers. In recent years hikers, fishermen and hunters have been killed when they stumble into a grow. The FBI now says that game wardens are seven times more likely to be attacked than police officers in urban



Trash at a grower camp.

areas. <https://www.abc10.com/article/news/local/california/cartel-in-the-hills-plumas-countys-marijuana-problem/295437556>

People may think of game wardens as "fish cops," but MET includes a sniper unit (Delta team), developed to support marijuana enforcement operations, homeland security and other public safety missions throughout California.

MET has produced results. From 2013 to 2017 the unit completed 583 missions that included:

eradicating 2.1 million poisoned marijuana plants;

arresting 745 armed felons;

confiscating 433 illegal firearms;

removing 335 tons of grower waste;

removing 41 tons of fertilizers, toxic poisons and pesticides (like EPA banned pesticides Furdan and Metaphos), as well as 311 miles of black plastic irrigation pipe; and

removing 614 illegal dams that consumed approximately 756 million of gallons of California water during the state's peak drought.

The danger in these grow sites is high. Not only are growers armed, but the sites are frequently booby trapped by punji pits (underground beds of sharpened and poisoned sticks camouflaged on the trail to severely injure those that walk into the grow site), or tripwires attached to guns.

"Approximately 85% of the trespass growers apprehended by the MET are here illegally," says Lt. Nores.

The felonies black market growers are typically charged with include marijuana cultivation for sale, using firearms in the commission of a felony, assault on law enforcement officers, and using banned and highly toxic poisons illegally on private and public land. Cartel growers can also be charged with felony water stealing from the Water Code. Other misdemeanors that are often charged include illegal stream alteration, water pollution, littering near state waterways, and the illegal take of numerous wildlife species.

"As a result of the numerous felony and environmental misdemeanor charges, we are seeing an average of 2-year prison sentences for trespass growers caught and prosecuted. Since most are illegal, they are deported following their prison or jail sentences," said Nores. But many seem to find their way back into the US.



Anti-personnel "Punji" pit booby trap on path leading into a grow.



MET officer and K9 handler Brian Boyd, who has worked with K-9 Phebe for the last nine years, reports that she has made

Essential to the success and safety of MET is “Phebe,” who is one of the unsung heroines of California’s drug war in the wildlands. A Belgian Malinois, Phebe has saved the lives of the two-legged members of MET numerous times on dangerous missions, as well as those of other agencies who have partnered with the game warden tactical unit during fugitive-tracking and evidence-detection missions.

114 physical apprehensions on violent trespass-grow suspects over her career. She has also caught another 740 suspects where a physical apprehension was not required.

Along with its mission to stop the public safety threat from organized crime cultivation operations, MET is also dedicated to rectifying the extensive environmental destruction to California’s wildlife resources within these grow sites, through cleanup and reclamation missions.

CAPTION:

Wildlands Conservation Is Part of National Security

Almost four million plants are removed from illegal grows on public lands nation-wide every year, which is less than 20% of what’s actually out there, according to Lt. Nores.

California’s MET unit and similar efforts have so far have made progress on the new threats to our wilderness areas, but nation-wide the numbers of federal and state wildlands law enforcement officers have been declining in recent years and crime in wildlands has increased. Regardless if there is a sturdy physical wall along our southern border or not, making our wildlands the safe places they should be should definitely be a goal that everyone should be supporting for healthy, safe natural areas are essential to the health and well-being of all Americans.



Mountain lion poisoned by toxic fertilizer and pesticides used at an illegal grow site.

Unless you’re a combat veteran, it’s difficult to get a sense of what it’s like to be the MET. That has changed with the recent release of a 24-minute documentary “WAR IN THE WOODS: Raid to Reclamation” <https://vimeo.com/212713167> by producer Rick Stewart of American Zealot Productions. <https://>

In 2010, Lt. Nores and James A. Swan, Ph.D., who was a Co-Executive Producer of the “Wild Justice” TV series, published a non-fiction book, War In The Woods: Combating the Marijuana Cartels on America’s Wildlands, https://www.amazon.com/War-Woods-Combating-Marijuana-Americas/dp/1599219301/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1548867663&sr=8-1&keywords=War+In+The+Woods which has been optioned for translation into a scripted, dramatic TV show, “Lone Pine,” to begin production this year. War in The Woods was written before MET was formed. In March 2019, a new book about MET written by Lt. Nores, Hidden War: How Special Operations Game Wardens Are Reclaiming America's Wildlands from The Drug Cartels, will be published by Caribou Press. <https://www.amazon.com/Hidden-War-Operations-Reclaiming->

Virtual Biology

The next article is from Public News Service at www.publicnewsservice.org. This is another example of some groups trying to divorce people from the natural biological world. Digital, or virtual, science may be useful in some instances, but biology, chemistry and physics labs do not fall into that category. The labs in these subjects encourage students to use all their senses, not just vision. Dissection in biology is a 3D experience. That is more difficult with a 2D screen even if the different ever-so-perfect layers can be added. Biological organisms are not perfect and there are variations. They should be noted and explored. Although I cannot say I like the aroma of the preservatives, being able to be able to touch the organs, bones, ligaments, tendons, etc. can communicate more than a mere representation can. There is a tangible difference in the way the different body parts feel and look. We learn through our senses. We should not limit our observations.

This is just another attempt to distance humans from the rest of the natural world that we are a part of.

And we wonder why fewer people are hunting and fishing?

Groundbreaking Bill Introduced to Ban Animal Dissection in CA Schools

By Suzanne Potter, Public News Service - CA



Hundreds of thousands of animals are dissected each year in California schools, which have 6.2 million students in K-12. (Evan Amos/Wikimedia Commons)

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California could become the first state in the nation to ban the dissection of animals in K-12 schools if a bill just introduced in the state Legislature were to pass.

[Assembly Bill 1586](#), called the Replacing Animals in Science Education (or RAISE) Act would encourage schools to adopt [newer teaching methods](#) such as 3-D computer modeling programs to teach biology. Shalin Gala, vice president for

International Laboratory Methods with People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, said animals aren't a mere classroom tool and should be treated humanely.

"Animals killed for classroom dissections do not die of natural causes, and the vast majority are not killed painlessly," Gala said. "Biological supply companies are not in the business of protecting animals from pain and suffering. They only care about selling as many dead animals as possible, not about making sure those animals were treated humanely while they were alive."

Many science teachers say dissection is an important tool to teach anatomy, and biological supply companies

say they follow strict procedures to reduce animals' suffering.

There are 6.2 million children in K-12 schools in California. PETA estimates millions of cats, dogs, frogs, fetal pigs, grasshoppers, mink, earthworms, rats, mice, pigeons and turtles are dissected in American schools each year. Gala noted the formaldehyde used to preserve most animals is a human carcinogen and is listed as a toxic substance under California's Prop 65.

"Superior non-animal teaching tools are readily available," Gala said. "And they can prepare our students for higher education, or even a career as a board-certified physician, without ever having to cut apart a frog, a pig, a cat or any other sentient individual."

California is one of 18 states that allow students with an ethical objection to request an alternate assignment. Gala said American medical schools no longer use animal dissection in their curricula, but many veterinary schools still perform surgery on healthy live animals and use dead specimens for dissection.

Poachers Beware!

This next item is from the *Washington Post* at www.washingtonpost.com. The poachers in this story were caught and paid for their crimes. Considering the extreme viciousness, lack of ethics, malice and premeditation involved, their penalty should have been many times more severe. Poachers are lower than pond scum on the sentience scale. This was wasteful and devoid of honor. No excuse. The actions of a few bad people harm us all. Good thing the cameras caught the crime and the cover-up.

They killed a bear and cubs, then tried to cover it up.

A wildlife camera helped convict them.



A female black bear and her cub. (Jessica Matthews for The Washington Post)

By [Alex Horton](#)

Lindsey Bever contributed to this report.

Andrew Renner and his son Owen cut a path on backcountry skis, toting rifles and seemingly confident it was just them and the black bears.

The hunters stopped at a den on a remote Alaska island and peered in to find their slumbering target. Owen Renner shouldered the rifle and fired at least two shots into a mother bear. Then the "shrieking" started, prosecutors said. The hunters listened for a few minutes and determined the origin of the cries: two cubs.

Andrew Renner looked through the scope and fired at [point-blank range](#), killing them alongside their mother.

The April 14 shootings may have been just another case of mistakenly killing a female bear, or sow, with cubs, which is illegal in Alaska but [rarely results](#) in jail time. Accused hunters typically say the killings were inadvertent.

But the crime was captured on a stop-motion camera used to document the bears' activity and the sow wore a GPS-enabled collar, helping prosecutors' piece together the illegal killing and coverup.

Andrew Renner, 41, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to three months in jail, fined \$9,000 and required to forfeit the vehicles, firearms, phones and skis that were used when the bears were shot. Owen Renner, 18, was sentenced to suspended jail time and community service, prosecutors said in a statement, on charges related to the unlawful killings and falsifying records.

Alaska Assistant Attorney General Aaron Peterson told the court that the incident was the “most egregious” cub-poaching case his office had encountered and asked the court for a punishment that would deter future offenses.

“The defendant, and anyone else that would pursue game in our state, should be on notice that killing a sow with cubs and then poaching the cubs to cover it up, will result in a significant jail term and loss of hunting privileges,” Peterson said.

An attorney for Andrew Renner declined to comment. An attorney for Owen Renner did not return a request for comment.

The remote camera captured the initial killings and showed the Renners butchering the sow and placing her remains in game bags. “I’m gonna go get rid of these guys,” Andrew Renner said as he tossed the cub remains into the snow, according to court records. Then the pair worked off the sow’s collar.

“They’ll never be able to link it to us,” Owen said.

But two days later, the Renners returned to sanitize the scene, the records say. They triangulated their positions to recover spent shell casings and scoured the den for additional evidence, then collected the cub remains and skied away.

Days later, Renner turned the collar into the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, claiming he only realized the bear had teats after shooting her and falsely claimed no cubs were present.

Andrew Renner had his hunting license suspended for a decade. Owen Renner’s license was suspended for two years, prosecutors said.

Generally, it is illegal in Alaska to hunt bear cubs or a sow with cubs, [according](#) to the agency. Wildlife officials have previously said it is not illegal for hunters with valid permits to take collared bears.

But “the loss of research animals could impede biologists’ efforts to learn more about ... black bear populations,” the department said in a 2016 news release. Hunters who kill collared bears, it said, are required to return the collar to state wildlife authorities within 30 days.

Federal and state wildlife officials launched the research project in 2016 to better understand how the dwindling bear population on Prince William Sound has adapted to an environment teeming with more human activity.

“Subsistence users, hunters and fisherman after fisherman telling us how they used to see dozens of bears along the beaches and shorelines while commercial fishing in the summer, and now they’re not seeing any,” Milo Burcham, a wildlife biologist for the Chugach National Forest, [said at the time](#).

Wildlife officials [anticipate](#) learning more this spring after the tracked bears emerge from their dens and begin foraging — four dozen bears in all, minus one.

Human vs. Cyborg vs. Robots

The next article is from High Country News at www.hcn.org. What does it mean to be human? As we become more involved with virtual or digital worlds, are we still human? As we move farther away from our more rural roots, are we still human? Are we still human if we separate ourselves from the natural world and sever our connection to the food chain and the ecosystem? Are we still human if we fail to see our obligations to the world around us? Are we still human if we fail to appreciate the gifts that Mother Nature bestows upon us? Are we still human if we no longer feel our connection to the natural world?

Can hunting keep us human?

In the New Machine Age, hunting helps us accept mortality as truth.

[Paula Young Lee](#)



Jo Stratton and her guide Matt Moran get a pronghorn in their sights during the annual Wyoming Women's Antelope Hunt in Johnson County, Wyoming.

[Ryan Dorgan](#)

Does hunting make us human? In the New Machine Age, we are all cyborgs — hybrids of flesh and technology, glowing with artificial enlightenment. So perhaps the better question is this: Does hunting keep us human?

In this country, hunting is both admired and despised. Anachronistic, it is a protest against the civilizing process, a process that combines neurotic desires with economic excess. The goal of civilization? Utopia. Soon, the civilizing narrative affirms, technology will surmount the pathos of the human condition and overcome the horror that is reality. Already, every trivial experience — vacationing at Disneyworld, snorkeling in the Seychelles — gets documented and flung into

cyberspace, to be admired by virtual friends who don't realize that these ersatz novelties were scripted by someone else.

Sadly, there is no such thing as the purely "wild" any more (if indeed there ever was), just as the unmodified human is extinct in wealthy habitats. The basic well-off human model gets contact lenses, braces, dental fillings and daily vitamin pills, for starters, then nose jobs, artificial knees, replacement hearts, silicone implants, hair plugs and so forth. But insofar as "wild" refers to a wilderness that civilization has mostly left alone, there hunters hunt, and in so doing protect a living reality from becoming one more ersatz, purchased experience.

To protect the living is a quintessentially human act. It may seem like sophistry to argue that hunting protects wildlife, but the act of hunting encompasses far more than shooting a wild animal, and it neither starts nor ends with a death. Entire seasons can pass without the quarry being spotted. And yet, without ever having taken a shot, the hunter has still hunted. Tracking, scenting, looking for signs, searching for scrapes, following paths, learning trails — this is all part of understanding the patterns of a particular landscape that both hunter and quarry call home. The hunt itself is part of a much larger continuum.

From a storytelling perspective, this continuum is boring. No drama, no conflict, no violence. Just watching, waiting, listening and learning. It is possible to equate the hunt with the fatal shot, but to do so reduces the quarry to a future mount over the fireplace. To anti-hunters, that head is a relic of a bizarre and morbid ritual. To the hunter, it is a reminder and a warning. The reminder is this: To hunt means taking from a land to which you will be giving back a life: yours. The warning? The land exists prior to both humans and animals, and it supports both without playing favorites.

Thus hunters refer to "taking a deer" from the land. The land is giving them a gift, but whatever is taken must eventually be returned. The idea of giving back is built in.

The traditional attachment of hunters to a family clan and a specific locale places hunting inside a "gift" economy, the traits of which are especially evident in the United States, where wild venison (as opposed to farmed venison) is illegal to sell. The implications of this system go beyond hunting itself. As anthropologist Marcel Mauss showed in his famous study, *The Gift* (1966), the gift of the wild holds a kind of magic in primitive societies. In Maori culture, gifts hold a "spiritual power" that is particularly strong in things from the forest, and in forest game most of all, infused with an energy that is, Mauss writes, "often personified, and strives to bring to its original clan and its homeland some equivalent to take its place."

Many hunters invest hunting with spiritual significance, for it is difficult to ignore the feeling that taking a wild life and serving it for supper are symbolically weighty acts that have nothing in common with going to a restaurant and ordering a steak. The legacy of the gift explains why.

In a gift economy, the act of giving compels the person who receives the gift to reciprocate. A gift can be refused, but that refusal has consequences. So does the failure to give back. If the original gift is the freedom to hunt the land, then hunters are obliged to return the gift by bringing an "equivalent": a life to take its place. Hence, ethical hunters reciprocate by protecting the wilderness, giving of themselves to ensure that the forest stays the forest, instead of being turned into a Rainforest Café. That act of caretaking, which is also conservation, likewise conserves a relationship between humans and nature that accepts mortality as truth. A commodity system, by contrast, cannot survive without the fantasy that displaces value onto symbols and calls it transcendence, even while working extremely hard to perpetuate the myth that cyborgs are immortal.

Fantasies are fun, but they can't last. Sooner or later, profits fall, reality intrudes, pills get popped, and everybody's depressed. When the land demands its due from those who take without acknowledging the "nature" in natural resources, the fantasy will collapse. As some clever cyborgs chase utopia, still other humans insist on living with nature. As long as a few hybrids hunt, something of that human nature will survive, too.

Paula Young Lee is a cultural historian, food writer and backwoods cook. She is the author of the award-winning book Deer Hunting in Paris: A Memoir of God, Guns, and Game Meat. This essay first appeared as a contribution to the Center for Humans and Nature.

The days of spring are getting longer and warmer. The tulip trees are blooming purple and the babies are being welcomed into a new world. This is a good time of year to renew your relationship with the wilderness. It is also a good time to introduce your family and friends to the wonders of the wilderness. It is amazing and we are part of it.

~May Your Arrows Always Find Their Mark~.

Ceri