



FUNDING THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



Bald eagles, Phyllis Picardi

To know the value Americans place on fish, wildlife, and habitat conservation, just look at the numbers. Wildlife related recreation is a \$122 billion a year industry and the total contribution from outdoor recreation in the U.S. (including hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, hiking, camping, skiing, boating and bicycling) is over \$730 billion a year, generating 6,435,000 jobs and \$88 billion in federal and state tax revenues.ⁱ

Protecting wildlife and its habitat also supports healthy natural systems that provide clean air and water, food, medicines and other products we all need to live healthy lives. The value of benefits provided by natural habitats in the U.S. is estimated at more than \$2 trillion per year.ⁱⁱ

Despite their importance, wildlife and habitat conservation programs are threatened with draconian cuts. Yet federal spending on all land, water, ocean and wildlife programs already comprise *only* about 1 percent of the federal budget. Cutting these modest but important programs will not address the problems with the federal budget but *will* have real and severe impacts on our nation's fish and wildlife, millions of outdoor recreation enthusiasts, and the economies of local communities around the country.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is our primary federal wildlife conservation agency. Its mission is to work with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continued benefit of the American people. The FWS's approximately 9,000 staff are responsible for:

- Managing 556 National Wildlife Refuges, 71 National Fish Hatcheries, 65 fish and wildlife conservation offices, 86 ecological services field stations and hundreds of special management areas
- Implementing and enforcing federal wildlife laws like the Endangered Species Act
- Managing migratory birds
- Conserving and restoring wildlife habitat and fisheries
- Protecting species of global concern
- Stopping wildlife crimes and illegal trafficking
- Working in partnership with state, tribal and private lands to assist in and/or provide funding for habitat conservation and restoration projects and programs



Patuxent Research Refuge, FWS

Following are a few examples of potential impacts to crucial FWS programs from damaging funding cuts.

CORE OPERATIONS



National Wildlife Refuge System – With 556 refuges on approximately 150 million acres, the National Wildlife Refuge System is the largest land and water system in the world dedicated to wildlife conservation. There is a refuge in every state and within an hour's drive of most major American cities. Visited by about 45 million people each year, our national wildlife refuges are economic engines, generating nearly \$4 billion and more than 32,500 private sector jobs in local economies.ⁱⁱⁱ If across-the-board sequestration cuts of 9 percent from the failure to reach a budget deal take effect in FY 2013 FWS would be forced to:

- Close or eliminate major programs at more than 130 national wildlife refuges. As the FWS looks for ways to slash expenses while minimizing impacts on the System as a whole, some of the refuges with the highest visitation levels and energy use – and therefore highest expenses – could pay the price including:
 - Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia
 - Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge and Patuxent Research Refuge in Maryland
 - Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge in Montana
- Eliminate approximately 35 visitor services jobs. Budget cuts could result in reduced capacity for, or elimination of, popular recreational programs on many refuges such as:
 - Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in Illinois, which attracted approximately 715,000 visitors in FY 2010.
 - Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge in Washington, which brought in nearly 120,000 visitors in FY 2010.
 - Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge in Montana, which saw 250,000 visitors in FY 2010.
- Eliminate approximately 200 wildlife management jobs. This would result in severe cutbacks of essential habitat management work.
- Eliminate more than 40 law enforcement officers. This would leave a force of only about 170 people to carry out the work that the International Association of Chiefs of Police recommends should be done by 845 officers.
- In addition, in 2011, devastating floods, tornadoes, wildfires, hurricanes and tropical storms, an earthquake, and a tsunami caused more than \$190 million in damages to refuges, an amount that totals nearly 40 percent of the Refuge System's budget that will put the System at further risk without supplemental disaster funding.





Endangered Species Program – For more than 35 years, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) has helped to prevent the extinction of our nation’s wildlife treasures, including the bald eagle, Florida manatee, and California condor. More than 99 percent of all species protected under the Act have been rescued from extinction, an astonishing success rate. With each plant or animal species that disappears, a part of creation is erased forever and with it a part of our natural system that may have unknown benefits. For example, extracts from the Rosy Periwinkle plant are used daily to cure Hodgkins and lymphocytic leukemia, and chemicals derived from the saliva of the Gila monster lizard have enabled over 17 million people to treat type-2 diabetes. Further cuts would threaten the success of the Act and hinder or stop altogether crucial work to protect

listed species in all four programs – candidate conservation, listing, consultation, and recovery.

- To gain protection, a species must be formally listed under the Act. Cuts in the listing budget will hinder progress in listing more than 250 candidates, many of which have awaited protection for years, including the American wolverine, red knot, Pacific fisher, Pacific walrus, Mojave fringe toed lizard, Yosemite toad, New England cottontail rabbit and others desperately in need of protection. In addition, as species are added to the list, the meager funding for consultation and recovery will have to stretch even further.
- Consultation ensures listed species will be protected while at the same time allowing crucial projects to move forward. Cuts will result in the delay of at least some ongoing or new consultations including:
 - Consultations on several hundred, out of at least 739, pesticide cases identified by EPA scheduled for review by 2022 that would impact wildlife like the California red-legged frog, Alabama and pallid sturgeon, San Joaquin kit fox and California clapper rail.
 - More than 1,200 consultations for renewable energy projects needed in the coming year including the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan in California, a wind turbine project in the Atlantic flyway of Everglades Agricultural Area, the Great Plains Wind Energy Habitat Conservation Plan that covers a 200 mile-wide corridor from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico through Colorado, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Texas, Kansas, New Mexico and Oklahoma, 48 consultations on wind, solar, wave, and other projects in Hawaii, and several Habitat Conservation Plans to mitigate for impacts of wind energy projects on the endangered Indiana bat in Missouri and Ohio.
 - A Multi-Species General Conservation Plan for agricultural activities in Washington to address impacts on the endangered pygmy rabbit and candidates Columbia Basin sage grouse and Washington ground squirrel.
 - Consultations on Department of Defense projects in Hawaii and Guam, such as expanded use of munitions.
- From 1996 to 2011, the Service has worked to avert the need to list 42 species such as the Sand Mountain blue butterfly in Nevada, the McCloud River redband trout in California, the Ramsey Canyon leopard frog in Arizona, and the swift fox across numerous states. Further decreases will seriously impact steps to prevent the need for listing such as efforts to conserve the New England cottontail rabbit in Maine and New Hampshire.



- Funding is already inadequate to address the recovery needs of the nearly 1400 listed U.S. species and cuts will further undermine crucial work, possibly including:

- Inventory and monitoring of Canada lynx and agreements to establish movement corridors.
- Restoration and enhancement of Florida panther habitat and work to resolve human-panther conflicts.
- Monitoring of ocelots in Arizona and Mexico and development of safe harbor agreements in Texas.
- Recovery actions such as habitat enhancement and research for the threatened Northern Idaho ground squirrel.
- Recovery actions for the threatened bull trout such as suppression of non-native lake trout.
- Coordinating with the Army Corps of Engineers to implement aquatic habitat restoration to benefit the endangered pallid sturgeon on the Upper Mississippi River.
- Continued work to recover the threatened Steller's eider in Alaska such as fox control and aerial surveys.
- Continued reintroduction of the endangered black-footed ferret across 8 states.
- Work with partners to leverage on-the-ground conservation funding in the Northwest to benefit marbled murrelet, bull trout, western snowy plover, grizzly bear and other species
- Implementation of recovery efforts for the California condor, Southern sea otter and desert tortoise.
- The Wolf Livestock Loss Demonstration Program that assists livestock owners co-existing with wolves.



Migratory Bird Management – Migratory birds are integral to healthy natural systems as predators, prey, seed dispersers, and pollinators and are enjoyed by millions of people across the country. Sadly the first *State of the Birds* report in 2009 documented broad declines in U.S. bird populations. It showed nearly all native Hawaiian birds plummeting to the verge of extinction, as well as 39 percent of ocean birds, half of coastal shorebirds, 30 percent of arid land birds, and 40 percent of grassland birds. Further cuts could severely limit key programs including:

- Crucial survey and monitoring including research on golden eagles to prevent harm from siting of wind turbines – limited information exists on nesting, roosting, wintering, and foraging locations and movement corridors and research on offshore migratory birds that could be impacted by energy development.
- Strategic conservation efforts for 139 high-priority species such as the American woodcock, long-billed curlew, American and black oystercatcher, tri-colored blackbird and Sprague's pipit.
- Issuance of permits to regulate the taking of migratory birds including mounting requests for eagle permits due largely to energy development.
- The Urban Treaties program that works to conserve birds in cities and suburbs through education, hazard reduction, and habitat improvements in Alaska, Alabama, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Oregon, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and D.C.
- Work for grassland birds that are declining faster than any other group of North American birds, including the Eastern and Western meadowlarks, Mountain plover, lark bunting, and greater prairie chicken.
- Continued monitoring and response to avian diseases to prevent harm to both wild bird populations and transfer of disease to humans and livestock.
- Crucial collaborative work to conserve habitat by the 18 Joint Ventures nationwide, especially new partnerships that have been established in Texas, West Virginia and Oklahoma.



Office of Law Enforcement – Wildlife faces escalating criminal threats, including illicit trade; unlawful commercial exploitation; illegal destruction of habitat; and environmental hazards. Moreover, illegal wildlife trade has important implications for national security. The link between wildlife smuggling and both organized crime and drug trafficking is well documented. Wildlife trade ranks third in monetary importance just after drug and arms trade.

The numerous responsibilities of the Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) include investigating wildlife crimes and enforcing regulation of wildlife trade. The 143 inspectors are the front line of defense in nearly 40 designated and non-designated ports of entry around the country including in Alaska, California, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Montana, Texas and Washington.

In FY 2011 they processed about 167,000 declared shipments of wildlife and wildlife products worth more than \$2.7 billion. The 219 special agents are expert investigators that break up smuggling rings, stop commercial exploitation of protected U.S. species, and work with states to protect U.S. game species from poaching that steals both state income and hunting and fishing opportunities. In FY 2011 OLE special agents investigated nearly 13,000 cases. And the OLE Forensics Laboratory in Ashland Oregon is unique – it is the only one in the world dedicated to wildlife crimes.

This crucial program is severely underfunded to meet the rapidly proliferating threats. For example, the number of inspectors is inadequate to provide full 24 hour coverage at ports and can only inspect samples of larger mail shipments. Any further reductions will further hinder crucial law enforcement efforts. Recent examples of the kinds of cases that could be impacted include:

- Illegal harvest in Texas of alligator gar, an important sport fish, for sale in Japan.
- The largest deer poaching case in Kansas history in an operation that led up to 60 clients to illegally kill about 160 deer.
- Killing and sale of bald and golden eagles in Washington – agents seized 57 bald and golden eagle tails and 52 golden eagle wings.
- Illegal take of the endangered pallid sturgeon for caviar in the Mississippi, Missouri, and Yellowstone Rivers.
- A multi-year undercover investigation of unlawful international trafficking in sea turtle parts and products.
- Smuggling of more than 40 tons of endangered coral into the port of Portland, Oregon.
- Smuggling jaguar skins for sale in Florida, Texas, and elsewhere by e-commerce.





Monarch butterfly, Michael R. Jeffords.

International Affairs – Extinction is irreversible, is increasing at an unprecedented rate, and requires all nations to work together cooperatively to address the challenge. The FWS is mandated to support U.S. environmental leadership around the globe through two programs: International Conservation, which supports the preservation of endangered and migratory species and habitat by providing capacity building, education, and training; and International Wildlife Trade which carries out the scientific and management requirements of laws and treaties for the conservation of species subject to trade, issuing 15,000-20,000 permits per year.

Modest investments of U.S. conservation dollars can reap significant returns, in recent years leveraging three dollars for every U.S. dollar invested. Recent examples of the kinds of work that could be impacted from cuts include:

- Three initiatives in Mexico to train natural resource managers, decision-makers and stakeholders that have resulted in successes such as the training of more than 2,000 farmers in the protection of monarch butterfly wintering habitat.
- Training multi-disciplinary teams of wildlife professionals in Africa to address threats such as the unsustainable bushmeat trade and timber harvest.
- Conservation of amphibians in decline of which 40 percent are threatened with extinction.
- Projects to protect critically endangered animals such as the Andean cat in Argentina, the most endangered cat in the Americas and Abbot's duiker, Africa's largest and rarest forest antelope.
- Preventing unsustainable trade in native U.S. species such as freshwater turtles that are sought for food and medicinal purposes; in sturgeon and paddlefish that are sought as caviar substitutes; in Hawaiian sandalwood that is used for oil, and in agave cactus that is increasingly being used for landscaping in European resorts.
- Regulating the currently unregulated snake trade in Southeast Asia – not only is the U.S. a primary consumer but the removal of snakes removes a control on mice, potentially negatively impacting agriculture in that region and increasing import costs.
- Preventing poaching of endangered rhinoceros and illegal trade in their much sought-after horns.



White Rhinoceros, Dr. Tinus Laubscher

Environmental Contaminants – The FWS is the primary federal agency responsible for protecting fish, wildlife, and habitat from damaging pollutants. It investigates damages and determines responsibility if not known, negotiates with the responsible parties for restitution and then, using the funds provided, works with other stakeholders to implement restoration projects. Since 1992, the program has negotiated more than \$785 million in settlements for restoration of natural resources that are held in trust for the American people not including the Deepwater Horizon disaster, the worst oil spill in American history with damage to natural resources likely to total in the billions.



Program funding has been essentially flat since 2001, yet its workload has only grown and its small team of expert contaminant biologists is far overstretched. Cuts will further undermine essential work to prevent harm to vulnerable wildlife from dangerous pollutants, for example:

- New studies have shown that fish and wildlife populations are more seriously affected by mercury than previously known, especially birds such as the American kestrel, American white ibis, snowy egret and tri-colored heron, and other animals that consume fish and insects contaminated by mercury. Investigations are needed to determine the extent of these impacts.
- The number of inland and riverine oil spills is expected to increase due to the aging of the U.S. oil pipeline infrastructure, much of which is over 50 years old. As a result, there will be a growing number of damaging spills such as: the Kalamzoo River in Michigan in 2010 that spilled over 800,000 gallons of oil and harmed wildlife including wood ducks, swans, great blue herons, muskrats, mink, turtles, snakes, frogs and toads; and in Yellowstone River, Montana where about 50,000 gallons of oil spilled harming wetlands and wildlife including the endangered pallid sturgeon, waterfowl, and wading birds. Proactive outreach with other agencies before spills occur is absolutely crucial to ensure the Contaminants Program will be called immediately both to protect wildlife in spill areas from harm and to ensure that damages to the public's wildlife are properly quantified for restitution before evidence of the loss dissipates or washes away.

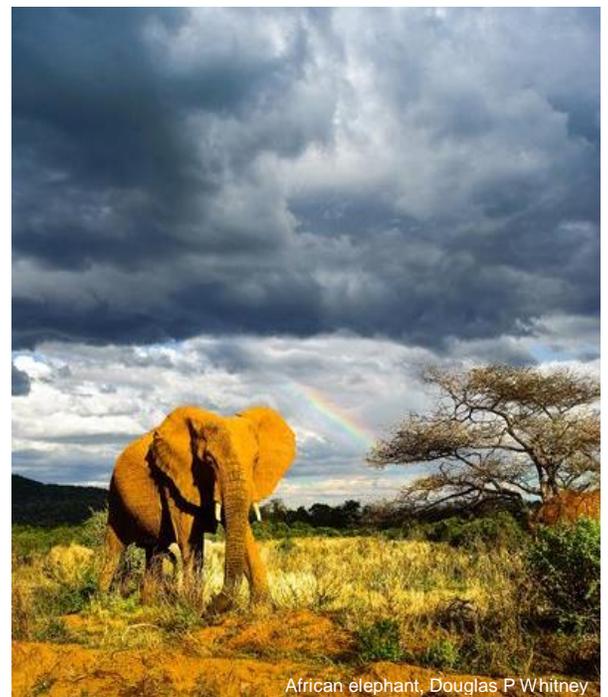
COOPERATIVE LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

Threats to the conservation of fish and wildlife and other natural resources are increasingly large-scale and complex. Combined with decreasing resources among federal, state, tribal, and private-sector conservation partners, there is a need to work more effectively and efficiently across jurisdictional boundaries. The Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Department of the Interior have established a nation-wide network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) to improve landscape-level coordination of conservation efforts, and to provide science and technical capacity to tackle today's complex environmental problems. Twenty one LCCs have been established across the country. Many, however, lack funds to offer the science and technical capacity sorely needed. Cuts will hinder crucial projects such as the following:

- In Washington State, the Great Northern LCC is helping fund the identification of essential habitats and corridors expected to be resilient to climate change and to facilitate the movement of wildlife. This information will be shared by all the conservation partners in the LCC to coordinate the protection and restoration of important wildlife corridors.
- The Western Alaska LCC is working on a project to understand the changes in permafrost in the region and the effects on freshwater resources and wildlife habitat. The information will assist with developing habitat conservation plans and assessing the stability of freshwater resources for communities.

KEY GRANT AND COOPERATIVE PROGRAMS

- **The Cooperative Endangered Species Fund** that provides grants to states to conserve the 65 percent of federally listed plants and animals found on non-federal lands for efforts that include research, surveys, habitat restoration, and reintroduction. This program has been cut by 44 percent since FY 2010 resulting in a substantial loss of on-the-ground conservation across the country.
- **The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund** that provides matching grants to conserve neotropical migratory birds. This funding supports partnership programs in the U.S., Latin America and the Caribbean, where approximately 5 billion birds (over 500 species) spend their winters, including some of the most endangered birds in North America; and an upland complement to the wetland bird conservation work done under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. This already tiny fund has been cut by nearly 25 percent since FY 2010.
- **The North American Wetlands Conservation Fund** that supports protection and restoration of wetlands. More than half of the original wetlands in the U.S. have been lost already and this cut will exacerbate declines of migratory birds and other fish and wildlife dependent on wetlands; and will drive up the costs of erosion control, water treatment, and flood protection that natural wetlands provide for free. This program has been cut by more than 25 percent since FY 2010.
- **The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program** that was created to assist states and tribes in voluntary efforts to protect more than 12,000 at-risk wildlife species from becoming endangered. This program already has been slashed by nearly 34 percent since FY 2010, resulting in significant cutbacks in habitat protection and restoration, invasive species management, research, and work with private landowners, associated jobs and leveraged funding.
- **The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program** through which FWS assists landowners in restoring degraded habitat on their property. With two-thirds of America's land privately owned, private landowners play an important role in maintaining diverse habitats and wildlife for future generations.
- **The Multinational Species Conservation Fund** that supports the conservation of charismatic endangered species including African and Asian elephants, rhinos, tigers, great apes and marine turtles in their natural surroundings through capacity building, law enforcement, habitat and conservation management, mitigation of human-animal conflicts, applied research and monitoring leading to conservation action, and enhanced protection of at-risk populations. The fund has been cut by more than 17 percent since FY 2010.



African elephant, Douglas P Whitney

ⁱ The Economics Associated with Outdoor Recreation, Natural Resources Conservation and Historic Preservation in the United States
www.nfwf.org/Content/ContentFolders/NationalFishandWildlifeFoundation/HomePage/ConservationSpotlights/TheEconomicValueofOutdoorRecreation.pdf

ⁱⁱ Ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ The Department of the Interior's Economic Contributions, June 21, 2011
www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/upload/DOI-Econ-Report-6-21-2011.pdf