



# America Demands Fair Funding for Wildlife

*Congress Needs to Increase Funding for the Fish and Wildlife Service Ecological Program Now!*

**<sup>1</sup>The National Wildlife Federation estimates that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service needs \$185.2 million for 2008 increasing to \$305.8 million by 2012 to meet its Endangered Species Act implementation responsibilities.**

## ***The Endangered Species Act works.***

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is a safety net for wildlife, plants and fish that are on the brink of extinction. The ESA is almost 100 percent effective in preventing the extinction of plants and animals. A recent GAO report, entitled "*Many Factors Affect the Length of Time to Recover Select Species*," studied species recovery time. The report found that existing tools in the ESA - namely recovery plans, stakeholder processes, and habitat protections - are putting species on the road to recovery. This study confirms that the best way to protect species is to protect habitat, create and implement recovery plans with broad stakeholder involvement, and ***provide necessary funding.***



## ***Without appropriate funding, species languish on the list.***

No radical rewrite of the Endangered Species Act is warranted. Congress should focus instead on ensuring that recovery plans are implemented, citizen involvement is invited and encouraged, critical habitat is protected, ***and endangered species programs are fully funded.***

Species with robust and well-funded recovery plans do best. For example, the American Bald Eagle, Gray Wolf, Columbia White-tailed Deer and the Papery Whitlow-wort, have been delisted, or are well on their way to being delisted because of the implementation of their recovery plans. However, some recovery plans are not as thorough as others. For example, an analysis of recovery plans done in 2002 found that 37% of all threats in recovery plans did not have recovery tasks associated with

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<sup>1</sup> These funding levels are based on an analysis of the FWS funding needs in order to improve recovery of endangered species by improving its core Endangered Species Program. The analysis does not include species managed by the National Marine Fisheries Service. This analysis does not include expenditures from private entities or other federal agencies to implement the ESA. This information was provided by a variety of sources including the FWS.

For information on funding needs for cooperative conservation through the Private Stewardship Program, Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund grants and the Landowner Incentive Program, please see the Fact Sheet entitled *Congress Needs to Increase Funding for the Endangered Species Act Grant Programs Now!*

them. Additionally, budget and cost estimates are too variable in format and completeness to do a reliable analysis, yet we know that without sufficient resources, neither recovery plan development nor implementation can be successful.

To ensure that all listed species have the same opportunity to recover, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) must acquire adequate funding. FWS needs \$185.2 million for 2008, increasing to \$305.8 million in 2012 to maintain and improve its core Ecological Services Endangered Species Program.

***FWS Ecological Services Endangered Species Program funds and implements the four key elements of the ESA.***



**1. Listing Program** – The listing program will require \$25.2 million for 2008, increasing to \$36.5 million in 2012, with a 5% increase each subsequent year. This will allow the FWS to address both new species and the backlog of species awaiting action on proposed listings and critical habitat designations. More than 250 candidate species – i.e., species deemed by FWS to be at risk of extinction and warranting ESA protection – have been denied the benefits of the ESA’s safety net due to a lack of resources. Candidates awaiting ESA protection include the Washington ground squirrel, sheath-tailed bat, gunnison sage grouse, lesser prairie chicken, band-rumped storm petrel, and the elfin woods warbler. Some of these creatures have been candidates for years and could become extinct while waiting for ESA protection. Improving funding for this program will ensure it remains capable and robust and prevent any new future backlogs.

The necessary funding levels are determined by simple math and facts. There are many steps, with associated costs, to get a species listed and access to the protections of the ESA. According to the FWS, the steps include the following: issue proposal for listing; issue final listing rule; issue 12 month petitions; propose critical habitat rule; and create final critical habitat rule.

FWS is planning to fund the proposed listings (with critical habitat) of only two candidate species in FY07. This may be increased to five species. FWS has a serious staff shortage and this funding increase will provide for more staff in order to handle the work load.

***FWS needs \$25.2 million in 2008, increasing to \$36.5 million in 2012 to address new species under consideration for listing and the backlog.***

**2. Recovery Program** – Despite the fact that Congress repeatedly states that recovery is the most important element of the ESA, recovery funding has remained almost stagnant in recent years. A 2002 study found that despite the complexity of the recovery process, species that have higher proportional spending have an improved chance of improving or remaining stable. For an effective recovery program, FWS needs \$84.8 million in 2008, increasing to \$121.6 million in 2012.

For example, birds like the Red-cockaded woodpecker and the American Bald Eagle receive a large percentage of recovery funding, while some island birds that are far more vulnerable to extinction, receive a mean of ten times less funding than mainland species and remain on the brink of extinction. Some of these are Hawaiian species, including the world's rarest bird, the po'ouli, with only three individuals known to exist in the wild.

The FWS Recovery Program staff work with federal and state governments, tribal, non-governmental entities, and private landowners to take necessary measures to prevent extinction of species; prepare recovery plans to ensure coordinated, effective recovery actions; and implement actions to reverse the decline of listed species and expedite recovery. A variety of methods and procedures are used to recover species, such as protective measures to prevent extinction or further decline, consultation to avoid adverse impacts of activities, habitat acquisition and restoration, and other on-the-ground activities for managing and monitoring endangered and threatened species. FWS needs increased staff in order to successfully implement the recovery programs.

***The road to recovery will cost \$84.8 million in 2008, increasing to \$121.6 in 2012.***



**3. Consultation Program** - Consultation is extremely important to ensure protection of endangered species. Under provisions of section 7 of the ESA, a federal agency that permits, licenses, funds, or otherwise authorizes activities must consult with FWS as appropriate to ensure that its actions will not jeopardize the continued existence of any listed species. Consultations also take place between FWS and private landowners in regard to Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs). FWS staffs participate in formal and informal consultations, prepare biological opinions, reports and recommendations, and issue permits. Delays in consultation cause frustration and misdirected anger towards the ESA, however, they can be easily reduced by ensuring proper staffing levels. FWS will review almost 80,000 federal actions under Section 7 in 2008.

On top of this, FWS is responsible for monitoring nearly 500 approved Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) and will be reviewing 300 that are currently in the pipeline. To ensure an accurate and efficient consultation program, FWS needs \$63.2 million for 2008, increasing to \$122.4 million in 2012.

In 1999, FWS participated in 40,000 consultations and received \$36 million in funding. In 2006, FWS participated in approximately 77,000 consultations – with only \$48 million. While the amount of work almost doubled for FWS staff, funding to ensure consultations are done accurately and efficiently has not. FWS needs supplementary staff to handle the additional work.

Another problem for FWS regards monitoring. FWS has said that monitoring HCPs, or federal actions, is seldom done due to staff and resource shortage. Currently, less than 2% of all permit and consultation requirements are monitored or reviewed by FWS. Of the 2%, none are addressed in an organized or formal manner. FWS reviews the 2% when they are informed that

something is wrong and should be examined more closely. A simple, single species HCP is estimated to cost \$2,000 for monitoring while a complex multi-species HCP costs up to \$500,000. Currently, the majority (over 350 of approximately 800) are single species but most of the new ones will be complex multi-species HCPs.

Occasionally, FWS requests information in order to grant a permit but the service does not follow-up and consequently does not know if work or data collection is actually completed. Because FWS can not afford to properly monitor projects and consequences of permits, they do not know if many of their actions cause positive or negative impacts on wildlife. Another consequence of this lack of monitoring is that future permit decisions may be made with flawed information.

***FWS needs \$63.2 million in 2008, increasing to \$122.4 million in 2012 to make the consultation process easier and beneficial to federal agencies, local governments, private landowners and wildlife.***



**4. Candidate Conservation** - Candidate species are plants and animals for which the service has sufficient information on their biological status and threats to propose them for listing as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act, but for which listing is precluded due to a lack of resources and other higher priority listing activities. However, it is a fact that efforts to protect candidate species at an early stage are more cost-effective, reducing the difficulty and expense of species recovery.

NatureServe has identified between 3,000 and 5,000 species that are potentially waiting to become candidates for listing. NatureServe puts species and subspecies in categories based on conservation status of critically imperiled (G1), imperiled (G2), or vulnerable (G3). FWS needs to do an assessment of G1 and G2 species to determine their status before the populations decline to a crisis level. FWS staff would also like to create “conservation strategy plans” for candidate species, similar to recovery plans, to prevent species populations from declining while waiting to be listed. Preventative actions will help avoid expensive management later. In order to increase the candidate list and work on conservation strategies, FWS needs more staff and more funding.

***To allow species to gain the full protections of the ESA – and start moving towards recovery – FWS needs \$12 million in 2008, increasing to \$25.4 million in 2012 to address candidate species.***

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All photos courtesy of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.