



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Leaders in Wildlife Science, Management and Conservation

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Submitted to: Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

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Re: **FY 2018 Appropriations for FWS, BLM, USGS, and USFS**

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The Wildlife Society (TWS) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony concerning the FY 2018 budgets for the **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and U.S. Forest Service (USFS)**. Founded in 1937, TWS inspires, empowers, and enables wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and their habitat through science-based management and conservation. Appropriations for the following programs within the jurisdiction of the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies will affect the current and future status of wildlife and wildlife professionals in North America. To empower and enable the appropriate use of science within these programs and beyond, TWS respectfully requests the following programmatic funding in FY 2018.

FY 2018 Interior Appropriation Requests — The Wildlife Society			
Agency	Program	FY 2017 Enacted	FY 2018 TWS
FWS	State & Tribal Wildlife Grants	63M	70M
	National Wildlife Refuge System	484M	586M
	Ecological Services	240M	253M
	NAWCA	38M	38M
	NMBCA	4M	6.5M
	Partners for Fish and Wildlife	52M	54M
	Migratory Bird Management	48M	50M
	Migratory Bird Joint Ventures	13M	19M
BLM	Wildlife & Fisheries Management	103M	121M
	T&E Species Management	22M	48M
	Wild Horse & Burro Management	81M	81M*
USGS	Ecosystems Mission Area	160M	174M
	Cooperative Research Units	17M	22M
USFS	Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat	140M	140M
	Forest and Rangelands Research	289M	303M

*BLM Wild Horse & Burro Management funding request accompanies request to remove an associated policy rider

NOTE: In addition to these FY 2018 requests, TWS urges Congress to ensure the independent science-advising role of federal advisory committees is protected during the Administration's recent actions to suspend and review these bodies.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The **State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program (STWG)** is the nation's *only* program that directly supports development and implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs), thereby assisting states in preventing classification of more wildlife as threatened or endangered. Collectively, STWG funds support strong partnerships between federal, state, tribal, private, and nonprofit entities that enable wildlife professionals to implement on-the-ground conservation activities that benefit over 12,000 at-risk species. Between FY 2002 and FY 2010, appropriations for STWG were greater than \$70 million per year. Subsequent budget reductions in STWG, however, have not allowed this highly successful program to make adequate progress. **TWS requests Congress empower the front lines of conservation with at least \$70 million for STWG.**

As a member of the *Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE)*, **TWS requests at least \$586 million for the National Wildlife Refuge System's operations and maintenance accounts in FY 2018.** CARE estimates that the Refuge System needs at least \$900 million in annual operations and maintenance funding to properly administer its 566 refuge units, 38 wetland management districts, and 5 marine national monuments spanning over 850 million acres of land and water. Without adequate funding, habitat restoration is limited, invasive species are left unchecked, poaching and other illegal activities occur, and our nation's wildlife heritage declines. Furthermore, the Refuge System generates approximately \$4.87 in economic activity for every \$1 appropriated by Congress. By providing \$586 million in FY 2018, Congress will bring us much closer to achieving the necessary \$900 million by FY 2021.

The **North American Wetlands Conservation Act** is a cooperative, non-regulatory, incentive-based program that has shown unprecedented success in maintaining and restoring wetlands, waterfowl, and other migratory bird populations. This program, however, has remained drastically underfunded despite its demonstrated effectiveness. **We greatly appreciate the \$3 million increase in FY 2017 and ask that Congress again provide at least \$38 million for NAWCA in FY 2018.**

Since 2002, the **Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA)** has provided more than \$58.5 million in grants to support 510 projects in 36 countries that enable wildlife professionals to conserve 386 bird species on 4.2 million acres of habitats in the United States, Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Moreover, NMBCA has achieved a partner match ratio of nearly 4:1 despite requiring only a 3:1 match. **TWS recommends Congress increase funding to at least \$6.5 million in FY 2018 to achieve greater conservation results under the program.**

Through the **Ecological Services Program**, FWS works with diverse public and private partners to help identify species facing extinction and reduce threats to their populations so that the requirement of federal protection can be removed. Wildlife professionals in FWS are working on new strategies to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Ecological Services Program and reduce regulatory burdens on private partners. To support these actions—and the increased emphasis on consultation and recovery—we recommend Congress **provide at least \$106 million for Planning and Consultation, \$35 million for Conservation and Restoration, \$23 million for Listing, and \$89 million for Recovery in FY 2018.**

TWS regularly expresses the importance of wildlife habitat on a mosaic of public and private lands. The **Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (PFW)** allows voluntary habitat restoration goals on private lands to be achieved through cost-efficient financial and technical assistance from wildlife professionals in FWS. For the role this program plays in improving private lands wildlife stewardship while working to preempt ESA listings through projects like the Monarch Butterfly Conservation Initiative, **TWS requests at least \$54 million for PFW in FY 2018.**

The **Migratory Bird Joint Ventures**, part of FWS' **Migratory Bird Management** program, are locally-directed partnerships that develop and implement science-based habitat conservation strategies for all species of birds across North America. These partnerships have leveraged federal funds at 32:1 to enhance and protect over 26 million acres of habitats. **TWS supports \$50 million for Migratory Bird Management, including \$19 million for Joint Ventures.**

Bureau of Land Management

The **Wildlife and Fisheries Management (WFM)** program maintains and restores fish, wildlife, and their habitats across a large portion of America's western landscapes. This includes projects to mitigate the effects of public land use on wildlife species and their habitat. With the anticipated expansion of energy development on BLM lands—and the associated mitigation challenges—we **recommend that Congress support WFM professionals with at least \$121 million in FY 2018.** We also appreciate the increase of \$9 million in directed funds for greater sage-grouse conservation in FY 2017 and request continuation of this funding in FY 2018.

The **Threatened and Endangered Species Management Program (TESM)** allows wildlife professionals at BLM to meet the agency's responsibilities in recovering the over 420 ESA listed species that occur on BLM managed lands. In a March 2001 Report to Congress, BLM called for a doubling of the TESM budget to \$48 million over 5 years to meet the needs of the program. Now, over fifteen years later, this goal has yet to be met. In light of this, **we strongly encourage Congress to increase overall funding for TESM to \$48 million in FY 2018.**

TWS, co-chair of the *National Horse and Burro Rangeland Management Coalition*, recognizes horses and burros in the U.S. as ecologically invasive, feral species. Horse and burro populations on the range reached >72,000 individuals in March 2017, exceeding BLM's estimated threshold for ecological sustainability by >45,000 animals. In FY 2018 the on-range population is expected to grow beyond 85,000 animals. To achieve ecologically sustainable levels of horses and burros on BLM rangelands without substantial budget increases **the current appropriations language limiting the sale and/or destruction of unwanted or unadoptable wild horses and burros must be removed from the Interior Appropriations bill.** We support the President's FY 2018 Request to remove this language as a way to increase program flexibility and enable effective implementation of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, as amended. Until Congress enables BLM to responsibly manage wild horses and burros by removing this text from the appropriations bill, federal funds will continue to be wasted warehousing nearly 50,000 animals, rather than spent on productive rangeland management activities. **Congress must enable effective management of wild horses and burros and our nation's rangelands by empowering BLM to remove excess horses and burros from the range at a meaningful rate and focus resources on rangeland habitat restoration.** Removal of this appropriations rider, as requested by the Administration, will allow this program's budget to eventually be reduced, and put federal funds toward more effective rangeland and wildlife management activities. **TWS**

recommends a flat budget of \$81 million for Wild Horse and Burro Management and the removal of the appropriations language. We also request Congress direct BLM to increase gather and removal of animals from the range to meet ecologically sustainable populations.

U.S. Geological Survey

As a member of the *USGS Coalition*, TWS supports the critical and unique mission of USGS to provide the country with objective scientific research and data collection on the complex environmental issues facing our nation. TWS specifically requests **at least \$174 million for the Ecosystems Mission Area**, which contains programmatic resources for fisheries, wildlife, environments, invasive species, and **Cooperative Research Units (CRU)**.

Within the Ecosystems Mission Area, **we support at least \$22 million for the CRU program**. CRUs foster federal, state, non-governmental organizations, and academic partnerships to provide actionable science tailored to the needs of wildlife managers on the front lines, and helps develop the next generation of wildlife professionals. These partnerships leverage more than three dollars in outside funds for every federal dollar invested into the program. An increase in funding would allow CRUs to continue to leverage outside sources and fill critical vacancies within their program to serve state cooperator interests across the U.S.

Climate Sciences Centers (CSC), a DOI program administered by the Climate and Land Use Change Mission Area, work with cooperators throughout their 8 regions to provide actionable climate science research. Following a similar model as CRUs, CSCs carry out dual roles by providing usable climate science research while also training the next generation of natural sciences professionals at host universities. These university partnerships have provided more than \$8.2 million in leveraged funds to CSCs since the program's inception seven years ago.

U.S. Forest Service

The traditional ten-year moving average for forecasting fire suppression costs for the upcoming fiscal year have not met USFS suppression needs since FY 2002. This results in funding transfers and shortfalls that negatively affect the ability of staff at USFS to implement proactive forest research and management projects. DOI and USFS need a long-term fire funding solution that will result in stable and predictable budgets. As a result, **TWS supports bipartisan congressional efforts to address federal fire funding challenges, minimize fund transfers, and address the continued erosion of agency budgets over time, with the goal of reinvesting in key programs that will restore forests to healthier more resilient conditions.**

Improving the future health and sustainability of the nation's forests and grasslands requires a strong investment in USFS Research and Development (R&D). Through long-term monitoring and collaborative research efforts with States and other partners, USFS R&D generates broad environmental and societal benefits, including an understanding of wildlife-habitat relationships for multiple species and communities that enables informed land management decisions. **TWS encourages Congress to increase funding for *all* Forest Service R&D to a minimum of \$303 million in FY 2018, including at least \$220 million directed to Forest and Rangeland Research program areas exclusive of Forest Inventory and Analysis.** Furthermore, TWS appreciates the \$140 million Congress provided for the applied Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management program in FY 2017 and we encourage Congress to continue—and consider increasing—this funding in FY 2018.