

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES  
REGARDING FISCAL YEAR 2015 APPROPRIATIONS FOR  
THE STATE & TRIBAL WILDLIFE GRANTS PROGRAM  
(US FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE)**

**May 23, 2014**

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the following members of the national Teaming With Wildlife Steering Committee:

**Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies  
Association of Zoos & Aquariums  
Izaak Walton League of America  
National Wildlife Federation**

**The Nature Conservancy  
The Wildlife Society  
Wildlife Conservation Society  
Wildlife Management Institute**

Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Murkowski and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide recommendations on the FY15 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. The 6,414 organizations and businesses that are part of the [Teaming With Wildlife](#) coalition represent millions of birders, fish and wildlife professionals, hunters, anglers, boaters, hikers and other nature enthusiasts. The **State and Tribal Wildlife Grants** program was created in response to this diverse coalition. We encourage the subcommittee to provide a minimum of \$58.695 million for the State & Tribal Wildlife Grants program in FY15, which would avoid further cuts to this program. Funding for the State & Tribal Wildlife Grants program has been reduced by 35% since FY10.

The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program is the only federal program with the singular purpose of preventing federal endangered species listings. It is achieving success as highlighted in the [State Wildlife Grants Success Stories Report](#) which showed how partnerships in every state are conserving vulnerable fish and wildlife, including many that are candidates for federal endangered species listing. The program is providing needed capacity to assess and implement actions to conserve many of the hundreds of species that have been petitioned for federal endangered species listing.

Preventing new endangered species listings is a goal shared by conservationists, business, farmers and ranchers and has broad bipartisan support. Through early and strategic action, we can be successful in preventing new endangered species. Adequate and consistent funding for the program is essential to fulfillment of the shared federal-state responsibility for keeping our nation's wildlife from becoming endangered. Now more than ever, we should be focusing limited resources on this kind of smart, effective investment in conservation.

The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program has been cut by 1/3 since 2010. The reduction in funding is impacting states' and their partner's ability to restore habitat, protect land, incentivize private lands conservation, monitor species, conduct research and mitigate threats like invasive

species and disease. Past cuts are slowing conservation work which is leading to a higher probability for future endangered species listings. There is no other program that can take the place of the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program.

Although the need is much greater, continued funding will help maintain essential capacity to conserve the more than 12,000 species that states have identified as at-risk in their State Wildlife Action Plans. These plans were developed collaboratively by leading scientists, conservationists, sportsmen and private landowners and identified the most effective and practical means to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered in every state, territory and the District of Columbia. The plans are up for a critical 10-year review and revision in 2015. Funding is needed to ensure states and their partners have the resources needed to update the plans to ensure the best science is available to inform the plans so that successful implementation can be achieved.

We understand and appreciate the fiscal constraints that face our nation. However, the investment in the State & Tribal Wildlife Grants program is relatively modest compared to the scope of work it funds (proactive conservation in all 56 states, territories and the District of Columbia) and the importance of that work (recovery of some of our nation's most imperiled fish and wildlife). We appreciate the subcommittee's past support for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program and hope the highest level of funding possible will be realized for the program in FY15.

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*AFWA is the voice of fish and wildlife agencies* ([www.fishwildlife.org](http://www.fishwildlife.org))

*6,400+ organizations and businesses are the Teaming With Wildlife coalition* [www.teaming.com](http://www.teaming.com)