



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Policy Brief Series

Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act

In the early 1900s, sportsmen and state wildlife agencies were concerned with unprecedented declines in wildlife populations. They urged Congress to pass the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act in 1937, designating an excise tax on hunting equipment to be used by states to fund wildlife restoration. The Act is often referred to as the Pittman-Robertson Act (P-R Act) after Senator Key Pittman of Nevada, and Representative Willis Robertson of Virginia, who were important sponsors of the bill.

Methods

An 11 percent excise tax on long guns, ammunition, and archery equipment and a 10 percent excise tax on handguns fund the P-R Act. The revenue from the tax goes into the Wildlife Restoration Account, which is administered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

Funds are apportioned annually to state wildlife agencies for wildlife restoration programs including habitat management of both game and non-game wildlife and hunter education programs. State wildlife agencies use the funds to cover up to 75 percent of a project's cost. The P-R Act requires states to use hunting licensing revenues as funding for state wildlife agencies; states often use this funding source to pay for the remaining 25 percent of P-R funded projects. An additional \$3 million is allocated for projects that involve cooperation among states through the Multistate Conservation Grant Program¹(Figure 1).

Results

Over \$8 billion has been collected from the excise tax since 1939, leading to the purchase of approximately 4 million acres for wildlife habitat.¹ An additional 40 million acres are being managed for wildlife under agreements with land owners through the use of P-R funds.² Funds have also been used to support wildlife research, building scientific capacity and understanding within state agencies.

Discussion

The original purpose of the P-R Act was to provide funding for restoring wildlife populations and to acquire, develop and manage their habitats.³ The Act was amended in 1970, to include funding for hunter education programs and the development, operation and maintenance of public shooting ranges.³

The P-R Act is fully funded by sportsmen, but benefits hunters and non-hunters alike. Nearly all lands purchased with P-R money are managed for wildlife production and other public uses like hiking and bird watching. Recent estimates indicate about 70 percent of people that use areas conserved by the P-R Act are not hunting.²

Implications for Wildlife Professionals

Funding from the P-R Act provides state wildlife agencies with a continuous, secure, and substantial source of funding, enabling them to plan long-term habitat and research projects. This benefits wildlife professionals working in or with those agencies, ensuring they can implement wildlife management projects to research and conserve both game and non-game species for the benefit of the public.

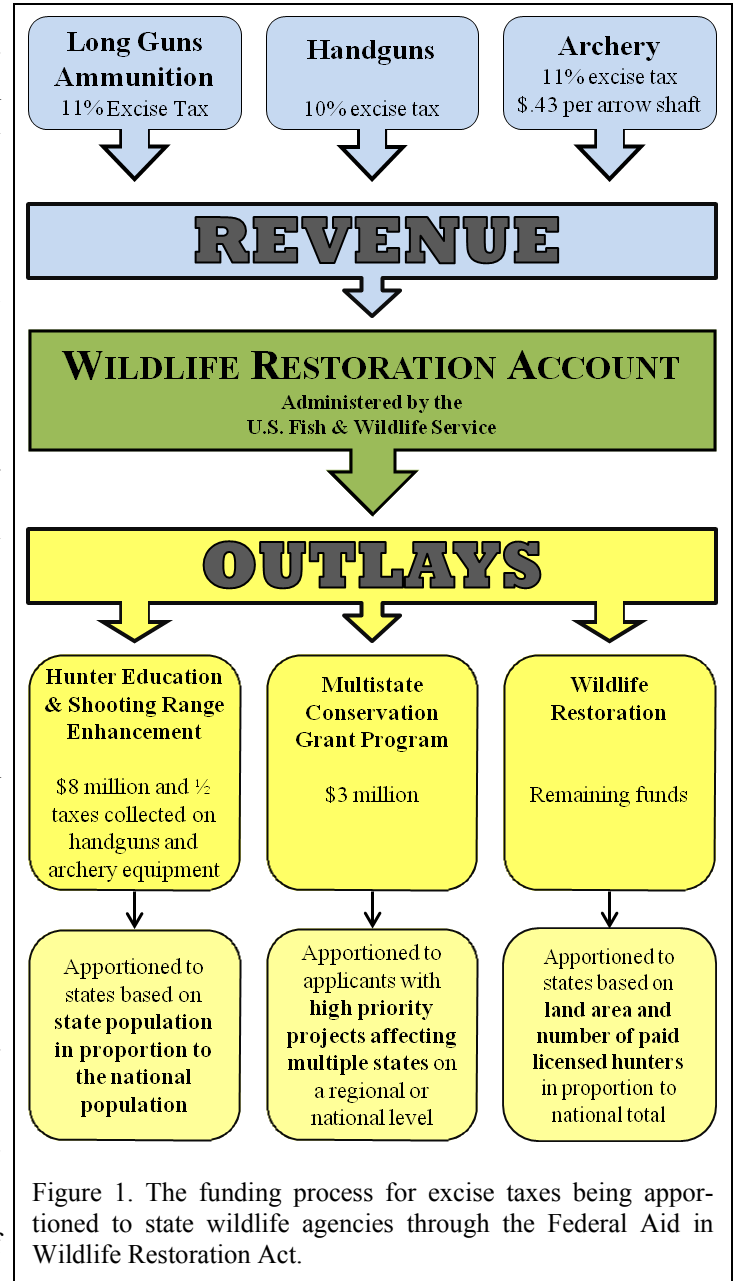


Figure 1. The funding process for excise taxes being apportioned to state wildlife agencies through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act.

Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act: Features



Bobwhite Research⁵

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) was awarded \$240,000 through the Multistate Conservation Grant Program in 2006 to study the northern bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*), also known as the bobwhite quail. TWRA helped develop the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI) to study the bird's population decline and create a regional plan for the bird's recovery. TWRA has been successful in developing landscape-level plans for NBCI and the information TWRA gathered has been useful to other agencies for planning purposes.

A pair of Northern Bobwhites (Credit: Steve Maslowski, USFWS).

Summer Lake Wildlife Area^{6,7}

The Summer Lake Wildlife Area in Oregon was established in 1944 to protect and improve waterfowl habitat and provide a public hunting area. P-R funds supporting the wildlife area helped it become a popular destination not just for hunting, but also wildlife viewing and environmental education. P-R funds have supported wetland maintenance and restoration on over 3,000 acres in the wildlife area. The Summer Lake Wildlife Area is home to more than 250 species of birds and 40 species of mammals, fish, reptiles, and amphibians.



Wetlands habitat in the Summer Lake Wildlife Area (Credit: ODFW).



Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Symbol

The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration symbol is used to identify projects and properties that have utilized P-R funds. Variations of this symbol may be used by businesses that manufacture or sell guns, ammunition, and archery equipment that contribute excise taxes used to fund the wildlife restoration account.

Sources

- 1 National Shooting Sports Foundation. 2013. Pittman-Robertson Excise Tax.
- 2 USFWS Southeast Region. 2014. Federal Aid Division – The Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act. <<http://www.fws.gov/southeast/federalaid/pittmanrobertson.html>> Accessed 27 Aug 2014.
- 3 Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife. 2014. Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration. <http://wdfw.wa.gov/grants/wildlife_restoration/> Accessed 27 Aug 2014.
- 4 Corn, M. L. and Gravelle, J. G. 2013 Guns, Excise Taxes, and Wildlife Restoration. Congressional Research Service.
- 5 Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. 2010. Funding Critical Conservation Needs.
- 6 Thomas, M. 2010. Summer Lake Thrives on P_R Funds. The Wildlife Professional. 37.
- 7 Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2014. Summer Lake Wildlife Area. <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/visitors/summer_lake_wildlife_area.asp> Accessed 15 Sept 2014.



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