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## The View From Here:

# A New 'Trust'

FROM THE SOLITARY DEER hunter deep in the backwoods, to the many members of traditional sportsmen's clubs across the country, to the largest and best known of our national hunting organizations, all hunters and hunting groups share a common heritage and challenge. And I believe all of us will soon benefit from the creation of a new and visionary hunting organization, the Hunting Heritage Trust.

The Trust was created with a mission statement as powerful as it simple: provide dedicated hunters with a way to help fight the current challenges facing our hunting heritage, while helping to establish a "war chest" that will fund pro-hunting initiatives for generations to come. Responding to the threats of anti-hunting activists today is critical, but our victory could be short-lived, and ultimately hollow, if we don't anticipate and plan for the challenges that await us and future generations of hunters.

I first learned of the Trust when I read about its highly successful launch in St. Louis in late 2002. The inaugural event was hosted by Budweiser and attended by most of the major hunting, shooting and conservation groups. Many called the event the most impressive first-

time fundraiser that they'd ever attended. Originally called the Hunting and Shooting Sports Heritage Trust, the organization's name was officially abbreviated to Hunting Heritage Trust just recently.

While I was impressed with those first reports about the Trust, I'll admit I didn't have a full appreciation of the mission and the potential of the group until I was invited to serve on its Board of Directors earlier this year.

## **"We'll finally be preaching to folks who aren't in the choir!"**

After studying the Trust's mission statement and philosophy and reviewing its current Board, I humbly accepted, hoping I might make a small contribution to its aggressive goals.

The first question most people ask about the Trust is, "How is it different from the other organizations already working in defense of hunting and the shooting sports?" The answer is simple: The Trust is the only organization created by many of these existing organizations, and



*By Bill Miller,  
Executive Director*

it's the only one with a mission to provide "across the board benefit" for these established groups.

An excellent example of the Trust's "across the board benefit" is its current work on a public television documentary exploring the cultural history of hunting in the United States. When complete, the program will be aired on public television and copies will be made available to school systems and sportsmen's groups across the nation. As a result, tens of millions of Americans will learn about the contributions made by hunters and hunter-based organizations to the growth of our nation. The very efforts you've read about for years in *North American Hunter* magazine will be shared with a much broader audience—we'll finally be preaching to folks who aren't in the choir!

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Political experts tell us if the hunting debate ever comes down to a vote, the outcome won't be decided by hunters or radical anti-hunters. The majority block of voters in the middle will decide the issue, and that's why educational programs such as this one are so important.

Additional Trust-supported initiatives that promise to win allies from the general public include: a project by the Silk and Steel Foundation to develop a museum exhibit featuring women's accomplishments in hunting and shooting; a pilot program by the Outdoor Heritage Education Center for a Hunting Heritage program for public television; and support for a documentary of "The Life and Times of Annie Oakley" for PBS.

Other Trust grants have benefited hunter education, youth shooting programs and habitat preservation. As we project the value of these programs down the road, we can begin to see why so many hunting industry leaders supported the creation of the Trust.

The recent success of a unique Heritage Trust fundraising program illustrates the degree of support and excitement surrounding this new group. The program, called "Give-A-Day for Years to Come," involves presentations about the Trust at



A major role of the Hunting Heritage Trust is to maintain a foundation of public support for hunting. This foundation will enhance and support the activities of other conservation and sporting groups.

major hunting and shooting sports companies. The event concludes with an invitation for industry employees to make a financial pledge to the Trust. The first three "Give-A-Day" programs resulted in more than \$40,000 in pledges—with the average pledge exceeding \$125!

Another promising fundraising initiative invites supporters to join the Trust's "First 1,000" Legacy Society with a contribution of \$1,000 or more. To date, approximately 60 supporters have made their \$1,000 contribution, and I'm proud to say I'm one of them.

I wonder if the enthusiasm shown by the "First 1,000" contributors, and by those who pledged so generously at the

"Give-A-Day" events, might not reflect the desire so many of us feel to "give something back." If so, then I'm very confident in the future of the Hunting Heritage Trust because I'm confident in the commitment of my fellow NAHC members to "give back" to a sport that's meant so much to our lives.

That's the view from here.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill".

Bill Miller  
Executive Director

P.S. To read more about the Trust's mission and programs, and to learn how you might lend your support, visit [www.huntingclub.com](http://www.huntingclub.com) and click "Featured Links."

## HUNTING HERITAGE TRUST

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