

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES REGARDING FISCAL YEAR
2013 APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE STATE & TRIBAL WILDLIFE GRANTS
PROGRAM**

April 20, 2012

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

**American Fisheries Society
Association of Zoos & Aquariums
Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
The Wildlife Society**

**Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
National Audubon Society
The Nature Conservancy
Wildlife Management Institute**

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

Thank you for this opportunity to offer comments on the FY13 Interior Appropriations bill. On behalf of the 6,366 organizations and businesses representing millions of birders, hunters, anglers, boaters, hikers, conservation organizations and other outdoor enthusiasts, we encourage the subcommittee to provide at least \$61.32 million for the State & Tribal Wildlife Grants program in FY13. This is unchanged from the level funding enacted last year and is the same as the Administration's FY13 request. We also request that the non-federal match requirement remain at 35% and that the proportion allocated for tribal and state competitive grants remain at ~7-9% respectively, the same as FY12 enacted.

Although the need is much greater, level funding would 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](#). 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.

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 listings and even recover species already on the list, such as the Lake Erie Water Snake, which was delisted in September 2011 because of State & Tribal Wildlife Grant investments. 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 and habitats and conduct research. Past cuts are slowing conservation work and further cuts may jeopardize the success of the program, 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.

State Wildlife Action Plans, which guide spending of state apportioned funds, 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. Congress can demonstrate its commitment to these plans in every state and territory by providing the federal share of support, leveraging millions in state and private matching funds. This investment in conservation helps support thousands of jobs and the \$730 billion outdoor recreation industry.

We ask the subcommittee to support the Administration's request to maintain the required nonfederal match at 35%, the same level as FY12 enacted. This level of match will help ensure program funds are efficiently put on the ground and will support those states still recovering from substantial budget cuts to their nongame programs the last several years. In addition, we ask the subcommittee to keep the proportion of funds for tribal and state competitive grants at roughly the same proportion, approximately 7% and 9% respectively. Although we feel there is an appropriate role for competitive grants, particularly for regional and landscape projects, we don't feel growth in competitive grants should come at the expense of apportioned funding which is at or near its lowest level since inception of the program in 2000. Funding provided to states through apportionments is already accountable in the following ways:

Funding dispersed through apportionments...

- 1) are directed by State Wildlife Action Plans that were approved by the Director of the US Fish & Wildlife Service;
- 2) must be subsequently reviewed and approved as grants to the US Fish and Wildlife;
- 3) will adhere to an effectiveness measures framework that will be incorporated into the US Fish and Wildlife Service's new Wildlife TRACS reporting and tracking system beginning in October 2012.

We understand and appreciate the fiscal constraints that face our nation. However, the State & Tribal Wildlife Grants program is 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 funding can be maintained in FY13 at or above the FY12 level.