



WSF Policy on “Governor’s” or “Special” Auction License/Tags

Consistent with the North American Wildlife Conservation Model, WSF supports state, provincial and tribal wildlife conservation efforts through facilitating the auction and/or raffle of their special licenses and tags as determined appropriate by the citizens and agencies of each jurisdiction. WSF does not, however, engage in advocating the allocation, species, or number of tags, if any, made available for auction or raffle. The citizens, wildlife professionals and their elected/appointed representatives in each state, province, tribe and/or First Nation make such decisions.

One of the seven “pillars” of the North American Wildlife Conservation Model is that wildlife is most effectively managed by wildlife professionals of the individual states and provinces for the benefit of the wildlife and people of the jurisdiction. Another “pillar” is public “ownership” of wildlife which places this trust in the hands of the citizens in each jurisdiction who then have direct impact on the make-up of their state legislators, wildlife agencies, wildlife commissions and/or councils who make wildlife laws, set seasons, bag limits, determine license and tag fees, and establish other funding means to support wildlife conservation.

Unlike other state agencies, which receive funding from general appropriations, more than 70% of all wildlife management in the United States is supported through user fees. License fees, tags, raffles and auctions provide critical funding to state, provincial, and tribal wildlife agencies for operations and game and non-game conservation. These fees and funding mechanisms are determined by the citizens and their elected officials and agencies, subject to the culture and will of their citizens.

Background: Responding to the critical need to raise more funds for wild sheep restoration, in 1980 Wyoming Governor Ed Herschler issued a special “Governor’s License” for a bighorn sheep to be auctioned, with proceeds dedicated to wild sheep conservation – it was the first of its kind. Governor Herschler gave the license to the Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF), then known as the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, to be sold at auction and directed that 100% of the proceeds benefit bighorn conservation and restoration efforts in the state. The tag sold for \$23,000. Today Wyoming issues five such bighorn licenses and raises more than \$250,000 annually through these auction tags representing 51% of the total Wyoming Game & Fish Department budget for bighorn conservation, restoration and management.

Other state, provincial and tribal wildlife agencies soon followed Wyoming’s lead offering special auction licenses. While Wyoming may offer multiple sheep tags, each

jurisdiction decides what species, and how many special tags, if any, are appropriate to auction or raffle.

Most agencies look to the Wild Sheep Foundation annual convention and auctions as the marquee venue to raise important conservation dollars. Since 1980, WSF has raised and directed more than \$55.8 million in conservation funding to state, provincial and tribal wildlife agencies through the auction of not only wild sheep tags but licenses for Rocky Mountain goat, elk, moose, brown bear, mule deer, pronghorn, muskox and caribou.

Often, states leverage these auction revenues with Pittman-Robertson Act funds, which can match auction proceeds 3 to 1.