



## THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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Testifying for The Wildlife Society on Public Witness Day:

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The Wildlife Society appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on the FY 2013 budget for the Department of Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. The Wildlife Society was founded in 1937 and is a non-profit scientific and educational association representing over 11,000 professional wildlife biologists and managers, dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. Our mission is to represent and serve the professional community of scientists, managers, educators, technicians, planners, and others who work actively to study, manage, and conserve wildlife and its habitats worldwide.

### U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The **State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program** is the only federal program that supports states in preventing wildlife from becoming endangered. It is also the primary program supporting implementation of comprehensive wildlife conservation strategies, known as State Wildlife Action Plans, which detail conservation actions needed on the ground in every state to keep common species common. Funding assistance for these state wildlife agencies is one of the highest priority needs for wildlife in order to prevent further declines in at-risk wildlife populations in every state. These grants also provide key funding to federally-recognized tribal governments for wildlife management and conservation. **We recommend Congress appropriate \$70 million for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants in FY 2013. We also ask that Congress support continuation of a reduction in the non-federal match requirement from 50 percent to 35 percent**, relieving some of the onus of providing adequate matching funding from severely cashed-strapped states.

The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE) is a diverse coalition of 22 wildlife, sporting, conservation, and scientific organizations representing over 14 million members and supporters. A comprehensive analysis by CARE determined the **National Wildlife Refuge System** needs \$900 million in annual operations funding to properly administer its nearly 150 million acres, educational programs, habitat restoration projects, and much more. Many years of stagnant budgets have increased the Operations and Maintenance backlog; refuge visitors often show up to find visitor centers closed, hiking trails in disrepair, and habitat restoration programs

eliminated. Invasive plant species are taking over on refuges, requiring \$25 million per year to treat just one-third of its acreage, and illegal activities such as poaching are on the rise, requiring an additional 209 officers (\$31.4 million) to meet law enforcement needs. **We recommend that Congress provide \$495 million in FY 2013 for the Operations and Maintenance of the National Wildlife Refuge System.** Additionally, The Wildlife Society supports the increase of **\$3 million for the Refuge System's Inventory and Monitoring program**, which is needed to provide the Service with the necessary information to guide effective use of funds.

The **North American Wetlands Conservation Act** is a cooperative, non-regulatory, incentive-based program that has shown unprecedented success in restoring wetlands, waterfowl, and other migratory bird populations. This program has remained drastically underfunded despite its demonstrated effectiveness. **We recommend a small increase over the FY 2012 funding level of \$35.5 million, to bring the funding to \$40 million in FY 2013.**

The **Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Grants Program** supports partnership programs to conserve birds in the U.S., Latin America and the Caribbean, where approximately 5 billion birds representing 341 species spend their winters, including some of the most endangered birds in North America. **The Wildlife Society recommends Congress fund the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act at \$6.5 million in FY 2013.**

The Wildlife Society supports adequate funding levels for all subactivities within the **Endangered Species Program**. Endangered species recovery efforts can ultimately lead to delisting, resulting in significant benefits to species through state management efforts. Currently, all subactivities within the program are understaffed while the costs for management of listed species continue to rapidly escalate. **We recommend Congress match the President's request for the Endangered Species Program and provide \$179.7 million in funding in FY 2013.**

The voluntary **Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program** provides financial and technical assistance to landowners to restore degraded habitat on their property. With over two-thirds of our nation's lands held as private property, and up to 90 percent of some habitats lost, private lands play a key role in preserving our ecosystem. We urge Congress to provide **\$60 million in support of the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program** in order to allow landowners to help contribute to land and wildlife preservation.

Through its **International Affairs office**, FWS works with many partners and countries in the implementation of international treaties, conventions, and projects for the conservation of wildlife species and their habitats. International trade, import, and transportation of wildlife species can have a huge impact on America's security, economy, and environment. Careful regulation of imports and implementation of international policies is an important task. We ask Congress to support FWS in protecting our economy, our environment, and our national security by providing a necessary **\$13.054 million in support of FWS International Affairs.**

### **Bureau of Land Management**

BLM lands support over 3,000 species of wildlife, more than 300 federally proposed or listed species, and more than 1,300 sensitive plant species. Historically, the **Wildlife and Fisheries Management (WFM) and the Threatened and Endangered Species Management (TESM)**

programs have been forced to pay for the compliance activities of BLM's energy, grazing, and other non-wildlife related programs, eroding both their ability to conduct proactive conservation activities and their efforts to recover listed species. Given the significant underfunding of the BLM's wildlife programs, combined with the tremendous expansion of energy development across the BLM landscape, we recommend Congress appropriate **\$55 million for BLM Wildlife Management**. This will allow BLM to maintain and restore wildlife and habitat by monitoring habitat conditions, conducting inventories of wildlife resources, and developing cooperative management plans. We support the proposed increase of \$15 million for sage grouse conservation efforts; this kind of broad-scale, landscape based conservation is exactly what is needed to manage and conserve sage grouse across their range.

Increased funding is also needed for the **Threatened and Endangered Species Management Program**, to allow BLM to meet its responsibilities in endangered species recovery plans. BLM's March 2001 Report to Congress called for a doubling of the Threatened and Endangered Species budget to \$48 million and an additional 70 staff positions over 5 years. This goal has yet to be met. In light of this, **we strongly encourage Congress to increase overall funding for BLM's endangered species program to \$33 million in FY 2013.**

The Wildlife Society appreciates the commitment of BLM to addressing the problems associated with **Wild Horse and Burro Management**. The president has requested an increase of \$2 million for research and development on contraception and population control. The Wildlife Society is concerned about BLM's emphasis on fertility control. Given that horses and burros have been maintained above the Appropriate Management Level for many years, we believe that additional funding should be requested to correct the habitat damage that has occurred due to overpopulation of these animals. **The requested \$77.068 million should be provided to BLM if they continue removing excess horses from the range at a reasonable rate and focus additional resources on habitat restoration.**

### **U.S. Geological Survey**

The basic, objective, and interdisciplinary scientific research that is supported by the USGS is necessary for understanding the complex environmental issues facing our nation today. This science will play an essential role in the decision-making processes of natural resource managers as we adapt to climate change, and it will help protect our water supply and conserve endangered species. More investment is needed to strengthen USGS partnerships, improve monitoring, produce high-quality geospatial data, and deliver the best science to address critical environmental and societal challenges. **The Wildlife Society supports funding of at least \$1.2 billion for USGS in FY 2013.**

The **Ecosystems Program** of USGS contains programmatic resources for fisheries, wildlife, environments, invasive species and the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit. The Ecosystems unit is a new department within USGS resulting from the recent reorganization that strives to maximize research and support for comprehensive biological and ecosystem based needs. **The Wildlife Society supports the President's request of \$177.85 million for USGS's Ecosystems Department in FY 2013. Within Ecosystems, we support the request of \$49.4 million for the Wildlife Program.** Additionally, we appreciate the requested addition of \$1

million to support research and surveillance of White Nose Syndrome and of \$2.2 million for research on hydraulic fracturing and its effects on land use, terrestrial wildlife, and habitats.

The **Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units (CFWRUs)** are managed under the Ecosystems Department and conduct research on renewable natural resource questions, participate in the education of graduate students, provide technical assistance and consultation on natural resource issues, and provide continuing education for natural resource professionals. In FY 2001, Congress fully funded the CFWRUs, allowing unit productivity to rise to record levels. Since then, budgetary shortfalls have caused an erosion of available funds, resulting in a current staffing vacancy of nearly one quarter of the professional workforce. In order to fill current vacancies, restore seriously eroded operational funds for each CFWRU, and enhance national program coordination, **the FY 2013 budget for the CFWRUs should be increased to \$22 million.** This would restore necessary capacity in the CFWRU program and allow it to meet the nation's research and training needs.

The Wildlife Society appreciates the FY 2011 funding of \$25.5 million for the **National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center.** This center plays a pivotal role in addressing the impacts of climate change on fish and wildlife by providing essential scientific support. In order for this role to be fully realized, **The Wildlife Society recommends that Congress fund the National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center at the requested \$26.2 million in FY 2013.**

### **U.S. Forest Service**

Our national forests and grasslands are essential to the conservation of our nation's wildlife and habitat, and are home to about 425 threatened and endangered, and another 3,250 at-risk species. In FY 2011, the Forest Service combined several programs and budgets, including Vegetation and Watershed Management, Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management, and Forest Products into a single Integrated Resource Restoration activity budget. We are concerned with this merger because it makes accountability to stakeholders and Congress more difficult. However, with these reservations noted, we urge Congress **to support the request of \$793 million for the Integrated Resource Restoration program in FY 2013.**

Integral to management of our natural resources is a deep understanding of the biological and geological forces that shape the land and its wildlife and plant communities. The research being done by the USFS is at the forefront of science, and essential to improving the health of our nation's forests and grasslands. Furthermore, it will play a key role in developing strategies for mitigating the effects of climate change. We urge Congress to provide **\$300 million in FY 2013 for Forest and Rangelands** to support this high-quality research.

Thank you for considering the recommendations of wildlife professionals. Please contact Laura Bies, Director of Government Affairs at (301) 897-9770 x 308 if you require further information or have any additional questions.