

The Bipartisan Recovering America's Wildlife Act in the 116th Congress

We are excited about the re-introduction of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act with the following changes. The focus of the bill remains to provide dedicated funding for proactive, collaborative conservation actions to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered.

New Title -- Tribal Funding

Tribal nations have many responsibilities and programs for the conservation and management of fish and wildlife species. Tribal lands and waters provide essential habitat for more than 525 federally threatened and endangered fish, wildlife, and plants.

In this version of the bill, tribal nations would receive \$97.5 million annually to fund proactive wildlife conservation efforts.

This new title increases the funding to \$1.397 billion. The state fish and wildlife agencies would still receive \$1.3 billion.

Tribal Nations are proven leaders in the protection of landscapes and fish and wildlife conservation. Increased funding to Tribal Nations is essential to prevent species from becoming endangered and for the recovery of species that are already listed as threatened and endangered.

Change to Funding Source

The bill continues to provide dedicated funding for wildlife conservation. The funding is still permanent and will not be subject to annual appropriations.

Instead of the funding coming specifically from energy development revenues and fees, it will come from the general U.S. Treasury fund. This revision simply eliminates the restriction on the source of revenue, but not the need for dedicated funding. Funding will still be authorized and directed to the Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program account.

Plants -- Funding Allowed When Connected to Wildlife Recovery

The bill clarifies that plants are crucial to healthy habitats for fish and wildlife. It provides flexibility for state fish and wildlife agencies to fund conservation efforts for these species when working towards implementation of their State Wildlife Action Plans.

Federally Threatened or Endangered Species

States have committed to continuing their work on recovering species already listed as federally threatened or endangered. Through proactive conservation and implementation of states' proven science-based plans, risks to wildlife and their habitats will be reduced, resulting in species either not needing to be on the federal endangered species list, or already-listed species being downlisted or delisted.

A minimum of 10% of the funding apportioned to states would be used to recover federally threatened or endangered species. Most, if not all, of the State Wildlife Action Plans include federally listed species of wildlife as Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Most states currently use their State Wildlife Grants to help recover these species and would continue to do so with Recovering America's Wildlife Act funds.

Competitive Grants Program

This bill recognizes the ingenuity of state fish and wildlife agencies and their ability to foster new, collaborative projects that benefit fish and wildlife on the ground.

10% of the total funding apportioned to states will be allocated through a competitive grants program. Grants will be awarded to state and U.S. territory fish and wildlife agencies, or regional

fish and wildlife associations implementing the most effective and innovative projects for conservation of fish and wildlife in their states. These grants will advance the creative work being done at the state level and invest in the resourceful efforts needed to prevent our nation's fish and wildlife from becoming endangered.

Reporting and Accountability

The bill now also requires reporting by states on how the funds are spent. The first report will be submitted five years after the bill is passed into law and every five years after that. State fish and wildlife agencies would submit a progress report to the House Natural Resources Committee and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

Recreation and Education

The bill allows for up to 15 percent of funds to be spent supporting wildlife-related education and recreation.

Investment in outdoor recreation and education programs is essential to ensuring that all Americans – urban and rural – have a connection to our nation's fish and wildlife. This is an especially important task with the growing divide between people and nature and declining numbers of hunters nationwide.

These wildlife conservation education programs and projects help state agencies provide valuable outreach and education activities including, but not limited to:

- Nature centers for children and adults, educational displays, interpretive trails, observation platforms, viewing blinds, and community-based engagement and collaboration with a variety of stakeholders, including NGOs.
- Programs designed to help all Americans better understand the positive impacts fish and wildlife conservation and management provide to their communities and state.
- Interactions with wildlife-associated recreational users to minimize conflicts, provide conservation education and promote sound stewardship of our shared landscapes.

Diverse Base of Support

Like last year with 116 bipartisan cosponsors, we expect to see this bill gain strong bipartisan support.

We believe there will continue to be a broad base of support--from hunter/angler groups to environmental groups to garden clubs to businesses. With control of Congress split, a broad range of conservation interests supporting the bill will be helpful.