

AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY • THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

07 December 2021

Senator Tom Carper, Chair
Environment and Public Works Committee
U.S. Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Shelley Moore Capito
Environment and Public Works Committee
U.S. Senate
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Carper and Ranking Member Capito,

The Wildlife Society and the American Fisheries Society thank you for holding a hearing on the **Recovering America's Wildlife Act (S. 2372)** - groundbreaking legislation that would empower our nation's fish and wildlife professionals to proactively and cost-effectively conserve at-risk species.

Our organizations are dedicated to development of natural resource professionals, advancing science, and conserving fish and wildlife. We work to promote science-based policies that empower fish and wildlife professionals to hold our nation's fish and wildlife in the public trust for generations to come.

With more than 200,000 species of plants and animals across America, our nation's fish and wildlife professionals are working on the front lines of species diversity and conservation. The *Reversing America's Wildlife Crisis* report (attached), released by the American Fisheries Society, The Wildlife Society, and the National Wildlife Federation, documents how the diversity of native species face alarming declines from threats such as habitat loss, invasive species, disease, and the accumulating problems caused by a changing climate. As detailed in the report, up to one-third of U.S. species need immediate conservation action, including 40 percent of freshwater fish species and 42 percent of amphibian species.

As relayed by the more than 1,700 natural resources scientists in a 2019 letter to Congress (attached), reversing these staggering declines requires a proactive and cooperative approach that will empower state and tribal natural resource managers to work directly with stakeholders, creating buy-in at all levels of governance. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act would help achieve this goal by providing nearly \$1.4 billion in dedicated funding annually for the more than 12,000 species determined by state fish and wildlife agencies to be at-risk.

Specifically, the legislation would provide funding for implementation of states' wildlife action plans. These congressionally mandated action plans provide a roadmap for full implementation

of at-risk species recovery efforts by state agencies alongside federal and non-government partners. The bill would also provide \$97.5 million in dedicated funding annually for tribal fish and wildlife agencies to work on at-risk species recovery.

Unfortunately, years of inadequate federal funding has not allowed for the goals of state wildlife action plans or tribal species recovery efforts to be realized. Tribes have continuously been left out of federal funding opportunities for conservation. At present, no federal fund exists that tribal agencies can utilize annually for long-term conservation planning.

By rewriting this narrative and investing in state and tribal species conservation, our public trust wildlife will have a chance at recovery, saving the federal government significant funds by avoiding future species listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). For species that have already reached the point of ESA listing, natural resource professionals will have the ability to prioritize listed species conservation efforts thanks to 15 percent of funds targeted at multistakeholder conservation efforts for listed species.

We strongly encourage the committee to favorably consider this legislation in order to provide fish and wildlife professionals with a stable and predictable funding source to combat the growing biodiversity crisis and maintain native species for the enjoyment of all Americans.

Sincerely,



Douglas J. Austen, Ph.D.
Executive Director
American Fisheries Society



Gordon R. Batcheller, CWB®
President
The Wildlife Society

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.

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.

fisheries.org