



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Leaders in Wildlife Science, Management and Conservation

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

Submitted by: Dr. John E. McDonald, Jr
President, The Wildlife Society
425 Barlow Place, Suite 200, Bethesda, MD 20814

Re: FY 2019 Appropriations for FWS, BLM, USGS, and USFS

POC: Caroline Murphy, AWB®, cmurphy@wildlife.org
Government Relations Program Coordinator, The Wildlife Society

The Wildlife Society (TWS) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony concerning the FY 2019 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 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 2019.

FY 2019 Interior Appropriation Requests — The Wildlife Society			
Agency	Program	FY 2018 Enacted	FY 2019 TWS
FWS	State & Tribal Wildlife Grants	63.6M	70M
	National Wildlife Refuge System	486.6M	586M
	Ecological Services	247.8M	255M
	NAWCA	40.0M	40M
	NMBCA	3.9M	6.5M
	Partners for Fish and Wildlife	51.6M	54M
	Migratory Bird Management	48.4M	50M
BLM	Wildlife & Fisheries Management	115.8M	121M
	T&E Species Management	21.6M	48M
	Wild Horse & Burro Management	75.0M	80.6M*
USGS	Ecosystems Mission Area	157.7M	174M
	Cooperative Research Units	17.4M	24M
USFS	Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat	136.4M	140M
	Forest and Rangelands Research	297M	307M

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

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 (SWAPs), 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. 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 reach its full potential. The Wildlife Society sincerely appreciates the \$1 million increase provided for state formula grants in the FY 2018 omnibus and requests **at least \$70 million in FY 2019 to reflect pre FY 2011 funding levels**. TWS also requests **removal of the FY 2018 omnibus explanatory statement language that requires administrators of this program to place the highest priority for funding on ESA candidate species**. While many states already utilize STWG funding for ESA candidate species conservation as outlined in their SWAP, other states utilize in whole or in part other conservation dollars –such as Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration funds (i.e., Pittman-Robertson) or ESA Section 6 grants. Removing this language in the FY 2019 appropriations package will ensure states have the flexibility to spend funds as efficiently as possible through a program that is already highly accountable to Congressional reporting requirements.

As a member of the *Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE)*, **TWS requests at least \$586 million for the National Wildlife Refuge System's (NWRS) operations and maintenance accounts in FY 2019**. The NWRS has long been an economic driver, generating approximately \$4.87 in economic activity for every \$1 appropriated by Congress. However, CARE estimates that NWRS needs at least \$900 million in annual operations and maintenance funding to properly administer more than 560 refuge 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 biking are not realized; and illegal activities, such as poaching, are not curbed.

Through the **Ecological Services Program (ESP)**, 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 efficacy of ESP and reduce regulatory burdens on private partners. The Wildlife Society was encouraged by a \$2 million increase in funding provided for the Recovery line item. To efficaciously move species through all components of the ESA listing and delisting process, TWS also requests **at least \$23 million for Listing, \$106 million for Planning and Consultation, and \$35 million for Conservation and Restoration**.

The **North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA)** is a cooperative, 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. **The Wildlife Society greatly appreciates the \$2 million increase in the FY**

2018 omnibus and asks that Congress again provide at least \$40 million for NAWCA in FY 2019.

Since 2002, the **Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA)** has provided more than \$62.2 million in grants to support 541 projects in 36 countries that enable wildlife professionals to conserve 386 migratory bird species on 4.2 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 2019 to achieve greater conservation results under the program.**

TWS regularly expresses the importance of wildlife habitat on private lands. The **Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (PFW)** 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 through projects like the Monarch Butterfly Conservation Initiative, **TWS requests at least \$54 million for PFW in FY 2019.**

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 protect over 27 million acres of avian habitat. **The Wildlife Society supports \$50 million for Migratory Bird Management** for enhancing and promoting MBJV.

Bureau of Land Management

The **Wildlife and Fisheries Management (WFM)** 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 WFM program with at least \$121 million in FY 2019.**

The **Threatened and Endangered Species Management Program (TESM)** allows wildlife professionals at BLM to meet the agency's responsibilities in recovering the over 480 ESA listed species that occur on BLM managed lands. Program funds also work toward conservation and recovery of the 31 ESA candidate species on BLM lands prior to ESA regulations being considered. 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. Nearly 20 years later, this goal has yet to be met. **TWS strongly encourages Congress to increase overall funding for TESM to \$48 million in FY 2019 to work toward recovery of ESA-listed species and to proactively conserve ESA-candidate species.**

TWS 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 nearly 50,000 animals, rather than spent on productive rangeland management activities. **Given the current management direction Congress has provided to the BLM, TWS recommends \$80.5 million in FY 2019, thereby restoring FY2017 funding levels.** The Wildlife Society recognizes that removal of this appropriations rider will ultimately allow this program's budget to be reduced. The Wildlife Society is encouraged to see Congressional interest in this program detailed in the FY 2018 omnibus explanatory statement, **but we urge Congress to take the recommendations provided by the BLM and bodies such as the Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board seriously when considering appropriated funds and associated riders.**

U.S. Geological Survey

As a member of the *USGS Coalition*, TWS supports the critical and unique mission of USGS to provide 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 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, 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 of funding to \$24 million would allow the CRUs to fill a record 36 CRU scientist vacancies (30%). These vacancies may continue to increase in scope if inflation-adjusted funding is once again neglected by Congress this fiscal year.

U.S. Forest Service

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. **The Wildlife Society encourages Congress to increase funding for all Forest Service R&D to a minimum of \$307 million in FY 2018, including at least \$224 million directed to Forest and Rangeland Research program areas exclusive of Forest Inventory and Analysis.** Furthermore, TWS is concerned about the decrease in funding provided to USFS Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat in the FY 2018 omnibus, and requests **a return to FY 2017 levels of \$140 million.**