



Recovering America's Wildlife Act Reintroduction: A Major Step Forward for Fish and Wildlife Conservation

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July 12, 2019 (Bethesda, MD) - The American Fisheries Society (AFS) and The Wildlife Society (TWS) are praising landmark legislation that seeks to transform fish and wildlife conservation across the nation. U.S. Representatives Debbie Dingell (D-Mich.) and Jeff Fortenberry (R-Neb.) have reintroduced the *Recovering America's Wildlife Act*, which will provide critically needed increases in funding for protecting, conserving, and managing the 12,000 species across the nation that are at risk of becoming threatened or endangered.

According to a recent United Nations [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#) (IPBES) report, more than a million species worldwide face an increased threat of extinction. Within the U.S., up to a third of species are in need of urgent conservation action. Habitat loss and degradation, invasive species, disease and pollution all pose threats to our wildlife. As noted by the report, challenges for species are being amplified by a changing climate and associated human activity.

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act will secure much-needed resources to combat this crisis by providing dedicated funding for State Wildlife Action Plans. These plans provide all 50 states with a roadmap for proactive, voluntary conservation of fish and wildlife to address species in decline. Unfortunately, Congress has never provided adequate funding for these plans, appropriating only about \$60 million annually.

This is vastly below the estimated \$1.3 billion a year needed by state fish and wildlife professionals to conserve at-risk species before they reach the point of endangerment. In addition to funding for state agencies, this legislation would also provide much needed funding to tribal fish and wildlife agencies to work alongside states in the conservation of at-risk species.

"Forty percent of the nation's freshwater fish species are at risk from a variety of causes including water pollution, sedimentation, dams and other river and stream alterations. Fish and wildlife professionals can help to reverse these species declines if they have the proper funding to implement science-based conservation plans. Species like the eastern brook trout, a native fish that is imperiled in 17 states in the U.S., would benefit from the habitat restoration, water quality improvements and watershed connectivity that would be made possible through the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. This bill provides the support and the certainty to reverse the disturbing declines in fish across the country," said Douglas Austen, Executive Director of AFS.

"State Wildlife Action Plans have proven that species can be recovered through voluntary, non-regulatory mechanisms." said TWS President Darren Miller. "Species such as the New England cottontail and the North American river otter have rebounded as a result of these plans, and other species such as the Delmarva fox squirrel and Louisiana black bear have recovered to the

point of no longer needing Endangered Species Act protections. With the passage of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, we will further advance effective, collaborative conservation for the benefit of wildlife populations and the American public.”

Passage of the bipartisan Recovering America's Wildlife Act will provide state fish and wildlife professionals and their partners with the resources needed to conserve species in a proactive, cost effective, and non-regulatory manner. The Wildlife Society and the American Fisheries Society look forward to working toward passage of this important legislation.

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Founded in 1937, TWS and its network of affiliated chapters and sections represents more than 15,000 professional wildlife biologists, managers, and educators dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship. TWS' mission is to inspire, empower, and enable wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and habitat through science-based management and conservation. www.wildlife.org

Founded in 1870, the American Fisheries Society (AFS) is the world's oldest and largest fisheries science society. The AFS mission is to improve the conservation and sustainability of fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems by advancing fisheries and aquatic science and promoting the development of fisheries professionals. With its renowned journals, books and conferences, AFS is the leading source of fisheries science and management information in North America and around the world. www.fisheries.org

To learn more about TWS' and AFS' efforts on the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, check out the [Reversing America's Wildlife Crisis](#) report, a collaboration between TWS, AFS, and National Wildlife Federation. This report calls attention to North American and migratory wildlife species facing population declines due to a variety of threats. It echoes the intent of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act in calling for more proactive management to prevent these declines and an improved funding mechanism to support such efforts.