



ARKANSAS CHAPTER
of
The Wildlife Society

May 10, 2021

Representative Rick Crawford
U.S. House of Representatives
2422 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H.R. 2773)

Dear Congressman Crawford:

The Arkansas Chapter of The Wildlife Society is writing to **request your co-sponsorship of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act**, originally introduced as H.R. 4647 by Representatives Fortenberry (R-NE) and Dingell (D-MI) in December 2017, passed in December 2019 out of the House on Natural Resources Committee, and reintroduced on April 22, 2021.

For generations, America's sportspeople like you have led the charge in the conservation of our nation's fish and wildlife resources by contributing to state-based conservation efforts through state license fees and federal excise taxes. The efforts of conservation-minded hunters, anglers, recreational shooters and trappers resulted in the development of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. As a result, sportspeople contributed to the recovery of iconic species such as the wild turkey, white-tailed deer, and many waterfowl species.

Founded in 1937, The Wildlife Society and its 15,000 members work to inspire, empower, and enable wildlife biologists and managers to sustain wildlife populations and habitat through science-based management and conservation. The Arkansas Chapter of The Wildlife Society has about 90 members from various state and federal agencies, consulting as well as timber and farm companies, and several universities/colleges across Arkansas. Among other things, The Chapter aims to promote sound stewardship of wildlife resources and of the environments upon which humans and wildlife depend.

Arkansas has 380 at-risk species as identified by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission in their congressionally-mandated conservation action blueprints, known as State Wildlife Action Plan. The Arkansas Wildlife Action Plan includes northern bobwhite and the American black duck, but also non-game species which share the same habitat. The Plan also lists many pollinators, such as the Arkansas state's butterfly (Diana fritillary), which are essential to agricultural crops throughout The Natural State.

Nationally, conservation efforts for these at-risk species are critically underfunded, only receiving about \$60 million annually through the existing [State and Tribal Wildlife Grants](#) program. This is not nearly enough for states and tribes to plan for multi-year conservation and recovery projects or prevent costlier measures, such as Endangered Species Act listings, from occurring. This bill represents a proactive and voluntary conservation mechanism that would avoid costlier regulation. Furthermore, **passage of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act would match an appropriate solution to the scale of this crisis.** By dedicating \$1.3 billion annually for the adequate implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans, wildlife professionals will have the resources needed to hold the nation's wildlife in the public trust for generations to come.

Here in Arkansas, this additional funding will allow important habitat restoration, population recovery, and associated outdoor recreation. The outdoor recreation economy including hunting, angling, wildlife watching, nature photography, hiking and camping generates **\$788 billion annually** in consumer spending and supported **5.2 million jobs** (*Source: Outdoor Industry Association/Bureau of Economic Analysis*). Importantly, a portion these funds support research projects conducted not only by Arkansas colleges and universities, but also small businesses in the form of environmental consulting firms. Thus this legislation will not only be a tremendous win for Arkansas's natural resources, but also directly benefit local economic activity.

Federal pass-through dollars to the State Wildlife Grants have been very successful in making a positive impact on the quality of life in Arkansas. Among other examples, over 550 acres of habitat were restored at Warren Prairie Natural Area. This allowed biologists to re-locate federally threatened red-cockaded woodpeckers to the site, which attracts birdwatchers from around the country to get a chance to see this rare bird. Moreover, these habitats are also home to thriving wild turkey populations, which demonstrates how shrewd conservation efforts can benefit multiple species. A second example involves the acquisition of 320 acres of recharge area for Foushee Cave Natural Area, allowing for the protection of seven at-risk species, including the federally endangered Indiana and gray bats (a natural insect control). In addition to protecting these species, local residents are ensured that clean ground water in the area is secured for them and future generations. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act would ensure many more successful conservation projects that directly benefit the quality of life in Arkansas.

Thank you for considering this important legislation. It is our hope that your office will also put your faith in the professionals working on the front lines of conservation by cosponsoring this legislation. If you have any questions regarding the Recovering America's Wildlife Act and the Arkansas Chapter of The Wildlife Society's support for this legislation, please feel free to reach me at 501-794-4898.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca McPeake". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Rebecca (Becky) McPeake
President, Arkansas Chapter of The Wildlife Society