

## **Top Hunting and Fishing Groups Release New Study on Threat of Climate Change to U.S. Fish and Game Habitat**

PRESS RELEASE

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Top Hunting and Fishing Groups Release New Study on Threat of Climate Change to U.S. Fish and Game Habitat

(Washington, D.C.) – The Wildlife Management Institute, joined by eight of the nation's leading hunting and fishing organizations, today released a new report – Seasons' End; Global Warming's Threat to Hunting and Fishing – detailing the predicted impacts of climate change on the fish and wildlife habitat and the future of hunting and fishing in the United States. The group also announced a new website, [www.seasonsend.org](http://www.seasonsend.org), which will provide updated information on the impacts of climate change on fish and wildlife and what can be done to address this challenge.

The report was compiled and edited by the Wildlife Management Institute, based on analysis done by Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited, BASS/ESPN, Izaak Walton League of America, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Coastal Conservation Association, American Sportfishing Association, and Pheasants Forever. These groups were joined by Congressman John Dingell, Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, at the press conference in Washington, D.C. to release the report. The report is funded by the Bipartisan Policy Center, whose projects include the National Commission on Energy Policy.

The new study finds that climate change is expected to have profound impacts on a broad range of fish and wildlife species, with the potential dramatically affecting hunting and fishing in the future. Among the findings in the report:

### Waterfowl

- The prairie pothole region could lose up to 90 percent of its wetlands, reducing the number of the continent's breeding ducks by as much as 69 percent.
- Sea-level rise along the Atlantic coast could destroy 45 percent of the habitat that supports canvasbacks, redheads and pintails.

### Fresh Water Fish

- Nationally, up to 42 percent of current trout and salmon habitat will be lost before the end of the century, with the south, southwest and northeast experiencing especially severe reductions.
- In regions most affected by global warming, trout and salmon populations will be slashed by 50 percent or more. Many trout species already listed as threatened or endangered will become increasingly vulnerable to extinction.
- In the Pacific Northwest, up to 40 percent of the salmon population will disappear.
- In localized, high-mountain areas of the West, bull trout will suffer reductions of up to 90 percent. In the lower elevations of the Appalachian Mountains, as much as 97 percent of the wild trout population will die.

### Big Game

- Pronghorn, elk and mule deer will lose vital habitat in many regions of the American West as rising temperatures allow trees and shrubs to overwhelm sagebrush ecosystems.
- Rising temperatures will allow forests to climb to higher elevations, severely limiting the alpine habitats that support bighorn and other mountain sheep.

- As fragmentation and loss of winter ranges continue, mule deer and elk will dwindle in number in the Rocky Mountain states, the Intermountain West and the northern Boreal Forest. In some locations, over time both species will disappear entirely.

#### Upland Birds

- Across central North America, including the prairie pothole region, global warming will cause droughts that could devastate food sources for upland birds. Prairie chickens, sharp-tailed grouse and pheasants will be among the species most diminished in number by these changes.
- In the Deep South, summertime drought and high temperatures will shrink bobwhite quail populations by disrupting the birds' breeding cycles and reducing availability of the insects that hens and chicks eat. Hot, dry conditions will also stunt the growth of vegetative cover, leaving broods vulnerable to predators.
- In the desert southwest and the high desert valleys of California and Nevada, drier and hotter conditions throughout late fall and early spring will imperil the overall health, reproduction and recruitment of quail and chukar.

#### Salt Water Fish

- Subsequent to only a moderate increase in water temperature, changes in distribution, growth rates and recruitment success will benefit some species. Among others, large population declines and possible local extinctions may occur.
- Sea-level rise will destroy thousands of acres of coastal salt marshes and sea grass beds that are home to egg, larval and juvenile stages of game fish.
- Increasingly frequent and severe storms could disrupt feeding and nursery conditions for the eggs and larvae of game fish like snook and croaker, causing declines in recruitment. Marine species spawning offshore, such as Atlantic menhaden and blue crab, could benefit from winds that push their offspring landward.

"Seasons' End presents a powerful summons to all of us who treasure our nation's outdoor heritage, said Steve Williams, President of the Wildlife Management Institute. "This well written and attractive book, developed by some of country's leading conservation organizations, provides reasonable and documented scenarios for climate change's impact to our natural landscape. Just as hunters and anglers have promoted conservation in the past, we now must take action to support the recommended 'Strategies for Hope', in order to assure abundant fish and wildlife resources for the future."

"Sportsmen were among the first conservationists in our history," said Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. "They have been leaders in creating national forests and parks and have been instrumental in protecting our fish, wildlife and habitat. I encourage America's sportsmen to continue on this course. Their involvement and contributions to this debate are a critical part of any solution to the problem of climate change."

"Scientists predict that climate change will significantly affect almost every aspect of our environment, including North America's wetlands and waterfowl, said Dr. Alan Wentz, Group Manager of Conservation and Communications, at Ducks Unlimited, Inc. "Ducks Unlimited is planning for the effects of climate change in conservation efforts to help ensure that long-term wetland and waterfowl management objectives are achieved. By participating in the Sportsman's Advisory Group on Climate Change, Ducks Unlimited and our conservation partners are taking important steps to prepare for the potential consequences of global warming and support policy efforts that enhance the resiliency and sustainability of wildlife and their habitats to climate change."

"Salmon and trout are among America's most vulnerable species to the harmful effects of climate change," said Steve Moyer, Vice President for Conservation, at Trout Unlimited. "In addition to

spelling out the troubling consequences of climate change, the report brings hope that there is still time to take effective actions to protect, re-connect, and restore rivers to enable salmon and trout to find refuge and weather the impacts of climate change.”

“While the issues of climate change are real and complex, potential answers should include elements of wildlife conservation,” said Dave Nomsen, vice president of Pheasants Forever. “After all, wildlife projects ranging from bottomland forest and wetlands restoration to native grass plantings have one thing in common. All sequester carbon and groups like Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, state wildlife management agencies, and others have a great deal of expertise to make these projects happen”,.

“We now know that climate change has the very real potential to affect fish and wildlife resources, and thus those activities that hunters and anglers hold dear, on a landscape level scale that is incomparable in modern times,” said Matt Hogan, Executive Director of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. “The information available to hunters and anglers through the "Seasons' End" book and website will be invaluable in educating sportsmen and women to these threats, and what they can do to assist the state and federal agencies in their efforts to facilitate fish and wildlife adaptation to those threats. I expect that this information will quickly be the basis for universal discussion in Rod and Gun clubs across the nation.”

“Global warming threatens to undo the decades of work that conservationists, especially hunters and anglers, have done to protect America’s fish and wildlife resources,” said David W. Hoskins, Executive Director of the Izaak Walton League of America. “This report, documenting the risks to everything from brook trout in the East to waterfowl in the Midwest, drives home the need to move forward now to implement solutions to this critical problem.”

“Annually, the sportfishing industry has a \$125 billion impact on our nation’s economy,” said American Sportfishing Association (ASA) President and CEO Mike Nussman. “It’s crucial that the industry, along with sportsmen and women, focus on the changes that are occurring in our climate and what that means to fish populations and their habitat.”

“Hunters and anglers have a unique bond with our lands and waters and the seasons and weather that define and shape their outdoor pursuits,” said George Cooper, President of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. “Sportsmen are seeing the effects of climate change and know full well that foresight and proactive management will be necessary to help fish and wildlife adapt. Sportsmen and policymakers need to read Season’s End and incorporate its findings into the policy and funding decisions being made to deal with changes in our climate.”

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#### About the BPC:

Former Senate Leaders Baker, Daschle, Dole and Mitchell formed the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) to develop and promote solutions that can attract the public support and political momentum to achieve real progress. The BPC will act as an incubator for policy efforts that engage top political figures, advocates, academics and business leaders in the art of principled compromise. In addition to advancing specific proposals, the BPC also intends to broadcast a different type of policy discourse that seeks to unite the constructive center in the pursuit of common goals. For more information please visit our website: [www.bipartisanpolicy.org](http://www.bipartisanpolicy.org)