

Business and Conservation Interests Support Dedicated Funding to Recover America's Fish and Wildlife

We, the undersigned, support preventing fish and wildlife from becoming endangered by dedicating \$1.3 billion annually into the federal Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program, using existing revenue from the development of energy and mineral resources on federal lands and waters. We support this recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources, comprised of national business and conservation leaders.

Our nation has been blessed with a diverse array of fish and wildlife. While some of these species are thriving, many more are facing increasing challenges and are in steep decline – increasing their possibility of becoming endangered. State fish and wildlife agencies have identified 12,000 species nationwide in need of proactive conservation action.

At the request of Congress, every state has developed a State Wildlife Action Plan to assess the health of their state's fish and wildlife and outline conservation actions necessary to sustain them. Collectively, these action plans have identified these 12,000 species and formed a nationwide strategy to prevent them from becoming endangered. However, the current federal State Wildlife Grants program is funded at only a fraction of what states need to conserve these species. State fish and wildlife biologists estimate that it would cost \$1.3 billion annually to implement 75 percent of these actions. The magnitude of the solution must match the magnitude of the challenge.

America has a proud history of bringing fish and wildlife back from the brink of extinction through professional wildlife management. A century ago, prized game species like elk, wood ducks, pronghorns, and striped bass were at risk of extinction—now they are thriving due largely to user fees provided by hunters and anglers. Today we face a new conservation crisis as emerging diseases, invasive species, habitat loss, and extreme weather threaten many wildlife populations at a scale inconceivable just a few decades ago.

This growing wildlife crisis poses a threat to America's vibrant outdoor economy. Hunters, anglers, birders, hikers, campers, and backyard wildlife watchers have created a fast growing outdoor consumer base that depends on healthy wildlife populations. Today, the outdoor economy contributes \$887 billion to our national economy annually, creates 7.6 million direct jobs, and generates \$124.5 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenue.

Further, by preventing the decline of species so that they do not require the stricter protections of the ESA, other businesses will be able to operate with more regulatory certainty and reduced risk. As the decline of numerous species and their habitats across the country worsens, preemptive action can reverse this trend and keep species from the critical, yet often costly, "emergency room" measures required by the ESA. Proactive conservation is good for wildlife, good for taxpayers, and good for business. We support the protection of our nation's precious fish and wildlife heritage by supporting efforts to direct dedicated funding into the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program.

Sincerely,

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