

April 21, 2011

Support Funding For State and Tribal Wildlife Grants

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in supporting adequate and responsible funding levels in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program, the nation's core federal program for preventing wildlife from becoming endangered. Last year, forty-seven members of the Senate signed on to the letter supporting funding for the program. We hope you can join us on the letter this year.

The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program provides states, territories, the District of Columbia, and Indian tribes with the resources they need to implement strategic, effective wildlife conservation programs aimed at keeping wildlife and their habitats from becoming endangered. Many species of wildlife have declined dramatically over the last several decades as evidenced by the over 1300 species on the federal threatened and endangered species list. While states have primary responsibility for the management of fish and wildlife, it is in the federal interest to provide funding to help restore declining wildlife populations and prevent conflicts over federal endangered species listings. Projects supported by this important program restore degraded habitat, reintroduce native wildlife, and develop partnerships with private landowners to secure a future for wildlife.

The State and Tribal Grants Program supports strategic and effective conservation investments in every state and territory and on tribal lands. Funding for this popular program is supported by the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition, which includes over 6,300 organizations nationwide, representing birdwatchers, hunters and anglers, hikers and outdoor-related businesses who support the goal of restoring and conserving our nation's at-risk wildlife.

When Congress created the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program in FY 2001, we asked every state fish and wildlife agency to complete a comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy (State Wildlife Action Plan). These plans were developed by scientists, sportsmen, environmentalists, private landowners, and other members of the community, who worked together to identify the practical actions that are needed to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered. State fish and wildlife agencies and their many conservation partners are moving ahead with implementation using funding from the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program. Congress should honor its commitment to this effort by providing the federal share of support to ensure these plans are implemented.

The attached letter urges the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee to provide robust funding for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program in FY 2012 and to maintain the non-federal match requirement at 35 percent. To sign onto this letter, please contact Amanda Mendoza in Senator Cardin's office (224-4524) or Luke Tomanelli in Senator Crapo's office (4-6142).

Sincerely,


Ben Cardin


Mike Crapo

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 04, 2011

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Reed and Senator Murkowski:

We are writing to express our support for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program. We appreciate your past support of this program, and we are hopeful that your support will continue. The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program is an important investment needed to sustain our nation's fish and wildlife. We understand the fiscal constraints that our nation is under and therefore request that you provide adequate and reasonable funding support for this important program in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012. We also ask that the nonfederal match requirement for states remain at 35%. This will help states who have seen significant reductions in their conservation budgets meet match obligations during the economic downturn.

The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program is the nation's core federal program to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered in every state. It is a mission-critical element of the Interior Department's budget as no other program is focused on this goal. As you know, states bear the primary responsibility for wildlife management and since the 1930's the federal government has worked in partnership with the states to fund successful conservation programs to ensure the fish and wildlife species enjoyed by millions of hunters, anglers and others are sustained.

Many species of wildlife that are not hunted or fished have declined dramatically, including more than 12,000 species that are at-risk and potentially headed towards endangered species listing. Through early and strategic action to conserve declining wildlife populations and their habitats, we can prevent conflicts over endangered species listings and save both wildlife and taxpayer dollars. Adequate funding for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants is essential to fulfillment of the shared federal-state responsibility for keeping our nation's wildlife from becoming endangered. We should be focusing limited resources on this kind of smart, effective investment in conservation.

When Congress created the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program in FY 2001, we asked every state wildlife agency to complete a comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy (state wildlife action plan). The plans were developed by scientists, managers, sportsmen, environmentalists, and other private citizens who worked together to identify practical conservation measures to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered. These plans are being implemented in every state and territory, creating jobs and stimulating the economy.

Congress should honor its commitment to this effort by providing the federal share of support for this program. We therefore urge the Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies to provide the most robust funding possible for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program in FY 2012so that these important wildlife conservation efforts can be sustained. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,
