



SPORTSMEN’S PROVISIONS IN THE BROAD, BIPARTISAN ENERGY BILL
NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND GREATER ACCESS FOR MILLIONS OF AMERICANS

On April 20, 2016, under the leadership of Chairman Lisa Murkowski, the U.S. Senate successfully passed the Sportsmen’s Act of 2016 and several other sportsmen’s provisions as part of S. 2012, the Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2016. Specific benefits for Alaska include:

Federal Policy – Provides a clear congressional declaration of policy for all departments and agencies to facilitate the expansion and enhancement of hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting opportunities on federal lands in accordance with their missions.

Sportsmen’s Access to Federal Land – Makes it clear statutorily, for the first time, that all Bureau of Land Management and National Forest System lands shall be open to hunting, recreational shooting, and fishing, unless explicitly closed for safety or other justified reasons.

Increased Transparency and Public Input – Establishes processes that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) must follow in the event they determine lands should be closed temporarily or permanently. Requires multiple forms of notification, opportunities for meaningful public comment, and limits temporary closures to 180 days. This will allow Alaskans to voice their support or concern when agencies propose a temporary closure of lands used for hunting, fishing, or recreational shooting.

North American Wetlands Conservation Act – Reauthorizes the long-running and very popular North American Wetlands Conservation Act, which is a voluntary, incentives-based program dedicated to the promotion and preservation of wetlands habitat for waterfowl, migratory birds, and other wildlife that support recreational opportunities from hunting to bird watching. The program is reauthorized at \$50 million a year through 2021 and will continue to promote public-private partnerships, such as the one for the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge.

Shooting Ranges – Facilitates the construction and expansion of public target ranges, including ranges on USFS and BLM land. This will allow greater access to target ranges, allowing Alaskans to safely practice and improve their shooting skills before heading out on hunting trips.

National Fish Habitat Partnership Program – Authorizes the National Fish Habitat Partnership Program, which consists of 19 regional partnerships involving the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, states, companies, NGOs, and local nonprofits. The partnership promotes recreational fishing and the conservation of aquatic species. This program is authorized to spend \$7.5 million on the partnerships, five of which are in Alaska.

Commercial Filming – Exempts small film crews from having to pay commercial filming fees on federal lands. Also exempts small businesses that already have a commercial use authorization, such as outfitter/guide companies, from having to pay additional fees. Also protects First Amendment rights by excluding content from being considered when authorizing or denying a permit.

Bows in Parks – Aligns Federal policy regarding bows and crossbows in national parks with current policy regarding firearms. This will ensure that if an Alaskan is legally allowed to carry a bow or crossbow, they will be able to carry one in our national parks.