



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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March 19, 2010

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
B-308 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Testimony Submitted by Bruce Leopold, President of The Wildlife Society

The Wildlife Society (TWS) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the FY 2011 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 9,000 professional wildlife biologists and managers, dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. Our mission is to represent and serve wildlife professionals—the scientists, technicians, and practitioners actively working to study, manage, and conserve native and desired non-native wildlife and their habitats worldwide.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program is the primary program supporting implementation of comprehensive wildlife conservation strategies, known as State Wildlife Action Plans, and it is the only federal program that supports states in preventing wildlife from becoming endangered. Each state creates Plans which detail conservation actions including land protection, invasive species management, research and survey work, and more; these actions create or sustain thousands of jobs that preserve lands important to all sorts of wildlife enthusiasts. Funding assistance for these state wildlife agencies is therefore one of the highest priority needs for wildlife in order to prevent further declines in at-risk wildlife populations in every state. **We recommend that \$100 million be appropriated for State Wildlife Grants in FY 2011. We also ask that Congress support a reduction in the non-federal match requirement from 50 percent to 30 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 that our **National Wildlife Refuge System** needs \$900 million in annual operations 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, and forced plans for a dramatic 20% downsizing of the workforce. 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, 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 request that you provide \$578 million in FY 2011 for the**

Operations and Maintenance of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

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 great demonstrated effectiveness. **We recommend a \$10 million increase, to \$52.6 million in FY 2011 so that Act may reach the goal of full funding of \$75 million by FY2012.**

The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act provides a broad-spectrum approach to bird conservation. **The Wildlife Society recommends that Congress fund the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act at its full authorization of \$6.5 million in FY 2011.**

The Wildlife Society supports adequate funding levels for all subactivities within the Endangered Species Program. Endangered species recovery efforts can ultimately lead to delisting actions that result in significant benefits to species through state management efforts. Currently, all subactivities are understaffed while the costs for management of listed species continue to rapidly escalate. **We recommend that Congress match the President's request for the Endangered Species Program and provide \$181.33 million in funding in FY2011.**

The voluntary Partners for Fish and Wildlife Programs 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 programs, FWS works multilaterally 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 and careful regulation 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 **\$22 million in support of FWS International Affairs.**

Finally, we ask Congress to provide additional funding to fight White Nose Syndrome (WNS) in bats. The current loss of bats from WNS is one of the most precipitous wildlife declines in the past century in North America, and will likely have significant ecological and economic consequences throughout the United States. Expert scientists have recommended that \$45 million will be needed over the next 5 years to study and combat WNS, however last year Congress only appropriated \$1.9 million for WNS in the Recovery of Listed Species program. In order to meet the growing urgency to fight this disease, **TWS asks you to provide an additional \$5 million for fighting WNS in FY 2011.**

Bureau of Land Management

The diverse habitats managed by BLM support over 3,000 species of wildlife, more than 300 federally proposed or listed species, and more than 1300 sensitive plant species. However, the

BLM has only one biologist per 591,000 acres of land and estimated costs for recovery of threatened and endangered species on BLM lands are \$300 million annually over the next five years. In addition, 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 their ability to conduct proactive species and habitat conservation activities and efforts to recover listed species. This diversion of funding must be stopped, or additional funding provided to both programs to make up for the deficiency. Therefore, given the significant underfunding of the BLM's wildlife programs, combined with the tremendous expansion of energy development across the BLM landscape, an increase to **\$65.4 million for the BLM Wildlife and Fisheries Management Program** is warranted. 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.

Increased funding is also needed for the **Threatened and Endangered Species Management Program** to meet its responsibilities in endangered species recovery plans. BLM's March 2001 Report to Congress called for a doubling of the current Threatened and Endangered Species budget to \$48 million and an additional 70 staff positions over 5 years, however, this goal has yet to be met. In view of this, **we strongly encourage Congress to increase overall funding for the BLM endangered species program to \$33 million in FY 2011.**

Finally, TWS applauds the positive action that is being taken to solve the problems associated with wild horse and burro management, and supports Secretary Salazar's \$75.9 million request for this issue. However, given that horses and burros have been maintained above the appropriate 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. **We recommend that an additional \$3.0 million be provided (\$78.9 million total) in FY2011 to remediate habitat degradation from wild horses and burros.**

U.S. Geological Survey

The basic, objective, 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 wildlife, land, and other natural resource managers as we adapt to climate change, and it will help protect our water supply, preserve endangered species, and strengthen our national defense. 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 \$1.334 billion for USGS in FY 2011.**

The **Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units (CFWRUs)** are a jointly funded federal/state partnership that provides the funding for personnel and establishment of the units at a university. 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 fiscal resources, resulting in a current staffing vacancy of nearly one quarter of the professional workforce. In order to fill current scientist vacancies, restore seriously eroded operational funds

for each CFWRU, and enhance national program coordination, **the FY 2011 budget for the CFWRUs should be increased to \$22.5 million.** This would restore necessary capacity in the CFWRU program and allow it to meet the nation's research and training needs. Also, the CFWRUs are crucial to successfully addressing the natural resource management challenges posed by climate change, energy development, invasive species, infectious diseases, and fire. We also ask that you establish a competitive matching fund program within existing CFWRU legislative authority that would make available **\$20 million annually in new funds beyond base operational costs, starting with a \$5 million appropriation in FY 2011.**

The Wildlife Society appreciates the funding for the **National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center** in last year's omnibus, and the FY2010 increase to \$11 million for the Center. This center will play a pivotal role in addressing the impacts of climate change on fish and wildlife. In order for this role to be fully realized, funding must increase. **The Wildlife Society recommends that Congress fully fund the President's request of \$23 million in FY 2011.**

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. Many programs within the Forest Service are essential to protecting these species and require careful consideration during the appropriations process. In FY 2011, the Forest Service is proposing to combine several programs and their 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 merging of resources because it makes accountability to stakeholders and Congress difficult. However, with these reservations noted, we urge Congress **to support the request of \$693.722 million for the Integrated Resource Restoration program in FY 2011.**

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 works at the forefront of science to improve the health of our nation's forests and grasslands and will play a key role in developing strategies for mitigating the effects of climate change. Research is the basis for sound policy decisions and sustained and increasing funding is needed. We urge Congress to fund the President's request **of \$312 million for Forest and Rangelands** so we can continue to support this high-quality research.

Last August, Secretary Vilsack announced his desire to develop national forest planning regulations that are new, meaningful, and climate-smart. Along with this need for new regulations, there is also a tremendous backlog of forest plans that require revision; therefore, an increase in funding for land management within the Forest Service is urgently needed. Based upon funding estimates for sustaining current plans, as well as additional funds for planning new regulations, we ask Congress to **provide \$80 million for land management in FY 2011.**

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.