

Dear Member of the House Natural Resource Committee:

Our organizations represent millions of hunters, anglers, wildlife and fish professionals and commercial interests, and others concerned about fish and wildlife habitat. All of us support responsible energy development on our western public lands, but we are concerned that the scope and scale of development in recent years is compromising fish, wildlife, and water resources. We are writing to you today in support of the oil and gas provisions in the Energy Policy Reform and Revitalization Act of 2007, HR 2337, which would take important steps to help ensure responsible energy development and balanced management of our public lands and natural resources.

For example, over the past six years, the number of drilling permits in crucial wildlife habitat on public lands has more than doubled. In the Pinedale Anticline of Wyoming, mule deer populations have declined by 46 percent since full scale development. Imperiled fisheries are also affected by energy development as nearly 50 percent of remaining Yellowstone cutthroat trout and 40 percent of Bonneville cutthroat trout habitat could be affected by energy development.

For these reasons, we commend for your consideration of the enclosed Sportsmen's Public Lands Energy Agenda. The attached agenda describes legislative solutions that will protect fish, wildlife, and water resources and the hunting and angling opportunities that we depend on.

As you know, the House Natural Resources Committee is currently considering the Energy Policy Reform and Revitalization Act of 2007. The oil and gas provisions of HR 2337 are consistent with the Sportsmen's Public Lands Energy Agenda. For example, HR 2337 protects water quality and requires the use of best management practices to minimize impacts to fish and wildlife habitat. It also ensures the protection of surface and subsurface water.

HR 2337 represents a major improvement in ensuring responsible energy development and protecting the most essential fish and wildlife habitat. We urge Congress to consider further improvements to managing energy development on our public lands by making clear that the federal government does not vest a property right to energy companies when it issues a lease to an energy company. Energy legislation should require the completion of long term fish and wildlife management plans before areas are leased for 10 to 20 years. In addition, Congress should require energy companies to comply with the stormwater run-off provisions of the Clean Water Act.

Our western landscapes are home to some of the most important fish and wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation opportunities in the nation. We urge you to resist reducing protection of the lands and waters that sustain these resources. Please ensure that these resources receive the high level of stewardship they deserve, and support the passage of HR 2337.