



PRESS RELEASE

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RE: Conservation Organization Hosts Successful International Symposium

On December 8-9, 2011, the Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia (GOABC) hosted its first International Wildlife Management Symposium: *Managing Wildlife in the Next Century*. This was an expansion on previous symposiums to explore the management of social, political, and environmental pressures on wildlife management in other jurisdictions. The goal was to learn from other regions and strategize for the future.

One of the event's objectives was to trigger a fundamental shift among those who support legal hunting, and, indeed, a sense of urgency emerged from the collaborative message of the speakers. Recent surveys have shown 15% of the population opposes all hunting, and that 85% of the population supports legal hunting. Of the 85%, about 15% are hunters. The anti-hunting movement has been united and well-funded, successfully appealing to the 70% in the middle with their loud and emotional messaging. What will wildlife management look like in the next century? If we as hunters do not relay and enhance the legacy of the hunter conservationist, someone else will formulate a vision for wildlife management. That vision may neglect the important balances in and between wildlife populations, and it will likely assume that stewardship means leaving resources untouched. It is doubtful that hunting will be part of that vision.

As hunters, we must become more united and strategic. We need to be leaders in conservation, not only providing a voice for hunters, but advocating for wildlife. This means getting involved in habitat conservation and enhancement projects, educating non-hunters, getting involved in our communities, connecting with our politicians, and providing financial resources to conservation when we are able.

"We are really pleased with how this symposium went," states President Mark Werner, "It was certainly the beginning of a new era for GOABC. We want to be leaders in conservation here in BC. We are planning another symposium for 2013, but the theme will be a little bit different. I'll be disappointed if the event reviews everything we talked about in 2011. The 2013 Symposium will be a "report card" on this first symposium. What did we learn and what are we doing about it?"

Symposium attendees were equally optimistic about the event's results. Wild Sheep Foundation's President and CEO Gray Thornton offered his reflections on the event, "Just wanted to congratulate you and your fine team on a superb symposium! I attend many of these, most have questionable value and few take aways. This symposium bucked that trend with superb presentations, very diverse topics and many take aways. Well done! We were very pleased to sponsor and will so again."

Ian Hatter, Head of Wildlife Management for BC's Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources Operations stated, "Well done, GOABC! It was a first-class event!" His accolades were echoed by former Assistant Deputy Minister, Jody Shimkus, "Government does not have the resources to pull off an event like this, and we are very appreciative of GOABC for hosting this event."

GOABC couldn't have pulled off an event like this without the incredible support of like-minded conservation organizations: Dallas Safari Club (DSC), Grand Slam Club/Ovis (GSCO), Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF), Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF), Goldenbear Outfitting, Safari Club International Foundation (SCIF), Boone and Crockett (B & C), Wild Sheep Society of BC, SCI Wisconsin Chapter, SCI Saskatchewan Rivers Chapter and Ducks Unlimited. Truly the sum of these partnerships is greater than its parts. We appreciate your commitment to wildlife stewardship, and look forward to working with you in the future.

In 2013 GOABC will host a second International Wildlife Management Symposium. By reviewing the actions and initiatives undertaken by hunters in conservation around the globe, we will be better able to formulate direction for the future and identify threats to wildlife stewardship. More information on this event will be available at www.goabc.org by summer 2012.

If you are interested in sitting on the planning committee for 2013 or have questions about this initiative, please email info@goabc.org or call 604-541-6332.