

AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY • THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

18 January 2022

Representative Raúl Grijalva, Chair
U.S. House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Bruce Westerman
U.S. House Natural Resources Committee
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman,

The Wildlife Society and the American Fisheries Society thank you and your colleagues for your consideration of the **Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H.R. 2773)** - groundbreaking legislation that will 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 allow natural resource 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](#), released by the American Fisheries Society, The Wildlife Society, and the National Wildlife Federation, documents how the diversity of native species in the U.S. 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.

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act will help to empower state and tribal natural resource managers to reverse these staggering declines through science-based conservation. Specifically, the legislation would provide \$1.3 billion in dedicated funding annually for the more than 12,000 species determined by state fish and wildlife agencies to be at-risk as set forth in state's congressionally mandated wildlife action plans. 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.

These congressionally mandated action plans provide a roadmap for full implementation of at-risk species recovery efforts by state agencies. Unfortunately, years of inadequate funding has limited the ability of state wildlife action plans or tribal species recovery efforts to be realized.

Action Plans are only funded to meet a small fraction of species recovery needs, and tribes are continuously left out of federal funding opportunities for conservation. At present, no federal funds exist 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). With 15 percent of the funds in this bill targeted to multi-stakeholder conservation of federally listed species, natural resource professionals will also have the opportunity to collaborate on the recovery and delisting of species that have already reached the point of ESA regulation. By working with federal and NGO partners and private landowners, our nation's fish and wildlife professionals can use these resources to create buy-in at all levels of governance through proactive and cooperative conservation.

We thank the committee for taking the time to review this important legislation, and strongly encourage the committee for favorable consideration in order to provide fish and wildlife professionals with a stable and predictable funding source to 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, The Wildlife Society (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