



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Leaders in Wildlife Science, Management and Conservation

Date: 15 March 2019

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

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Re: **FY 2020 Appropriations for USGS, FWS, BLM, and USFS**

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The Wildlife Society (TWS) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony concerning the FY 2020 budgets for the **U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and U.S. Forest Service (USFS)**. Founded in 1937, TWS represents approximately 15,000 wildlife professions with a mission to inspire, empower, and enable wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and 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 enable the appropriate use of science within these programs and beyond, TWS respectfully requests the following programmatic funding in FY 2020.

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

FY 2020 Interior Appropriation Requests — The Wildlife Society			
Agency	Program	FY 2019 Enacted	FY 2020 TWS
USGS	Ecosystems Mission Area	156.9 M	174 M
	Cooperative Research Units	18.4 M	24 M
FWS	State & Tribal Wildlife Grants	64.6 M	90 M
	National Wildlife Refuge System	488.3 M	586 M
	Ecological Services	251.8 M	262 M
	NAWCA	42 M	44 M
	NMBCA	3.9 M	6.5 M
	Partners for Fish and Wildlife	51.6 M	54.4 M
	Migratory Bird Management	46.4 M	50 M
BLM	Wildlife & Aquatic Management	126 M	128 M
	Wild Horse & Burro Management	80.5 M	80.5 M*
USFS	Research & Development	300 M	311 M

U.S. Geological Survey

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

Within the Ecosystems Mission Area, **TWS supports at least \$24 million for the CRU program**. This program fosters federal, state, NGO, and academic partnerships to provide actionable science tailored to the needs of natural resource managers on the front lines. The support of many state agencies, universities, and NGOs has allowed the program to leverage more than three dollars in outside funds for every federal dollar invested. By housing USGS scientists in Land Grant universities, this program also develops the next generation of wildlife professionals and provides them with an understanding of actionable science responsive to stakeholder needs. An increase of funding to \$24 million would allow the CRUs to fill a record 38 CRU scientist vacancies (32%). If inflation-adjusted funding is once again neglected by Congress, this problem may continue to increase in scope. The increase of \$1 million in the final FY 2019 language failed to provide the funds needed to make a sizable impact in filling these vacancies.

Within the Land Resources Mission Area, the **Climate Adaptation Science Centers** program responds to regional wildlife, ecosystems, and community-based stakeholder needs in the face of a changing climate. TWS encourages Congress to retain this program within the Land Resources Mission Area, where its existing framework has effectively leveraged millions in funding from nonfederal partners to provide stakeholders with a better understanding of how resources will react and respond to climate change.

The Wildlife Society is encouraged by discussions surrounding the public lands **maintenance backlog** by the Administration and Congress. However, TWS is concerned that USGS, which provides added scientific capacity for federal public lands agencies, is not being considered within these conversations. With a maintenance backlog of over \$400 million, the facilities needs of USGS have to be addressed for them to remain responsive to federal public lands agencies and partners. **TWS encourages inclusion of USGS in funding conversations on the maintenance backlog.**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The **State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program (STWG)** is the nation's *only* program that encourages developing and implementing State Wildlife Action Plans, thereby directly supporting states in preventing wildlife from being listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Collectively, STWG funds support strong partnerships among 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. In FY 2010, appropriations were at \$90 million for the program – allowing states to complete more of the projects deemed necessary for monitoring and recovery of at-risk species. Subsequent budget reductions in STWG, however, have not allowed this highly successful program to reach its full potential. The Wildlife Society requests Congress once again reach prior funding levels for this highly effective program by providing **at least \$90 million in FY 2020**. TWS also requests the competitive

funding portions be open to all states and tribes working on at-risk species recovery, and not be funded exclusively for implementing Interior Secretarial Order 3362.

The Wildlife Society requests at least \$586 million for the National Wildlife Refuge System's (NWRs) operations and maintenance accounts in FY 2020. The NWRs has long been an economic driver, generating approximately \$4.87 in economic activity for every \$1 appropriated by Congress. However, the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement, to which TWS is a member, estimates NWRs needs at least \$900 million in annual operations and maintenance funding to properly administer its 567 units, 38 wetland management districts, and 5 marine national monuments spanning over 850 million acres of land and water. Without adequate funding, ecosystems are not restored; invasive species are left unchecked; infrastructure for multiple use opportunities such as hunting, fishing, and hiking are not realized; and illegal activities such as poaching are not addressed.

Through the **Ecological Services Program (ESP)**, the USFWS 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 efficacy of ESP and reduce regulatory burdens on private partners. To efficaciously move species through all components of the ESA listing and delisting process, TWS requests **at least \$23 million for Listing, \$108 million for Planning and Consultation, \$35 million for Conservation and Restoration, and \$96 million for Recovery.**

Further promoting FWS' partnership with private landowners is the **Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program**. This program allows voluntary habitat restoration goals, aligned with identified strategic priorities, on private lands to be achieved through cost-efficient financial and technical assistance. For the role this program plays in improving private lands wildlife stewardship while working to preempt ESA listings, **TWS supports the Administration's request of \$54.4 million for PFW in FY 2020.**

The **North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA)** is a non-regulatory, incentive-based program that has demonstrated success in maintaining and restoring wetlands, waterfowl, and other migratory bird populations by conserving more than 33.4 million acres since 1989. This program has remained chronically underfunded despite its demonstrated effectiveness. **TWS greatly appreciates the \$2 million increase in FY 2019 and asks that Congress provide a similar increase in FY 2020 with an appropriation of \$44 million.**

Since 2002, the **Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA)** has provided more than \$66 million in grants to support 570 projects in 36 countries that enable wildlife professionals to conserve approximately 400 migratory bird species on 4.5 million acres in the U.S., 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. The needs of U.S. migratory bird species and conservation efforts to keep these species common extends to landscapes far beyond U.S. borders. As a result, **TWS recommends Congress increase funding to at least \$6.5 million in FY 2020 to achieve greater proactive conservation results under the program.**

The **Migratory Bird Joint Ventures (MBJV)**, 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 31:1 to enhance and conserve over 27 million acres of avian habitat. **TWS supports \$50 million for Migratory Bird Management, including \$19.9 million for enhancing and promoting MJBV.**

Bureau of Land Management

The **Wildlife and Aquatic Management** program maintains and restores fish, wildlife, and their habitat across a large portion of America's western landscapes. This includes projects to balance effects of multiple public land uses, such as energy development and livestock grazing, with needs of native species. With the continued expansion of energy development on BLM lands—and the associated mitigation challenges—**TWS recommends Congress support the Wildlife and Aquatic Management program with at least \$128 million in FY 2020.**

The Wildlife Society would also like to stress the importance of the threatened and endangered species work of the BLM, and **urges Congress to maintain this work as a separately funded line item.** Approximately 480 ESA listed species and at least 31 species that are candidates for ESA listing occur on BLM-managed lands. **TWS encourages Congress to increase overall funding for Threatened and Endangered Species Management and reject efforts by the Administration to absorb this program into other line items.**

The Wildlife Society recognizes free-ranging horses and burros in the U.S. as ecologically invasive, feral species. Free-ranging horse and burro populations on the range reached >82,000 individuals in March 2018, exceeding BLM's estimated threshold for ecological sustainability by over 50,000 animals. To achieve ecologically sustainable levels of horses and burros on BLM rangelands without substantial budget increases, **the current policy rider limiting sale and/or destruction of unwanted or unadoptable wild horses and burros must be removed from the Interior Appropriations bill.** Until Congress enables BLM to responsibly manage free-ranging horses and burros by removing this text from the appropriations bill, federal funds will continue to be wasted warehousing over 50,000 animals, rather than spent on productive rangeland management activities. **Given the current management direction Congress has provided to the BLM, TWS recommends flat funding at \$80.5 million in FY 2020.** TWS recognizes that removal of this appropriations rider will ultimately allow this program's budget to be reduced as requested by the Administration.

U.S. Forest Service

The Wildlife Society thanks Congressional conferees for their interest in the research priorities of **USFS Research and Development (R&D)**. TWS encourages an acknowledgement of wildlife science and management within R&D priorities and hopes the Administration will better reflect this work in future budget requests. Improving the future health and sustainability of the nation's forests and grasslands through collaboration with states and other partners requires a strong investment in R&D. **TWS encourages Congress to increase funding for all Forest Service R&D to a minimum of \$305 million in FY 2020, including at least \$227 million directed to Forest and Rangeland Research program areas exclusive of Forest Inventory and Analysis.**