

# GUIDE AND OUTFITTER ASSOCIATIONS

THE HEAVY HITTERS REPRESENTING THE PROFESSIONALS OF THE HUNTING INDUSTRY.

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Every group or society has an affiliation that lobbies for their cause. In the hunting industry, we are constantly under attack from animal rights groups and the liberal media. Remember the wolf debacle? Of course you do because it's still ongoing. We were promised states' management of the blood-thirsty rascals after several hundred pairs were established, only to see the management get tied up in court by liberal, tree-hugging politicians who know nothing about wildlife management.

To make matters worse, we lost in court. Why did we lose? For starters, the judges were against us. Secondly, the animal rights groups raised more money than we did. They stuck together, had a bigger budget and never looked back. Sportsmen lost big time.

So who fights for the sportsmen? The National Rifle Association, U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance, National Shooting Sports Foundation and many other conservation groups such as the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation carry the fight to the judicial system.

Guide and outfitter associations are the heavy hitters for the professionals in the hunting industry. We spoke with Kerrie Romero (Executive Director of the New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides) and Scott Locorini (President of the New York State Outdoor

Guides Association) on the importance of these organizations.

## THE BENEFITS OF ADMISSION

Why is it important for guides and outfitters to be a part of their state's association? Locorini's response was simple.

"We are the only statewide voice for guides and guiding in New York," he said. "More members means we have more influence in the state capital."

Romero states a lot of the same viewpoints, and even takes it a step further.

"We are often the only organization fighting to protect non-resident sportsmen opportunity," he said. "Outfitter clientele is primarily non-resident, and the industry is dependent on non-residents being provided with a sufficient opportunity to harvest state wildlife."

When asked about the biggest threat to the outfitting industry, Romero and Locorini went in different directions.

"The biggest problem we see in the industry today is a disconnect from the outdoor world," said Locorini. "In this technology-driven world, kids spend more time staring at screens than clouds. We mentor youth through our 'Kids to Camp' program and feel that getting kids outdoors is a start."

"The outfitting industry is facing a number of very serious threats, any one of which could deeply impact the future

of the industry," said Romero. "Probably the biggest overarching threat that affects all hunters from a macro level are attacks from powerful special interest groups, such as Humane Society of the United States, Center of Biological Diversity, Wildearth Guardians and the Sierra Club, focused on dismantling the hunting industry."

"This threat will likely grow until all sportsmen come to the realization that ignoring the problem is not a solution," added Romero. "Many of today's sportsmen carry the 'who cares' attitude in regard to groups that are against their way of life. The flaw in this is that anti-hunting groups tend to be very persuasive with the vast majority of people who know very little about hunting."

Romero also believes another threat comes from local so-called "sportsmen advocacy groups" that aim to reduce or eliminate the non-resident hunter and angler opportunity." On the surface, this sounds good for resident sportsmen, but if non-resident sportsmen are regulated away, guides and outfitters will soon follow.

Most states have associations. Become a member and get involved. The conservative, laid-back approach of letting things work themselves out isn't saving the industry one bit—it's completely handcuffing it.

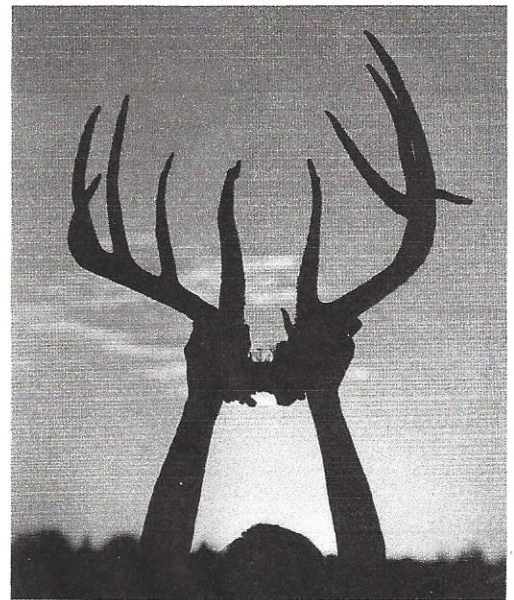


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