

The John Ernest Foundation

*YES*

Youth Environmental Scholarship

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**Abstract:**

Smoke belching furnaces and crowded Californian highways. Murky brown river water and melting polar ice caps. All are problems that come to mind as we think of the state of the environment, and rightfully so, as these are severe problems that must be fixed. However, between the smog ridden freeways of Los Angeles and the warming waters of the Arctic, there are millions of square miles of forest, desert, and everything in between. These mountain ranges and valleys, deserts and lakes, are often left out of the big picture. What one may not realize is that a perfect balance of wildlife, domestic animals, water, forage, and people are needed to keep these lesser known places functioning the way they have been for centuries. It is necessary that we take conservatory efforts to keep this perfect balance, and this is how I make a difference.

There is no question that my roots run deep all throughout the state of Nevada. My father was born and raised in Ely, a mining town if there ever was one. His father spent his life working in the mines of Nevada; and hunted wildlife with every spare second he was given. Needless to say, the wildlife of Nevada is my lifeblood; something I have grown up to love and understand. While I understand that there are bigger problems that need solving, the joy I find when being outdoors is too much for me to abandon, so I help the environment that I love in as many ways as I can.

When you tell someone that you are a hunter you can see a stereotypical vision flash across their face. They see a rampaging redneck with his keg of Bud Light and a shotgun. They picture the destruction that hunters cause to nature with their firearms and alcohol. Yet the reality is that hunters, such as me, do more to conserve the environment and help its wildlife than do our representatives in Washington D.C. For example, the funding necessary to implement programs such as Fire Restoration, is not given to the state from Federal Grants. Instead several wildlife organizations, such as Nevada Bighorns Unlimited and Safari Club International, work with their members throughout the year to put on fundraising events such as banquets, auctions, and golf tournaments in order to raise money and awareness for wildlife conservation. I am proud to say that I have been a member of both organizations for several years now, and am pleased with the contribution that both groups have made to help our wildlife flourish.

Another crucial part of wildlife conservation is game management. The open spaces of the western states are not only home to wildlife, as ranchers depend on the income that their beefy cattle will bring. It becomes necessary to keep the massive herds of wildlife in check so that the cattle are allowed ample space and forage. This is another problem that hunters are able to solve. By issuing a certain quota of tags each year, agencies such as the Nevada Department of Wildlife are able to keep the number of wildlife animals in check. I have hunted in Nevada every year since I was 12, taking a total of 6 big game animals. Being able to help the environment while doing something that you truly love is why I choose to make a difference in this different manner.

Everybody has that passion that burns deep inside of them, and when that passion allows them to help their world to any extent, they know that it is worthwhile. Although

the steps I have taken to help the environment may not win me a scholarship, I am pleased with myself, for through this essay I have continued to help the wildlife that I so dearly love by spreading the word, and that is just another step in my lifelong conservation efforts.