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And Pipe Fitting Industry  
Hearing: March 27, 2007 “Access Denied: The Growing Conflict between  
Fishing, Hunting, and Energy Development on Federal Lands”**

**Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee.**

**My name is Bill Hite and I am proud to say I am the General President of the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices in the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada...or the UA, as we call it.**

**I would like to start by thanking you for addressing an issue that is on the minds of every sportsman and woman in this country – guaranteed access to quality hunting and fishing habitat.**

**The UA is a trade union that represents more than 330,000 men and women in the piping industry. They are pipefitters, plumbers, sprinklerfitters, HVAC technicians, welders and pipeline workers.**

**I am proud to be a third generation member, and my son, Billy, is continuing that tradition.**

**In fact, the Hite family represents more than 100 years of membership in our union. My grandfather and father demonstrated a great work ethic in my family. They instilled in me an appreciation for a great trade and a great tradition.**

**They also took me out fishing and hunting and passed on a love for the outdoors.**

**We weren't rich enough to afford a ranch or expensive guided trips, but when I was a child, we didn't need to do that to enjoy the outdoors.**

**There were lakes near my hometown of Chicago that were abundant with fish, and beautiful fields and woods outside of the city that were full of deer, pheasant and quail.**

**I don't remember the fish jumping in the boat, but there was no shortage of places to go.**

**At first glance, you may wonder why an organization like the UA that is usually concerned with providing good careers in the piping industry, is now testifying on behalf of sportsmen and women.**

**What was obvious to me years ago...**

**...And what recent polling has shown those of us who started the Union Sportsmen's Alliance, is that over 70 percent of our members hunt or fish—or do both.**

**This number identifies us with the readership of *Field and Stream*, as well as our own progressive organization.**

**In fact, our own *UA Journal* devotes several pages in each issue to photos and stories that our members submit about their fishing and hunting trips.**

**We get so many submissions—about 50 a month—that it can sometimes take months to get pictures published.**

**But, when it comes to enjoying the outdoors, things have changed since I was a child.**

**Throughout the country, working men and women are having a harder time finding public access to hunting and fishing areas, and those that are still available are often experiencing a decrease in the quality and quantity of fish and game.**

**Unfortunately, when it comes to access to the beautiful wilderness of this nation, the U.S. is becoming more like Europe every day.**

**In Europe, hunting and fishing is a pay-to-play system.**

**Because of a shortage of places to hunt and fish, only the wealthy, upper class of European society can afford to be active sportsmen.**

**In contrast, it has been a tradition in this country that all Americans have an equal opportunity to hunt and fish.**

**It would be a great tragedy if this tradition were to die.**

**That's why I became an early believer in the Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, and a charter member of the Union Sportsmen's Alliance.**

**If the next generation is to have the same opportunity to hunt and fish that I had, then we have to ensure affordable access to good quality habitat.**

**The TRCP has promoted smart policies to open private land in a way that benefits both landowners and hunters.**

**The TRCP has been an advocate of sound, scientific ways to improve and protect public lands, as well.**

**The group's slogan says it all: "Guaranteeing you a place to hunt and fish."**

**The TRCP is doing a great service to working men and women who are also outdoor enthusiasts, and it's a mission we wholeheartedly support.**

**I also ask you to consider the fact that, without the thinning of herds that is a result of hunting, game animals are prone to starvation and disease.**

**These animals suffer immeasurably, and that is something none of us want.**

**It is clear to me that hunting and fishing advocates are concerned about preserving the land and waters of our great nation.**

**Indeed, groups like TRCP and the Union Sportsmen's Alliance are the ones who are working the hardest to preserve animal populations and keep our lakes, rivers and streams clean and safe for all kinds of fish.**

**However, let me be very clear about what our union stands for and what we believe is best for all of us.**

**We are a union that always has...and always will...support energy independence, clean water programs, and all the other development that is critical to our country.**

**We believe the U.S. deserves the best infrastructure in the world, and we support a broad range of careful development of our natural resources...**

**...Not only because it provides jobs for our members, but because it also keeps America competitive in the global marketplace.**

**This, of course, ensures more jobs in the future, but it also protects the quality of life for all Americans.**

**We have consistently supported oil and gas drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf and in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.**

**We built the Trans-Alaskan Pipeline, which has stood the test of time, and we continue to build oil rigs, refineries, and coal, natural gas and nuclear power plants, as well as the pipelines that bring the fuel sources to the generating facilities.**

**We have also been consistent in our message that all development should include both adequate labor protections as well as environmental protections.**

**I know discussion of these kinds of issues can become heated.**

**Too often, there is divisive rhetoric coming from all sides.**

**But, these issues are too important for us to become distracted by animosity and hostility.**

**I hope you all can stop and think about how all this affects men and women like those in the United Association.**

**When proponents of development say that America must build in order to provide jobs...**

**...They are talking about UA jobs.**

**And when opponents counter that we must have a clean, healthy environment for all Americans, they're talking about UA members who live near the projects they build, and who hunt in nearby forests and fish in wetlands and rivers near industrial facilities.**

**In fact, I think that UA members who work on these projects, have a deeper appreciation for the care and effort it takes to ensure that construction projects, from power plants to apartment houses, are built without damaging the environment.**

**I feel safe in saying that UA members have every right to be called "environmentalists" as do those in the Sierra Club or any other special interest group working on this issue today.**

**The TRCP does not oppose development.**

**Like us, the organization believes there is a right way and a wrong way to approach development.**

**What you will hear from others today is how simple policies based on good science can ensure that development is done the right way, in a way that doesn't destroy natural habitats.**

**If we want the public to support expanded development in the future, especially in the energy sector, then we need to look at our impact on the water, land and air, and be ready to embrace a better, smarter way when it presents itself.**

**We hope our partnership with the TRCP will provide a model for the future.**

**If we can find ways to develop energy resources and create good jobs, at the same time that we preserve our wilderness lands, then we all win.**

**Thank you, Mr. Chairman and esteemed members of this committee, for your time and consideration.**

**I hope we can work together now, and in the future, as we build a better America and remain good stewards of our vast natural resources.**