

# FY 2009 Budget Harms Wildlife



## President's Last Budget Leaves Wildlife, Lands Behind

On February 4, 2008, President Bush submitted his budget for FY 2009 to Congress and the American people. This last budget is no different than prior requests, cutting funding for lands and wildlife while playing a smoke and mirrors game to hide the impacts. Bright spots such as "Safe Borderlands" and "Birds Forever" are paid for by cuts in other programs, resulting in a net conservation loss. Appropriated funding for conservation and land management would be cut by \$1.6 billion or 16 percent and, more specifically, for the Department of the Interior by \$410 million or 3.7 percent and the U.S. Forest Service, by \$379 million or 8.4 percent. The budget emphasizes damaging, unsustainable energy sources, while failing to adequately address the looming crisis of global warming.

The budget leaves our nation's wildlife and habitat struggling to stay afloat and falls far short of recommendations made in the FY 2009 Green Budget released by twenty-one environmental groups. **To view the green budget or to get more information about funding for wildlife and habitat, visit [www.defenders.org/funding/](http://www.defenders.org/funding/).** Some of the lowlights of the president's budget include:

**Land and Water Conservation Fund:** This budget continues the quest to eviscerate the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program, cutting it by nearly \$104 million to only \$50 million, more than 67 percent below 2008 and funding it at 94 percent below the authorized \$900 million level. The LWCF is one of our best 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. A recent report by the U.S. Forest Service estimates that 6,000 acres of open space are lost each day, four acres each minute.

**Endangered Species Conservation:** The budget again cuts funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service endangered species program, which protects our nation's most vulnerable plants and animals, this year by 2.5 percent or \$3.7 million below 2008 levels. Continued cuts only exacerbate the existing severe shortfalls which include a 30 percent staffing shortage and lack of resources to address 280 candidate species awaiting proposal for protection. 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 548 National Wildlife Refuges are anchors for wildlife conservation across the country and create over 27,000 reliable jobs for American workers. The request leaves the system nearly \$32 million below the FY 2004 inflation adjusted funding level and fails to address the \$3.5 billion operations and maintenance backlog. To address prolonged funding shortfalls, the system has cut 300 jobs in recent years and is poised to eliminate 250 additional critical staff, cut visitor and child education programs, habitat restoration activities and law enforcement presence.

**Law Enforcement:** Fish and Wildlife Service Law Enforcement, crucial in addressing illegal international wildlife trade and violations of U.S. wildlife law, is cut by \$2.3 million, nearly 4 percent. The program already is struggling to stay afloat given deficient numbers of port inspectors and forensic scientists and losses of approximately 40 special agents since 2002, with another 20-25 expected to leave through retirement in the next year.

**International Conservation:** The request hacks by 45.6 percent or \$3.6 million the Multinational Species Conservation Fund which leverages a 3 to 1 match for on the ground conservation of elephants, rhinos, tigers, apes and sea turtles in foreign lands. The

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International Affairs budget is reduced by \$1.2 million or 10.3 percent, undermining work to meet our international treaty obligations and restore sustainable wildlife populations around the globe, while a \$470,000 or 10.6 percent cut to the Neotropical Migratory Bird Fund will hinder efforts to conserve wintering habitat for migratory birds in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**National Global Warming and Wildlife Science Center:** The scientific capacity of the federal agencies is inadequate to address the looming global warming threat to wildlife and habitat. To address this need, Congress enacted up to \$2.5 million for FY 2008 to establish a national Global Warming and Wildlife Science Center in the U.S. Geological Survey. Unfortunately, only \$1.5 million is allocated to the Center for FY 2008 and no FY 2009 increases to this level are proposed.

**Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units:** Each of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Cooperative Research Units in 38 states is a true federal-state-university partnership that must be healthy to support protection of endangered species and assistance to other fish and wildlife threatened by global warming. Unfortunately, approximately one fifth of all Coop Unit scientist positions are vacant due to erosion of funding since FY 2001. For FY 2008, Congress enacted a \$1 million increase over the level requested by USGS to begin restoring the integrity of the program. The level proposed for FY 2009 rejects this increase and would leave the Coop Units in worse shape than a year ago.

**Bureau of Land Management Wildlife Programs:** Levels for Wildlife and Fisheries and Threatened and Endangered Species management fail to keep pace with fixed costs. 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 drained away, yet the budget proposes a \$22 million increase, 24.3 percent, 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 3,250 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 million or 10.6 percent below FY 2008 levels that includes a loss of 13 percent of the workforce, 130 staff.

**Unsustainable Energy:** The budget directs \$9 million to identify and study new coastal areas for expansion of offshore drilling and again trots out the tired old proposal to drill in the pristine Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, assuming \$7 billion for lease sales in 2010.

**Birds Forever Initiative:** The budget proposes an important new initiative to help conserve declining migratory birds by completing and implementing focal species plans and stepping up surveys and monitoring; however, it is paid for by unacceptable cuts in other areas.

**Safe Borderlands:** The budget proposes a critically needed initiative to bring focus and increased funding to addressing the impacts of illegal immigration and related enforcement on sensitive federal lands and wildlife along the Southwest Border. However, the funding requested falls far below the need and is paid for by cuts in other important areas, such as land acquisition.

**Farm Bill Conservation:** This unacceptable USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service budget ignores current congressional Farm Bill proposals that collectively reauthorize and fund the full suite of conservation programs and continues to push for policies that have been rejected by both House and Senate Farm Bill proposals, including consolidating multiple conservation programs. The request guts funding for critical wetlands, grasslands, and wildlife habitat conservation programs, for example: 1) fails to fund the Wildlife Habitat Incentives or Grassland Reserve programs; 2) funds Wetlands Reserve at only the 2002 Farm Bill cap; 3) cuts Conservation Reserve, the largest conservation and land retirement program, by \$76 million; and 4) cuts funding by \$60 million for technical assistance, crucial to delivering program benefits to farmers across the country.