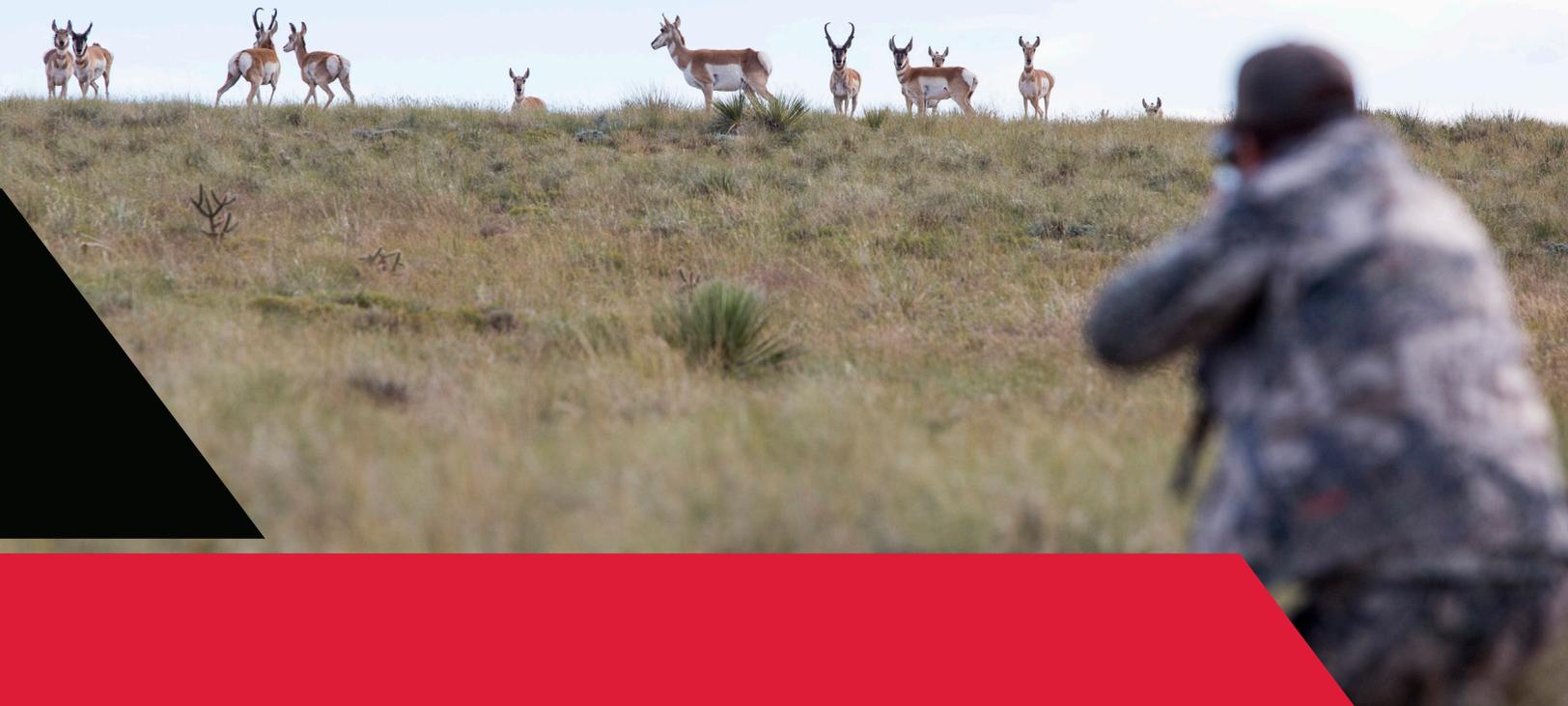




# SCI PRIORITIES FOR THE ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS

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TO ADVANCE HUNTING, FISHING, AND  
RECREATIONAL SHOOTING





## SCI PRIORITIES FOR THE ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS

A year ago, SCI set forth an ambitious agenda for the Trump Administration: ten priorities and 34 action items to promote and expand hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting.

At the time, SCI's "Priorities for the Trump Administration" reflected concern that hunting was under attack by the federal government. A year later, nothing could be further from the truth. Where we once saw federal barriers, nine of our ten priority areas and 19 of the action items have gained remarkable traction. Thanks to the dedication of this Administration and our allies in Congress, sportsmen and women are witnessing a renewed commitment to the issues that matter most. Sportsmen and women should celebrate the Secretary of the Interior's recent affirmation that "public and federally managed lands should be open to hunting and fishing unless a specific, documented, and legally supported exception applies." It reflects this Administration's commitment to Making America Beautiful Again. These Priorities align with that goal.

We have updated our Priorities to harness this momentum. They continue to call on the Administration as well as Congress to take bold action—expanding access, strengthening federal wildlife laws, and advancing conservation both at home and abroad.



## PROTECT AND EXPAND ACCESS FOR HUNTING, FISHING, AND RECREATIONAL SHOOTING

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Hunters, anglers, and recreational shooters are the country's greatest conservationists. They contribute most of the funding for state wildlife agencies and safeguard extensive habitat that has brought species like white-tailed deer, black bear, and more back from the brink. Hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting are recognized priority uses under landmark laws like the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act of 2019 and the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.

Despite these undeniable contributions, these activities too often come under fire by activists who would sacrifice wildlife and habitat management for ideology. That is the wrong choice. The Administration and Congress should champion policies that protect wildlife and encourage public access, public engagement, and responsible stewardship of wildlife and habitat. SCI applauds Secretarial Order 3447, which directs implementation of many of our Priorities and confirms that federal lands are meant to be open for hunting and fishing.

- The Secretary of the Interior should issue regulations safeguarding federal lands for hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting as required by the Dingell Act.
- The Secretary of the Interior should fully implement the “Federal Lands Hunting, Fishing, and Shooting Sports Roundtable Memorandum of Understanding” to enhance public access and improve opportunities for hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting on federal lands.
- The Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture should ensure that the Federal Subsistence Board keeps any hunting closures on federal lands in Alaska strictly within the bounds set by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.
- Congress should adopt legislation which prevents agencies from overriding state harvest regulations except in rare cases where science clearly demands such preemption to fulfill a conservation need.
- The Senate should pass the Fix Our Forests Act, S. 1462, which would provide federal agencies with critical tools to implement vital forest management projects without becoming tied up in litigation.
- Congress should also ensure no net loss of hunting access on federal lands, and that any potential sale of federal lands protects or replaces hunting access and all sale proceeds are reinvested in conservation programs.



## MODERNIZE THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT TO ALIGN WITH CONGRESSIONAL INTENT AND FOCUS ON TRULY AT-RISK SPECIES

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The Endangered Species Act is a flagship law credited with halting the extinction of many species. But it has limited success in recovering species in the United States and zero success in recovering species abroad. Further, gratuitous litigation has kept recovered species on the ESA lists—diverting federal resources away from those truly at risk and in need of urgent attention. Targeted reforms are needed to make the ESA more effective.

Some of these challenges require Congressional action. The ESA is not untouchable: it can and should be modernized to ensure it delivers results—just as Congress has repeatedly done in past amendments.

- The Administration and Congress should join forces to pass the ESA Amendments Act of 2025 (H.R. 1897), restoring the ESA’s effectiveness and realigning its implementation with Congress’ original vision.
- Congress should amend the ESA to eliminate rigid deadline requirements and adopt the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s listing workplan—thus reducing unnecessary lawsuits and allowing science to drive decisions.
- Congress should amend the ESA to clarify that a Distinct Population Segment may be delisted based on its recovery, without consideration of other segments.
- Congress should amend the ESA to make the presumption of legality for import of threatened-listed species in Section 9(c)(2) binding, realizing Congress’ intent to credit successful foreign conservation programs.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should revise the “Distinct Population Segment” policy and regulations to lock-in designations and prevent recovered populations from being trapped on the ESA lists.
- The Secretary of the Interior should rescind conflicting regulations that undermine the presumption of legality for imports of threatened species protected by international treaty set forth in Section 9(c)(2) of the ESA.
- The Secretary of the Interior should revise its regulations to fully implement Section 8 of the ESA, which requires “encouraging foreign conservation programs.”



## FULLY IMPLEMENT THE ESA BY DELISTING WOLVES AND GRIZZLY BEARS

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Since 2003, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has recognized the recovery of gray wolves. Across multiple administrations—George W. Bush, Barak Obama, and Donald Trump—the Service has consistently pushed to delist wolves from the ESA, demonstrating that this issue is driven by science, not politics.

Likewise, since 2007 the Service has sought to delist grizzly bears in the Yellowstone Ecosystem based on their robust population and habitat expansion. As human-bear conflicts have exponentially increased, the Service has repeatedly tried to return these bears to responsible state management, where they belong.

Yet, despite this progress, special interest groups and activist courts have blocked these efforts. As a result, the Service remains burdened with managing species that have fully recovered—diverting vital resources away from those truly at risk and in need of protection.

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should immediately publish rules to delist gray wolves across the Lower 48 States and grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone and Northern Continental Divide Ecosystems. By removing these species from the ESA lists, the Service can focus critical resources and recovery funding where most needed.
- Congress should enact legislation to remove gray wolves and grizzly bears from the ESA lists. SCI commends the House for passing the Pet and Livestock Protection Act of 2025 (H.R. 845) to reinstate a delisting rule for wolves and calls upon the Senate to take immediate action on this bill. Both chambers should also advance the Grizzly Bear State Management Act of 2025 (H.R. 281/S. 316), reinstating the Service’s delisting rule and restoring state management for grizzly bears in the Yellowstone area.



## PROTECT ACCESS TO TRADITIONAL AMMUNITION AND FISHING TACKLE

Hunting and angling are at risk from federal policies that erroneously assume the use of traditional lead ammunition or fishing tackle will harm all wildlife or human health. Those assumptions are not supported by science and alienate land management agencies from their strongest supporters: hunters, anglers, and recreational shooters, who contribute significant funding to wildlife and habitat conservation. Lead bans on federal lands will likely reduce hunter and angler participation because lead alternatives are not as readily available as proponents assert. New, novice, and rural hunters are most likely to be harmed. This undermines hunting and fishing as priority public uses and diminishes the efficacy of hunting as a management tool. SCI applauds Secretarial Order 3447, which prohibits the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from adopting restrictions on lead ammunition or tackle except in limited, scientifically supported cases.

- Congress should enact the Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act of 2025 (H.R. 556/S. 547) to prevent federal agencies from restricting access to traditional ammunition and fishing tackle without a clear and science-based justification and acquiescence by the relevant state wildlife agency.

## AMEND EAJA TO REDUCE UNNECESSARY ENVIRONMENTAL LITIGATION

The Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA) was designed to empower small businesses to stand up against government overreach. It authorizes payment of attorneys' fees and litigation expenses in certain cases involving the federal government. Yet EAJA is frequently exploited by serial environmental litigants who secure hefty fee awards—often stalling habitat management projects—despite their organizations boasting net revenues in the tens or even hundreds of millions. These payouts stray from EAJA's original purpose of supporting small businesses or vulnerable individuals.

Congress should amend EAJA to restore the original intent and ensure government dollars are not subsidizing wealthy non-profits to sue the government. Such amendments should include:

- Requiring that nonprofit organizations exempt under Section 501(c)(3) meet the same net worth and employee caps as any other organization;
- Limiting the total number of EAJA awards available to one organization per year, or the total amount of fees for which an organization is eligible per year;
- Capping the maximum EAJA award per case or per stage of the case;
- Disallowing EAJA fee awards for settlements where the plaintiff receives procedural relief;
- Eliminating “fees on fees” by allowing the U.S. government to contest initial EAJA fee claims without generating additional EAJA fees;
- Imposing a strict hourly cap on fees which cannot be exceeded for any reason; and
- Requiring direct reporting by courts approving EAJA fee awards.

## ABOUT SCI

Safari Club International is the leader in defending the freedom to hunt and promoting sustainable-use wildlife conservation worldwide. As the only hunting rights organization with a Washington, D.C.-based national and international advocacy team and an all-species focus, SCI mobilizes more than 170 chapters and an affiliate network representing millions of hunters around the world. SCI annually hosts the “Superbowl of Hunting Shows,” which brings together vendors, sportsmen and women, and thought leaders on hunting and conservation issues for four days of celebration and discussion.

The SCI Foundation has invested more than \$100 million in on-the-ground conservation and research projects since 2000. These projects range from Chronic Wasting Disease research and grizzly bear conflict mitigation in the United States to leopard and lion surveys in southern Africa. The Foundation’s conservation impacts are multiplied by SCI Chapters, who must invest 70% of their fundraising proceeds in local conservation, education, and humanitarian projects.

## ABOUT SCI’S ADVOCACY TEAM

SCI’s advocacy team is unmatched in scope. The team includes in-house attorneys, federal and state lobbyists, and international advocates who represent sustainable use conservation around the world.

SCI’s in-house counsel have litigated more than 60 wildlife-focused cases in the last decade and filed a dozen briefs before the U.S. Supreme Court. SCI also recently founded the SCI Center for Conservation Law and Education, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that centralizes our legal and educational efforts while expanding our outreach to hunters and members of the sporting community who are not (yet) SCI members.

On Capitol Hill, SCI’s federal lobbyists champion pro-hunting laws and regulations. SCI also maintains the largest hunter-funded political action committee (SCI-PAC) and the only hunter-funded super-PAC (the Hunter Action Fund) to support members of Congress and candidates committed to advancing pro-hunting and wildlife conservation policies. At the Hunters’ Embassy, SCI hosts members of Congress, Congressional staff, and partners for educational courses and roundtables on key issues facing hunters and celebrating the work that follows—bringing decision-makers and stakeholders together for the benefit of all.

SCI’s reach also extends to state capitals and wildlife commissions. SCI staff educate and advocate on behalf of sustainable use conservation and hunting as a management tool. Further, SCI has advocates in the European Union, Canada, and southern Africa, ensuring that issues of importance to hunters are at the forefront of international policy.

For more information, please contact SCI’s federal advocacy and policy team:



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