



Recovering America's Wildlife Act

The Problem: America's Wildlife in Crisis

Our nation has been blessed with a diverse array of fish and wildlife - many of which are so iconic, they symbolize our country's bounty. However, many of these species are at a crisis point. State fish and wildlife agencies, the first line defense for conserving fish and wildlife resources, have identified 12,000 species in greatest need for conservation action. Species including monarch butterflies and other pollinators, American Oystercatcher and hundreds of other bird species, salamanders and turtles – all once had abundant populations but are now facing steep declines due to habitat loss, disease, or other threats. Without the ability to direct focused conservation measures, these and hundreds of other species are facing risk of becoming threatened or endangered.



The Need for Dedicated Funding

State fish and wildlife agencies are tasked with managing our fish and wildlife, and they have shown great success in restoring other species that were once on the brink – like white-tailed deer, turkeys, elk, and more. The difference is that these wildlife, and others that are hunted or fished, have dedicated funding for their conservation through license fees and excise taxes on



hunting and fishing equipment resulting in 80% of agency funding coming from just a small slice of the American public. However, the thousands of wildlife that aren't hunted or fished do not have a similar dedicated funding stream and they are falling through the cracks. In many cases, no action is taken until a species is officially listed under the federal Endangered Species Act, a bill originally intended to be an "emergency room" measure. Once a species reaches that point it is much harder and more expensive to recover a species and there are regulatory hurdles that make doing business more challenging. Proactive conservation is good for wildlife, good for taxpayers and good for business.

Implementing the Action Plans

Recognizing this need, in 2000, Congress created the State and Tribal Wildlife Grant program to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered in every state. As part of that, every state was required to develop a State Wildlife Action Plan that assessed the health of wildlife within the state and outlined the conservation actions necessary to sustain them. Collectively, these State Wildlife Action Plans form a nationwide strategy to prevent wildlife from becoming listed under the Endangered Species Act. Through the course of this planning process, the states determined that there are 12,000 species of greatest conservation need. While the State and Tribal Wildlife Grant program has been appropriated \$50-100 million dollars each year, the program is funded at only a fraction of what states need to conserve these species. A survey of all the State Wildlife Action Plans revealed that \$1.3 billion annually is what it would cost to implement 75 percent of every state's plan. Based on average funding from annual appropriations, current funding is only 4.65% of what is necessary to conserve our nation's species of greatest conservation need. As a result, states are forced to focus only on just a very few species, with many more at-risk and heading towards becoming endangered.



The Magnitude of the Solution Must Match the Magnitude of the Challenge

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act, introduced by Representatives Don Young (R-AK) and Debbie Dingell (D-MI) would help avert this crisis by dedicating \$1.3 billion annually to the unfunded Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Account – \$650 million from existing revenues from energy development on the outer continental shelf and \$650 million from existing revenues from mineral development on federal lands. These funds currently go into the U.S. Treasury. The Land and Water Conservation Fund is also funded from offshore oil and gas receipts and would remain as a separate account. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act implements the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources. This nonpartisan panel of 26 visionary leaders, representing outdoor recreation retailers and manufacturers, the energy industry, sportsmen's groups, and other conservation organizations, was convened by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to develop recommendations on providing secure funding for all of our nation's fish and wildlife. The members agreed that pro-active conservation is cost-effective and can save wildlife and taxpayer dollars well before listing becomes necessary. The panel reviewed many options and determined that using funding from existing revenues from the use of our non-renewable natural resources was a pragmatic and logical solution that would mutually benefit America's industries and agencies as well as our shared fish, wildlife, and economic heritage.



A Proven Mechanism

By allocating funds to the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration subaccount within the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Fund, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act takes advantage of an existing funding mechanism that has been shown to work for wildlife restoration for over 75 years. The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration account channels revenues paid by sportsmen when they purchase hunting gear back to state fish and wildlife agencies. These agencies have a proven track record of using those funds wisely and effectively, having restored native game populations around the country. The Wildlife Conservation and Restoration program provides funding to

each state, territory, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia based on a formula of land area and population; states will receive between 1 and 5 percent of the total amount. States must provide a 25 percent match, leveraging these federal funds even further.

Accountability through State Wildlife Action Plans

These funds will be used by each state to safeguard wildlife and their habitat as laid out in their existing, congressionally mandated State Wildlife Action Plans. These plans provide accountability and oversight because states can only use these funds on work that is identified within the Action Plans. These plans must be updated every ten years with the latest science, require public input, and are approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Conservation efforts could include reintroduction of imperiled species, conserving and restoring important habitat, fighting invasive species and disease, and more. States also can use a portion of the funds for wildlife-related recreation such as wildlife viewing, nature photography, and trails. In addition, they can improve conservation education efforts to engage the next generation of our nation's wildlife stewards.



The Recovering America's Wildlife Act is the solution we need to address America's wildlife crisis.

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