



BUSH BUDGET PLAY SHELL GAME WILDLIFE PAYS THE PRICE

On February 5, 2007, President Bush submitted his budget for FY 2008 to Congress and the American people. As in past years, the president has used his budget to shortchange key conservation programs through funding cuts and budgetary gimmicks, seriously jeopardizing our wildlife and public lands. While some increases are provided for the National Park Service, they are paid for by cuts in other programs with the result a net conservation loss. The budget would cut appropriated funding for natural resources and the environment by nearly \$1.5 billion below FY 2006, a 4.8 percent cut. The total that the president has allocated for this important budget category is \$28.8 billion, less than 1 percent of the massive \$2.9 trillion federal budget.

The FY 2008 budget leaves our nation's wildlife and habitat struggling to stay afloat and falls far short of recommendations made in the FY 2008 Green Budget released by twenty-one environmental groups. For the few programs where modest increases are provided, they are still far below the need, are outstripped by cuts to other programs, and do not keep pace over the long-term with fixed costs.

To view the green budget or to get more information about funding for wildlife and habitat, visit <http://www.defenders.org/funding/>. Some of the lowlights of the president's budget include:

- **Land and Water Conservation Fund:** The budget eviscerates the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), cutting it by nearly \$85 million to only \$58 million, almost 60 percent below 2006 and only 6 percent of the authorized \$900 million level, and uses budget gimmicks to mask the true impacts. Only \$22.5 million is provided for planned land acquisition projects. The LWCF is one of our greatest tools to address the increasingly significant loss of open space, forests and wildlife habitat by providing funding for acquisition of lands for our national wildlife refuges, parks, and forests and for state purchase of open space.
- **Endangered Species Conservation:** The budget again cuts U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service funding for recovery of endangered and threatened animals and plants, this year by 7.5 percent or \$5.5 million below 2006 levels. With cuts like this, we cannot expect too many more conservation success stories such as the bald eagle, peregrine falcon or wolves anytime soon.
- **National Wildlife Refuge System:** The nation's 547 National Wildlife Refuges are anchors for wildlife conservation across the country and serve as economic engines for local communities. The meager increase that the administration says will cover fixed costs still leaves the system more than \$55 million below the FY 2004 inflation adjusted funding level and fails to address the \$2.5 billion operations and maintenance backlog. The system is undergoing a massive restructuring to deal with funding shortfalls that will result in elimination of a fifth of the system's staff, forcing the cutting of education programs and conservation activities.

- **Arctic National Wildlife Refuge:** Despite the president's new goal of reducing U.S. gasoline usage by 20 percent in the next ten years, the president's budget reverts to old, dirty energy. Using wildly speculative calculations, the president's proposal claims that lease sales in the refuge will generate \$7 billion. Generating this much money would only happen if oil companies paid more than 209 times per acre what they've been willing to pay for any lease on Alaska's North Slope in the last 15 years!
- **Landowner Incentive Programs:** At least 65 percent of threatened and endangered plants and animals are found on non-federal lands, yet the budget eliminates funding for two programs that aid private landowners who willingly conserve at-risk species on their lands.
- **Multinational Species Conservation Fund:** The president's budget hacks by 33.4 percent or \$2.1 million below FY 2006 levels this small but effective fund that leverages a 3 to 1 match for on the ground conservation of elephants, rhinos, tigers, apes and sea turtles in foreign lands.
- **Bureau of Land Management Wildlife Programs:** While the budget touts a \$15 million cross-cutting "Healthy Lands Initiative" for BLM that it says is targeted to protect wildlife and restore habitat in energy interface areas, it is unclear exactly how this money will be spent and whether it will be effective. This Initiative is largely window dressing attempting to mask the devastating impacts of massive oil and gas development on federal lands, without making changes in how oil and gas resources are leased or developed. In addition, proposed levels for specific BLM wildlife programs are essentially flat. These programs have routinely seen more than 30 percent of funding siphoned away to support energy development and in FY 2006 saw more than 50 percent of their funding drained away, yet the budget proposes a \$32.8 million increase, nearly 37%, for the oil and gas program.
- **Forest Service Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management:** More than 425 species listed under the Endangered Species Act and an additional 3,200 at-risk species are found on Forest Service lands, yet the president's budget again slashes wildlife and fish habitat management, this year by \$14.1 million or 11 percent below FY 2006 levels. At the same time the budget for logging receives a \$41 million increase, nearly 15%.
- **Selling off Lands:** The budgets for Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service include troubling proposals to sell off our public lands. The BLM program would raise \$182 million over the next five years from land sales and the Forest Service proposal would sell 300,000 acres of National Forest lands.
- **Farm Bill Conservation:** While requesting important increases for the Wetlands Reserve and Conservation Security Programs, the president's budget shortchanges other critical farm conservation programs denying farmers the resources they need to be good stewards of their land. The budget requests "placeholder" money for a suite of six distinct programs, including the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), but requests no specific funds for these programs and effectively slashes funding for these vital conservation programs by nearly 50 percent from the authorized levels. This approach suggests these programs will be combined – a move that would dilute or even eliminate the critical benefits to wildlife that WHIP currently provides.

[Defenders of Wildlife](#) is recognized as one of the nation's most progressive advocates for wildlife and its habitat. With more than 500,000 members and supporters, Defenders of Wildlife is an effective leader on endangered species issues. For more information, please contact Mary Beth Beetham, at (202) 772-0231, mbeetham@defenders.org.