



Frequently Asked Questions Recovering America's Wildlife Act



QUESTION: WHY IS THIS BILL NECESSARY?

In their congressionally mandated State Wildlife Action Plan, state fish and wildlife agencies have identified 8,000 different species in need of proactive efforts to prevent them from becoming endangered. Monarch butterflies, migratory songbirds, salamanders and turtles, and bats are among the species at-risk. Estimates of implementing two-thirds of each state's plan is \$1.3 billion each year. Current funding (about \$70 million annually) is less than five percent of what is necessary to conserve the species most at-risk.

The magnitude of the solution must match the magnitude of the problem. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act will fund conservation efforts for declining wildlife species before they need the emergency room measures of the Endangered Species Act. Once a species reaches the point of needing ESA intervention it is harder and much more expensive to recover, and it is more challenging for business. Proactive efforts provide more regulatory certainty for businesses saving them substantial money and time.

QUESTION: WHY SHOULD THIS MONEY BE GOING TO STATES?

State fish and wildlife agencies have jurisdiction over the majority of wildlife within their borders, sharing some management responsibilities with the federal government for endangered species and migratory birds. Because states are the first line of defense for wildlife conservation efforts, their ability to proactively manage species and their habitats is essential. In addition, states have a proven track record for almost a century. Using dedicated funding from excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment, as well as state hunting and fishing licenses, states were able to restore now common species like white-tailed deer, turkey, elk, and striped bass that were on the brink in the early 1900's.

Funding that would be provided through the Recovering America's Wildlife Act would be distributed through this established and effective funding mechanism within the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program. The money can only be used on needs identified within each state's existing, congressionally mandated State Wildlife Action Plans. In addition, the plans are regularly updated to incorporate the latest science and public input, and are approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ensuring program oversight.

QUESTION: WHERE WOULD THE MONEY COME FROM?

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act would direct a portion of revenues from oil and gas and mineral extraction for wildlife conservation into the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program (WCRP). Half the funds (\$650 million) will come from existing revenues from energy development on the outer continental shelf and the other \$650 million will come from existing revenues from mineral development on federal lands. The current revenues from these sources fluctuates based on the price of energy sources but generally is from \$6-

Businesses and organizations can sign-on to the group letter by contacting cookseyb@nwf.org.

12 billion. Most of these funds currently go into the U.S. Treasury, a portion of offshore oil and gas revenues are directed toward the Land and Water Conservation Fund for land protection.

QUESTION: WHY SHOULD WE FUND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION USING REVENUES FROM ENERGY DEVELOPMENT?

Energy and mineral development have a direct impact on habitat which in turn impacts wildlife. Using funds generated through the use of non-renewable resources for conservation acknowledges that there is damage to the environment from this energy development and that it makes sense to reinvest the revenues from development for conservation efforts. Some have suggested this might be an incentive for more development since states and others would get more funding with more drilling, however funding for this program is a set amount and wouldn't fluctuate with more development.

QUESTION: HOW DOES THIS BILL COMPARE TO THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND?

The Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program would create a separate but complementary program to LWCF. Both programs have an overall similar purpose of conservation, however, there are some differences as the law is currently implemented: 1) WCRP can be used for a range of actions including species reintroduction and stewardship of lands while LWCF is primarily focused on land acquisition or easements; 2) WCRP is state based and LWCF is primarily federal based; and 3) WCRP is wildlife focused and LWCF is broader (historic and cultural, scenic areas, etc.).

While both use similar sources of funding, LWCF is only from offshore oil and gas and WCRP is from both on and offshore oil, gas and minerals. With current revenues from these sources ranging from \$6-12 billion, there are enough funds available for both programs. Further, LWCF does not require a match but WCRP does, which will encourage states to invest further in wildlife conservation programs.

QUESTION: A DEDICATED FUND REQUIRES AN IDENTIFIED SOURCE OF FUNDS TO PROVIDE AN "OFFSET" SO THERE IS NOT AN INCREASE IN THE OVERALL BUDGET. WHAT IS THE OFFSET?

The pay-as-you-go rule, also known as PAYGO, is designed to encourage Congress to "offset" the cost of any legislation that increases spending on entitlement programs or reduces revenues so it doesn't expand the deficit. Under PAYGO, Congress must pay for such legislation by reducing other entitlement spending or increasing other revenues.

There currently is no identified source of funds for an offset. As recently as last year, Congress provided an increase to the budget without identifying a source of funds. This program is essential for wildlife conservation and we must build the political will to either have Congress determine the best offset source or decide it is not required. In addition, there will be savings in annual federal government spending for species listed under the Endangered Species Act due to the proactive conservation efforts the states will be able to implement.

QUESTION: DOES RECOVERING AMERICA'S WILDLIFE ACT COMPETE WITH THE RECLAIM ACT?

The **RECLAIM Act** will release \$1 billion of the **Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation (AML) Fund** over five years for the clean-up of abandoned mine sites. The AML fund is a separate fund that will not compete with **Recovering America's Wildlife Act**, which will use a portion of revenues from oil and gas and mineral leasing

fees. Instead, the AML fund revenue is distinct and comes solely from coal industry fees required to be paid into the Fund for each new ton of coal produced. The AML fund is dedicated by law for the purpose of cleaning up abandoned coal mine sites. The RECLAIM Act seeks to accelerate the spending of the surplus accumulated fees in the AML fund that has not been allocated at the same output rate for the purpose of abandoned mine reclamation.

QUESTION: CAN THIS BILL PASS?

Both Republicans and Democrats wish to address the need for our nation to have a proactive effort to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered. The strong and diverse coalition, including Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources, reflects how this bill has support from sportsmen, birders, gardeners and the businesses dependent on our nation's lands and waters including big and small outdoor gear retailers and manufacturers and oil/gas companies. The cost effective, state based approach is good for wildlife, good for taxpayers and good for business.