ANNOUNCEMENTS

Weeks of Friday, April 4th through 11th 2014

Check out the chapter on Facebook at:
https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Wildlife-Society-New-Mexico-Chapter/122478411098284

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1. Please submit articles for the NM Chapter Newsletter to Ryan Walker by April 21st, 2014

Please submit articles and other information regarding wildlife conservation and management in New Mexico to Ryan Walker (ryan.walker@state.nm.us), the new editor of the NM TWS Newsletter. Information on management-related work being done by state or federal agencies or research being carried out at universities is welcome. Photo submissions by the original photographer are also welcome. Articles due April 21st, 2014.

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2. Editorial: Doppler radar to alert drivers of wildlife is idea worth watching

April 1, 2014 in Opinion

The forecast for animal and driver safety could improve if a promising experiment using a meteorologist's tool is successful.

As part of a pilot project, Doppler radar is being strategically deployed along U.S. 95 in North Idaho to spot animals approaching the highway. Detection then trips flashing lights on roadside signs to alert drivers to slow down.

Similar experiments in Colorado and Arizona have reduced collisions significantly.

Most of the attention on wildlife crossing has been centered on building overpasses or underpasses, which have been successful in places like Banff, Alberta, and along U.S. Highway 93 in Western Montana. Two dozen crossings are being planned along Interstate 90, east of Snoqualmie Pass.

Crossings require extensive design, engineering and construction, and they need miles of fencing to funnel animals to safe passage. Some overpasses cost as much as $2 million. The new U.S. Highway 95 underpass near Silverwood Theme Park cost about $1 million. Two underpasses near the Canadian border cost $500,000 each.

States simply don't have the money to place structures everywhere they're needed, and as recent legislative sessions in Olympia and Boise have demonstrated, transportation funding isn't getting any easier to come by.

Some species of wildlife learn to use the crossings right away. Others, such as bears, can take years to adjust. The Doppler experiment turns the equation around, by training drivers to look for the flashing lights, tap the brakes and remain vigilant. It shows particular promise around dusk and into the evening, when visibility is poor, and in tricky highway sections where animals seemingly bolt out of nowhere.

The technology can filter out vehicles, and it won't activate for animals smaller than coyotes. Thus far, there have been few false alarms. The system is mobile, so it can follow seasonal migrations of animals, rather than be fixed in one place.

The cost is generally tens of thousands of dollars – about one wrecked vehicle – rather than millions.

The system was recently tested for more than three months south of Bonners Ferry, and no collisions occurred. This is an area that experienced more than 320 collisions – mostly with deer and moose – between 2000 and 2010. Two people were killed.

Animal collisions represent significant danger and costs. In 2011, between Coeur d'Alene and the Canadian border, about 900 animals were struck. Nearly 5,000 were struck statewide. Washington has about twice as many collisions because it has many more vehicles.

In the Inland Northwest, wrecks usually involve white-tailed deer, a species that poses dangers on highways north of Spokane, according to the Washington Department of Transportation website.

Washington officials should keep an eye on the Doppler radar experiment because it could allow for safer passage on this side of the border, too.

Article link: http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2014/apr/01/editorial-doppler-radar-to-alert-drivers-of/

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3. Fences cause 'ecological meltdown'

Posted By News On April 3, 2014 - 8:00pm

NEW YORK (Embargoed – Not for release until 14:00 EST 3 April 2014) Wildlife fences are constructed for a variety of reasons including to prevent the spread of diseases, protect wildlife from poachers, and to help manage small populations of threatened species. Human–wildlife conflict is another common reason for building fences: Wildlife can damage valuable livestock, crops, or infrastructure, some species carry diseases of agricultural concern, and a few threaten human lives. At the same time, people kill wild animals for food, trade, or to defend lives or property, and human activities degrade wildlife habitat. Separating people and wildlife by fencing can appear to be a mutually beneficial way to avoid such detrimental effects. But in a paper in the journal Science, published today, April 4th, 2014, WCS and ZSL scientists review the 'pros and cons' of large scale fencing and argue that fencing should often be a last resort.

Although fencing can have conservation benefits, it also has costs. When areas of contiguous wildlife habitat are converted into islands, the resulting small and isolated populations are prone to extinction, and the resulting loss of predators and other larger-bodied species can affect interactions between species in ways that cause further local extinctions, a process which has been termed "ecological meltdown".

"In some parts of the world, fencing is part of the culture of wildlife conservation – it's assumed that all wildlife areas have to be fenced. But fencing profoundly alters ecosystems, and can cause some species to disappear. We're asking that conservationists as well as other sectoral interests carefully weigh up the biodiversity costs and benefits of new and existing fences," said ZSL's Rosie Woodroffe, lead author of the study.

In addition to their ecosystem-wide impact, fences do not always achieve their specific aims. Construction of fences to reduce human–wildlife conflict has been successful in some places but the challenges of appropriate fence design, location, construction, and maintenance mean that fences often fail to deliver the anticipated benefits. Ironically, in some places, fences also provide poachers with a ready supply of wire for making snares.

Co-author Simon Hedges of WCS said: "A variety of alternative approaches – including better animal husbandry, community-based crop-guarding, insurance schemes, and wildlife-sensitive land-use planning – can be used to mitigate conflicts between people and wildlife without the need for fencing. WCS projects working with local people and government agencies have shown that human–elephant conflict can be dramatically reduced without using fences in countries as different as Indonesia and Tanzania."

Co-author Sarah Durant of ZSL's said, "An increased awareness of the damage caused by fencing is leading to movements to remove fences instead of building more. Increasingly, fencing is seen as backwards step in conservation."

The desire to separate livestock from wildlife in order to create zones free from diseases such as foot and mouth has resulted in extensive fencing systems, particularly in southern Africa. Some of these fences have had devastating environmental effects. Fortunately, it is increasingly recognized that a combination of improved testing, vaccination, and standardized approaches to meat preparation can prevent spread of diseases without the need to separate cattle from wildlife by fencing.

The authors conclude that as climate change increases the importance of facilitating wildlife mobility and maintaining landscape connectivity, fence removal may become an important form of climate change preparedness, and so fencing of wildlife should be avoided whenever possible.

Source: Wildlife Conservation Society

Article link: http://www.sciencecodex.com/fences_cause_ecological_meltdown-131127

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4. Series of Bills Threaten Conservation in Kansas

April 04, 2014 By Cassie Martin

A war is raging in the Kansas legislature that could undermine conservation efforts in the state. Four bills have been introduced that would remove protections for dozens of species — including the lesser prairie chicken (Tympanuchus pallidicinctus) — end perpetual protections of private lands, and change how the state handles illegal take. The legislative session ends today, April 4, with significant stakes for conservation.

Senate Bill 276

In response to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) proposed designation of the lesser prairie chicken as a threatened species, Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach drafted Senate Bill 276, which challenge both the bird's designation and the Endangered Species Act. In its original form, the bill would have made it a felony for a federal worker to enforce any laws or regulations in the state regarding the lesser prairie chicken. The Kansas House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee rejected that provision, but then added an amendment recommending a fine of $100 for each federal enforcement attempt. That amendment was also rejected. As it stands now, the bill makes federal enforcement illegal, but there are no civil or felony penalties. Last week, FWS officially designated the lesser prairie chicken as a threatened species.

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"The original bill would've made it illegal for us to participate in the five-state lesser prairie chicken conservation plan," said Ronald Kaufman, a Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism spokesperson. However, legislators added a provision that provides an exemption for state agencies. "Now that the bill has been amended, we're okay with it," he said. "It doesn't get in our way and still lets us and other state entities do conservation work."

Kobach argues that the management of non-migratory wildlife, including the lesser prairie chicken, should be in state hands. In January, he testified before a Kansas House committee that the federal government's threatened designation for the lesser prairie chicken would create "an economic wasteland," as it renders thousands of acres exempt from development. Kansas recently joined Oklahoma

in a federal lawsuit challenging FWS's process leading to designation. (Our calls for comment from Kobach's office were not returned.)

House Bill 2118

A second bill, House Bill 2118, would repeal the Kansas Nongame and Endangered Species Act of 1975. The legislation originally proposed the removal of two snake species — the threatened redbelly (Storeria occipitomaculata) and smooth earth (Virginia valeriae) snakes — from the state endangered species list. However, Sen. Larry Powell (R-Garden City) expanded the bill to remove nearly 60 threatened and endangered species from the list.

Current regulations require that the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism review the state endangered species list every five years and re-evaluate protected species designations based on scientific analysis. Allan Pollom, senior conservation specialist with the Kansas Nature Conservancy, opposes the bill. "It's premature. You're taking elected officials with no biological expertise that would guide their decision and putting them in charge," he said. "It's just a bad deal all around for all species in our state." House Bill 2118 seems to be dead in the current legislative session, but that doesn't mean it couldn't be revived in future sessions, Pollom said.

Senate Bill 323

The third piece of legislation, Senate Bill 323, proposes to eliminate the "in perpetuity" clauses from existing and future conservation easements as well as to provide landowners with an option to opt out of conservation programs, leaving once-protected land open to development. Since the 1990s, Kansas has acquired more than 130,000 acres of privately owned land that is protected from development indefinitely, thanks to The Nature Conservancy, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Kansas Land Trust, FWS, and the Ranchland Trust of Kansas. Much of this land consists of fragile wetlands and prairie.

"What legislatures want to do with the easements will only be good for the life of the individual," said Lynn Thurlow, a soil conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. "It wouldn't be acceptable for any of our programs. We would be out of the business of offering easements to our landowners," he said. Kansas currently has 300 easements through conservation programs, which either last for 30 years or indefinitely. "The new Farm Bill is gearing up so we can work with landowners for new easements," he said. "We'll just have to wait and see."

House Bill 2538

The final bill up for debate in the legislature, House Bill 2538, would allow landowners rights to wildlife taken illegally on their land. The proposal was sparked by an Kansas Department of Wildlife, Game, and Parks move to seize antlers from a private landowner after a man illegally hunted a deer on his property. The man, David Kent, received 30 days in prison and a $1,500 fine for poaching. Tim Nedeau, the landowner, took his fight to get the antlers returned to the legislature. Current regulations require poached wildlife to be surrendered to the state.

“[The bill is] the first step down a slippery slope of recognizing private ownership of wildlife, which we do not do in this country,” said Pollom. “Wildlife does not belong to a private individual until it has been harvested in a legal and licensed manner. Allowing this could lead to unintended consequences,” he said.

The current legislative session adjourns today, April 4, until the end of the month when the legislature reconvenes for a veto session. Action on any or all bills could be taken at any time today or in the next legislative session if the bills are reintroduced.

Article link: http://news.wildlife.org/featured/series-of-bills-threaten-conservation-in-kansas/

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5. Facing Climate Change in Forests and Fields

April 05, 2014 By Amy Daniels, Nancy Shaw, Dave Peterson, Keith Nislow, Monica Tomosy, and Mary Rowland

U.S. Forest Service Taps Into Science-Management Partnerships

As a growing body of science shows, climate change impacts on wildlife are already profound — from shifting species’ ranges and altering the synchronicity of food sources to changing the availability of water. Such impacts are only expected to increase in the coming decades. As climate change shapes complex, interwoven ecological processes, novel conditions and ecosystems will continue to emerge. This reality poses unprecedented challenges, but also opportunities for natural resource managers as they plan for the decades to come.

Addressing the impacts of climate change on wildlife and habitats involves assessing how the various components of and interactions within an ecosystem may change together and then, considering dynamic conservation targets informed by society’s values. Achieving such a complex goal can be daunting for any one organization or single branch of science and, as a result, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is building on long-established research-management

partnerships to develop real-world applications suitable to specific landscapes. The following partnerships illustrate these efforts.

North Cascadia Forests

The North Cascadia Adaptation Partnership (NCAP) — led by the USFS and University of Washington in collaboration with the National Park Service and more than 30 stakeholders — is the largest science-management climate change adaptation partnership of its kind. Established in 2011, this project focuses on two national forests (Mount Baker–Snoqualmie and Okanogan–Wenatchee) and two national parks (North Cascades and Mount Rainier), encompassing about five percent of the area of Washington State and 2.4 million acres of public lands. "Science management partnerships are integral to assessing vulnerability and successfully developing adaptation actions with land managers," says Becky Gravenmier, USFS Pacific Northwest Region Climate Change Coordinator.

In an effort to develop such climate change adaptation strategies, in 2011 and 2012, the NCAP organized a series of two-day workshops for resource managers, scientists, and stakeholders. The workshops — held at the University of Washington — focused on climate change in relation to key themes like hydrology, human access, vegetation management, fish and fish habitat, and wildlife and wildlife habitat. The NCAP team focused on the following activities:

Vulnerability Assessments. Researchers conducted vulnerability assessments, which involved characterizing what about climate is changing or expected to change and how species and habitats are expected to respond to those changes. As part of the assessments, partners reviewed downscaled projections of climate change for the region and identified climate-related sensitivities of various habitats including low-elevation maritime forests on the western slopes, riparian forests, and wetlands, as well as wildlife species such as the American pika (Ochotona princeps) and the northern red-legged frog (Rana aurora). Researchers explored the respective roles of animal physiology, phenology, distributional shifts, inter-specific interactions, and non-climatic stressors like land use change. They also considered components of species' adaptive capacity such as dispersal abilities and reproductive strategies.

Adaptation Strategies. NCAP members combined extensive information about vulnerability with local expert knowledge and ecosystem experience to develop science-based adaptation options for existing management plans. For example, changes in hydrologic regimes impact amphibian habitat. As North Cascades watersheds receive less snow and become increasingly rain dominated, resulting lower spring and summer flows diminish reproductive habitat for amphibians. Similarly, the increased frequency of extreme precipitation events will produce higher peak flows that scour riparian habitat, removing more eggs and individuals than in the past. As a solution, managers work to increase upland water storage to moderate runoff downstream. One tactic is to manage upstream beaver

populations to increase dam building, which creates functional wetlands. Another is to maintain diminished snowpack with reflective tarps or fences so the resulting slower snow melt feeds streams longer into the summer. Also, managers can increase microhabitat structures like woody debris as microclimate refugia for amphibian nesting and egg deposition.

Monitoring. The partnership has helped managers devise a meaningful approach to prioritize monitoring. Increased monitoring of wildlife population trends and habitat conditions — such as for early detection of insect infestations — allows managers to focus on critical regions, locations, and species as climate change ensues. For example, the team designed monitoring measures to detect critical changes to alpine habitat like the encroachment of trees into meadows, changes in the upper treeline, and the establishment of herbaceous species in areas previously occupied by perennial snow or glaciers. Strategic monitoring of habitat for species, such as elk that rely on alpine and subalpine habitat for summer forage or mountain goats and hoary marmots that live exclusively in the alpine, allows managers to implement adaptation measures before populations become imperiled.

Outcomes from this pioneering partnership are important not only to the lands encompassed in the partnership, but more broadly to resource management across the Pacific Northwest. In fact, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is updating its State Wildlife Action Plan with a more detailed climate change component that also complies with the requirement to collaborate with federal agencies. NCAP is both a resource and a tangible work-in- progress as a climate change adaptation partnership that might be a useful model. According to Gravenmier, “The efforts of scientists working with planners and managers to assess vulnerabilities and implement adaptation actions enables us to manage the North Cascade forests for the long-term sustainability of all resources in the context of climate change.”

Great Basin Grasslands

The Great Basin is a 135-million-acre desert that sprawls across five arid western states. Sagebrush steppe is an important vegetation community of the Great Basin, providing habitat to more than than 200 species of conservation concern including the greater sage-grouse (Centrocercus urophasianus) and pronghorn antelope (Antilocapra americana) (Suring et al. 2005). Land use conversion has led to the loss of more than half of all sagebrush habitat in recent decades (The Nature Conservancy). In addition, factors such as increasing temperatures and changes in wildfire regimes accelerate the spread of exotic plant species like the pernicious cheatgrass, deplete native seed banks, simplify sagebrush community structure, and reduce desirable landscape patchiness. Native conifers encroach on sagebrush grasses in part due to fire control, while Mojave vegetation has begun to migrate northward in response to warming temperatures.

Simulations of climate change impacts on sagebrush showed a potential reduction to a mere 20 percent of present sagebrush area within the next century (Nielson et al. 2005). In short, the future of the entire sagebrush community and its component species are at risk due to climate change, altered wildfire regimes, invasive species, habitat fragmentation, and resulting bottlenecks to plant migration. Major losses of populations and species can be expected if current trends continue, making innovative, science based management solutions more critical than ever.

In response, scientists with the USFS have developed mechanisms to protect and restore native grasses in the sagebrush ecosystem. SageSTEP, for example, is a multi-agency regional effort to examine the effectiveness of vegetation treatments such as mowing and burning on disturbed and degraded sagebrush. Further, USFS scientists are collaborating with universities to evaluate biological controls for cheatgrass to mitigate the invasive plant's ability to out-compete native grasses in restoration sites. Still, conserving remaining sagebrush communities alone will likely be inefficient in sustaining sagebrush-dependent species like the greater sage- grouse and, as a result, managers must implement forward-looking conservation practices that create suitable habitat resilient to future climate conditions. A major bottleneck to creating resilient sagebrush habitat with native plant species, however, is the limited availability of native seed, largely due to the difficulty and nuanced practices of collecting, growing, and distributing native seed sources.

USFS scientists are working to address this bottleneck. With funding from the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) National Plant Conservation Program, scientists conducted genetic studies to match adaptive traits within native grass species to the appropriate environmental conditions. Then scientists developed seed transfer zones—areas within which plant materials can be transferred with little risk of being maladapted — to guide the establishment of future sagebrush plant communities tolerant of tomorrow's climate conditions. Further, to conserve native plant diversity that may provide vital seed sources for resilient native vegetation in future landscapes, scientists contributed hundreds of samples of plant genetic material to the USDA Agricultural Research Service's National Plant Germplasm System through the interagency Seeds of Success Program, started by the BLM.

Within the broader sagebrush native plant community, research specifically on plant species important to wildlife can provide a conservation boost. For example, forbs are an extremely important component of the sage-grouse diet, but have been little used in restoration. Seed zone maps are lacking for forb species, so USFS scientists developed a provisional seed zone map based on climate variables. The map is hosted at the agency's Western Wildland Threat Assessment Center. By combining soil data and ecological site descriptions, this tool has informed the selection of seed sources originating from conditions similar to those at the planting site. The National Forest System and the BLM

have used the seed zone map tool extensively in the Pacific Northwest, Great Basin, and elsewhere to establish ecological communities with traits that can withstand temperature and precipitation variability and are resilient to environmental disturbance.

Also to facilitate the use of forbs in sagebrush restoration, USFS scientists have led extensive collaboration to complete the production cycle of native forb species — from research, to production, to use — to increase the list of options available for restoration after disturbance. Agricultural fields now produce native forb materials for specific provisional seed zones while the BLM purchases the seed to improve diversity and habitat value of native seedlings. Private sector seed growers are overcoming the bottlenecks in the propagation of newly available species—and all of this is a positive advancement for sage-grouse and other wildlife that eat forbs. “This research is directly applicable to all public land management through- out the Great Basin,” says Peggy Olwell, Plant Conservation Program Lead for the BLM. “There is a vital need for genetically appropriate native seed in restoring resilient sagebrush plant communities after disturbances such as wildfire and cheatgrass invasion.”

Increasing the use of genetically appropriate plant materials and the production of high quality seed, along with the development of improved restoration practices, are all essential adaptation tactics necessary to establish native sagebrush communities resilient to future climate conditions. Through these science-management partnerships, federal and state land managers in the Great Basin aim to sustain and enhance the sagebrush ecosystem and species like sage-grouse that depend on it.

Northeastern Rivers

Numerous wildlife species such as aquatic salamanders, water thrushes, and mink rely on riparian corridors to access thermally resilient habitats critical to their survival. However, in- frastructure such as roads and dams fragments stream habitat, which in turn threatens wildlife populations. This is perhaps of greatest concern in streams and rivers of the densely populated Northeastern corridor, and climate change only exacerbates these challenges. Wetter winters and overall warmer temperatures projected for the Northeast will drive increased winter runoff and decreased spring runoff, and push peak runoff to much earlier in the year (Hayhoe et al. 2007). Rising stream temperatures and increasing frequency and intensity of flood events combine with infrastructure-related fragmentation to significantly diminish the connectivity of aquatic wildlife populations and the availability of aquatic habitat.

In response, USFS researchers developed tools to prioritize barrier removal sites, monitor their effectiveness for reconnecting populations, and evaluate the cost-benefit balance of implementing riparian habitat enhancements that promote thermal resilience. Since 2008, Forest Service scientists, along with USGS, The

Nature Conservancy, and universities, have provided managers in the Northeast and Midwest with tools to deal with these challenges.

In 2013, for example, managers in Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest developed a protocol to prioritize road-stream crossings that incorporates both habitat area and thermal resilience — a critical aspect of habitat quality — into its ranking criteria. The protocol was implemented to enhance resilience of vulnerable coldwater stream systems and the unique set of fish and wildlife species they support. According to Nick Schmal, Fish and Aquatic Ecology Program Manager for the USFS Northeastern Region, "The ability to monitor the effectiveness of barrier removal in restoring aquatic organism passage, reestablishing population connectivity, and increasing effective population size are all critical for continued support of these efforts."

USFS scientists have also developed a landscape-genetics approach to monitoring the effectiveness of barrier removal efforts. As part of the approach, they assign individuals of eastern brook trout to sibling groups based on genotypes. Presence of siblings on either side of a removed barrier is evidence of movement and population connectivity. Since individuals "mark themselves" by family affiliation, this technique helps in saving the expense, time, and uncertainty of traditional marking techniques. Last year, the Huron-Manistee National Forest in Michigan used this barrier removal monitoring protocol to demonstrate successful re- establishment of population connectivity after a dam removal project. Following their success, a number of other national forests have since adopted this monitoring technique.

Further, Forest Service scientists developed a GIS tool that allows managers to predictively compare the costs and benefits of implementing riparian vegetation restoration to shade streams and thus lower stream temperatures. With many competing demands on land management budgets, tools that assist managers in evaluating the cost-benefit ratio for riparian habitat enhancement, along with measures to help prioritize and monitor barrier removal projects, will help managers facilitate resilience in riparian habitats and the species that depend on them.

On-the-Ground Adaptation

Spanning some 18 degrees of latitude — from the tundra to the great plains and the north woods to the tropics — identifying specific conservation challenges and applying appropriate science and research-derived tools offers USFS and its partners unique opportunities to adapt to climate change. Such opportunities will only increase over the coming decade as our understanding of climate change at finer scales, along with habitat and species responses, is refined and systems for evaluating opportunities and tradeoffs evolve. The built-in research capacity within USFS has already proved critical to developing and working with federal,

state, and private land managers to test adaptation options and replicate successful approaches.

Engaging in collaborative partnerships affords USFS the ability to stitch together the broad swaths of jurisdictions and ownerships that match the scale of wildlife species' adaptation trajectories. With climate change adaptation, these partnerships not only lend themselves to greater long-term efficiency toward achieving meaningful outcomes, but will likely prove the only way forward. "At the end of the day, there is much better buy-in and ownership on the ground for adopting climate change adaptation tactics when managers are directly involved in their development," Gravenmier says.

Careful consideration of habitat resilience, landscape connectivity, and species movement over time and space are the building blocks of focused climate change adaptation actions. The last decade of experiences in designing and implementing adaptation strategies has built a solid foundation for methodically chipping away at the uncertainty surrounding complex ecosystem responses to climate change and what managers might do about it. Over time, the refined understanding resulting from purposeful, deliberate science-management partnerships is key to the successful, dynamic management to conserve habitat, wildlife species, and the many goods and services resilient ecosystems provide to society.

Article link: http://news.wildlife.org/twp/2014-spring/facing-climate-change-in-forests-and-fields/

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6. Intermountain West Joint Venture: Request for Proposals for FY 2014 Capacity Grants Applications due May 1st, 2014

The Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) is a diverse public-private partnership that works across all or parts of 11 states to deliver strategic habitat conservation for migratory birds and other priority bird species. We bring people and organizations together to leverage technical and financial resources, building our collective capacity to achieve conservation at meaningful scales. The intent of the Capacity Grants Program is to build capacity and catalyze partnerships to increase bird habitat conservation in the Intermountain West. Please visit our website (http://www.iwjv.org/funding-opportunity/iwjv-capacity-grants-program) for more information and to download funding guidelines.

If you have questions, please contact either our assistant coordinator, Ali Duvall (ali.duvall@iwjv.org) or Brian McDonald, our agreements and grants specialist (brian.mcdonald@iwjv.org).

For more information please visit: http://www.iwjv.org/funding-opportunity/iwjv-capacity-grants-program

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7. Wildlife dividend: Guns, ammo have direct connection to conservation

SUNDAY, APRIL 6, 2014 By Richl@Spokesman.Com (509) 459-5508

A set of numbers suggests that Barack Obama's presidency is the best thing that's happened to hunting since Teddy Roosevelt.

Record-breaking sales of guns and ammunition in recent years have resulted in a windfall for wildlife conservation.

The corresponding federal excise taxes on guns and ammunition also have soared to record levels – and that funding is earmarked for wildlife and hunting programs.

"The increase is not a surprise for anyone who's tried to buy .22 shells in the past few years," said Brad Compton, Idaho Fish and Game Department assistant Wildlife Bureau chief. "They're sold out as soon as they hit the shelves."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced it will distribute nearly $1.1 billion in hunting and fishing excise tax revenues to state and territorial fish and wildlife agencies to fund fish and wildlife conservation and recreation projects.

The funding comes from two programs that have generated more than $15 billion since their inceptions:

• **Pittman-Robertson** Wildlife Restoration, approved by Congress in 1937, sets a 10-11 percent federal excise tax on guns, ammunition, archery and other hunting equipment; funding is earmarked for wildlife habitat, research and hunter safety and shooting programs across the nation.

• **Dingell-Johnson** Sport Fish Restoration, approved in 1950, sets import duties on fishing tackle, recreation boats, and a portion of the gasoline fuel tax attributable to small engines and motorboats; the funds are used for fishing and boating programs.

The D-J sportfishing apportionment for 2014 totals $325.7 million, which includes $18.5 million that had been sequestered during 2013. However, the 2014 funding is $34.1 million lower than last year because of reduced domestic fishing equipment excise tax receipts, Department of Interior officials say.

Meanwhile, the P-R wildlife funding continues to shoot past previous records, a trend that started with Obama's election in 2008.

The 2014 P-R wildlife apportionment totals $760.9 million, which would be a record even without the addition of $20 million that was sequestered last year.

The funding is distributed to the states by reimbursing up to 75 percent of the cost of each eligible project while state fish and wildlife agencies contribute a minimum of 25 percent.

The funding cannot be used for wildlife police programs, public relations or raising pheasants to release for hunting.

"The state match can come from hunting license revenue or donations by conservation groups such as Ducks Unlimited, or the labor provided by volunteers," said Nate Pamplin, wildlife program manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Washington has been allocated $14.4 million in P-R funds this year, up from $10.1 million last year.

Idaho has been allocated $14.6 million.

Wildlife officials from both states say they'll be careful about the way they spend money from these record funding levels.

"We saw a 2010 spike in funding from gun sales over concerns about gun legislation among firearms enthusiasts," Pamplin said. "But that tends to be cyclical in nature so the state doesn't want to get far with ongoing spending obligations.

The agency avoids building programs that would require staff to be let go should the P-R funding dip, he said.

"Everything Idaho Fish and Game does in wildlife programs has some measure of federal funding," Compton said. "P-R funding is sprinkled through our big-game aerial surveys and other monitoring and all of our habitat and lands programs."

Pamplin called P-R grants the backbone of Washington's wildlife programs.

“The Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, the state’s first wildlife area, was acquired 75 years ago with the first major expenditure of P-R funds,” Pamplin said, noting that agency continues to use the funding for acquiring and maintaining wildlife lands.

Programs to gain more hunting access to private lands are priorities this year as well as research and management of moose, Selkirk elk, mule deer and other projects, Pamplin said.

“We’re also looking into providing shooting ranges. Not just a wide spot off the road, but designated areas, with covered pavilions and benches like the one in Methow Wildlife Area, which was built with P-R funds and is very popular.”

Compton said Idaho’s share the 2010 P-R funding spurt “helped fund sharptail grouse work we desperately wanted to do, as well as mule deer work that had been sitting on the table waiting for funding.”

This year’s funding increase will help Idaho maintain wolf management as endangered species funding is drying up.

Idaho also will tap federal funds this year to build a state wildlife health lab near Boise.

“We’ve needed a replacement for years,” Compton said. “We’re pretty excited to finally get up to date with a facility that will help us deal with wildlife diseases present and future.”

Article link: http://www.spokesman.com/outdoors/stories/2014/apr/06/wildlife-dividend-guns-ammo-have-direct/

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8. Fungal disease fatal to bats spreads to half of US

Posted: Thursday, April 10, 2014 12:57 pm | Updated: 4:08 pm, Thu Apr 10, 2014.

Associated Press |

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. (AP) — A fungal disease that has killed millions of North American bats is spreading and now has been detected in half of the United States.

Officials in Michigan and Wisconsin said Thursday they've confirmed that bats in their states have been diagnosed with white-nose syndrome, which first showed up in the U.S. in upstate New York in 2006.

The disease is named for the white fuzz it creates on the animals' noses, wings and tails. It causes hibernating bats to wake frequently, which saps their energy reserves and can cause them to starve or dehydrate before spring arrives.

In some caves where the disease has been spotted, more than 90 percent of bats have died.

Bats are valuable species because they eat insects that otherwise would damage crops and trees.

Article link: http://cbs7kosa.com/news/national/article_e6ab05f9-bd73-5e56-bdce-2f260e9ecc1b.html

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9. Bureau of Reclamation Seeks Applied Science Project Applicants for Desert and Southern Rockies Landscape Conservation Cooperatives – Applications due May 13th, 2014

The Bureau of Reclamation is seeking applicants for applied science projects for the Desert and Southern Rockies Landscape Conservation Cooperatives. Proposed projects are expected to deliver new capabilities that address priority resources identified and shared by Reclamation and partners involved in the Desert and Southern Rockies LCC.

The Desert LCC funding opportunity is seeking applicants to study wildfire impacts on riparian areas and study environmental flow impacts on the Colorado River Delta. This funding opportunity may be found at www.grants.gov by searching funding opportunity number R14AS00031 (http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html?keywords=R14AS00031). Applications are due May 13, 2014 at 4 p.m. MDT.

The Southern Rockies LCC funding opportunity targets projecting future water availability and quality, projecting the resiliency and vulnerability of natural or cultural resources, and assessing and evaluating natural or cultural resources management practices and adaptation opportunities. The funding opportunity is available at www.grants.gov by searching funding opportunity number

R14AS00032 (http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html?keywords=R14AS00032). Applications are due May 13, 2014 at 4 p.m. MDT.

Approximately $700,000 will be available for Desert and Southern Rockies LCC projects combined. Up to $100,000 in federal funding will be available for each project award. Reclamation's share of each proposed project shall not exceed 50 percent of the total project cost.

The Desert LCC encompasses portions of five states: Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico and Texas, as well as a substantial portion of Northern Mexico. The area is topographically complex, including three different deserts (Mojave, Sonoran and Chihuahuan), grasslands and valley bottoms and the isolated mountain ranges in the southern portion of the LCC (Apache Highlands and the New Mexico-Texas Highlands, also known as the Sky Islands). There are several large river systems, including the lower Colorado, Gila, Rio Grande, San Pedro and Verde Rivers.

The Southern Rockies LCC encompasses large portions of four states: Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah, as well as smaller parts of Idaho, Nevada and Wyoming. The area is geographically complex, including wide elevation and topographic variation, from 14,000 foot peaks to the Grand Canyon and cold desert basins. This topographically complex region includes the headwaters of the Colorado River and Rio Grande, the Wasatch and Uinta Mountains to the west and the Southern Rocky Mountains to the east, separated by the rugged tableland of the Colorado Plateau.

LCCs are partnerships of governmental (federal, state, tribal and local) and non-governmental entities. The primary goal of the LCCs is to bring together science and resource management to inform climate adaptation strategies to address climate change and other stressors within an ecological region, or "landscape." There are 22 different LCCs across the United States, territories and other countries. To learn more about Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, visit www.lccnetwork.org.

To learn more about these funding opportunities visit www.usbr.gov/WaterSMART/LCC/. To learn more about the Desert LCC, please visit www.usbr.gov/dlcc. To learn more about the Southern Rockies LCC, please visit www.southernrockieslcc.org.

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