

THE OUT FITTER



Take Utah Congressman Rob Bishop (R), Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, who said, "There's no way in hell I am going to allow you just to spend that...to expand the footprint of the federal government."

Bishop was referring to the revenue-neutral Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Signed into law by Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965, it uses a portion of taxes on offshore energy production to pay for such things as public hunting and fishing access and urban park and recreation programs. In many instances, the land is turned over to the locality. What's more, the LWCF has been widely praised among the conservation community. It had broad bipartisan support when it came up for renewal last fall, but Bishop and other Republicans attempted to block funding.

Trump said his father would continue the LWCF and was open to the idea of additional funding through onshore energy royalties. Thompson also agreed that the LWCF was a critical source of funding for access.

"She [Clinton] understands how incredibly important it is," he said, adding that Clinton would also examine options for additional funding.

One thing Republicans do get right, agree Fosburgh and Devney, is their opposition to needless regulations and federal oversight in the name of conservation.

"There is too much reliance on regulatory oversight," said Fosburgh. "The best conservation comes from local citizens who have a vested interest in the issue. There's no question the federal government can and should play a role, but in many cases, they go too far."

Devney thinks a recent EPA ruling did just that. Called Waters of the United States, it was written to define the various waters that fall under the EPA's jurisdiction. It was a divisive ruling, one that garnered contempt among virtually every Republican in Congress, as well as a handful of Democrats. A better alternative to WOTUS, he said, would have been some



sort of voluntary, incentive-based solution like a Conservation Reserve-type program for wetlands.

"All the money and manpower being used right now just on the legal battle over WOTUS could have been used to actually protect wetlands," said Devney. "This ruling has yet to protect a single one. We already know that investments in conservation are cheaper and far more palatable than regulations."

That's why Devney and Fosburgh agree that it's up to the conservation community not only to advocate for conservation-specific legislation and funding, but also to show the value of that funding. Spending a dollar now is better than spending ten later. Perhaps even more important, we must be better informed of the views and principles of those who want to represent us.

"We need to look beyond the 'D' or the 'R' next to a politician's name," said Fosburgh. "We can't pretend one party is good and one is bad. We have to hold everyone accountable for their actions on matters important to hunters."

It may be hunting season, but it's also election season. Do yourself and your fellow hunters a favor. Study the candidates as thoroughly as you study the buck you keep catching on your trail cameras. And then vote. — *David Hart*

BOOK YOUR HUNT WEB STYLE

How do you book a flight? Most choose a site like Orbitz, look at the best offerings, click, buy, and enjoy. How do you book a hunt? Ah...now things get a bit more difficult. Attend a sports show? Wandering down aisle after aisle of outfitters is a fun way to burn a Saturday, but it's not the best method of finding a good guide. A booking agent who recommends a guide is another option, but it can be hit or miss. Many hunters use a personal recommendation from a friend to choose a guide. Depending upon how experienced the friend is, this can turn out great or be a total disaster.

Why couldn't there be a website that allows hunters simply to click and buy as they do with all other sorts of travel? That's the question Aleksei Agafonov had, so he created bookyourhunt.com to fill the need. Launched in May of 2015 with three outfitters, bookyourhunt.com now lists 229 outfitters and offers more than 1,300 hunts in 34 countries on five continents.

One of the most unique features of the site is the accreditation of outfitters with the various professional organizations, such as PHASA, NAPHA, and Canadian Guide/Outfitters associations. In short, bookyourhunt.com deals only with professional, well-regarded outfitters. In keeping with the site's goal of being a one-stop shop, bookyourhunt.com is much more than a directory of guides and outfitters. It has detailed information about every country's visa and firearm requirements and offers travel protection, med evacuation, and security services where applicable. Also, users can set up a personal profile page to create dream hunt lists; sign up for hunt alerts; and, eventually, keep track of their state points, applications histories, etc.

Watch for a follow-up feature article on this service next year as we try it first-hand from start to finish and report on the entire experience.

BOOKYOURHUNT.COM