

THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Leaders in Wildlife Science, Management and Conservation

POLICY
BRIEF

State and Tribal Wildlife Grant Program

Congress created the **State and Tribal Wildlife Grant (STWG) Program** in 2000 to assist state fish and wildlife agencies and their partners with the conservation of public-trust species.¹ STWG is the only federal program that directly supports states in keeping common species common and thus preventing wildlife from becoming threatened or endangered. It is the primary program supporting the development and implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs), which identify the species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) in each state and detail the on-the-ground conservation actions needed to conserve those species.¹

Methods

STWG funds are administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Congress appropriates funds for STWG on an annual basis. USFWS apportions a majority of those funds to states, commonwealths, and U.S. territories based on a formula that considers each state's population and total geographic size (Figure 1). Tribal funds, and some state funds, are also attained through a STWG competitive grants subprogram.¹

As a condition for receiving STWG funding, each state and territory must develop a SWAP. These plans are approved by USFWS and are implemented—in part—using the federal funds provided through STWG. SWAPs are updated at least every ten years. STWG funds may be used to address a variety of conservation needs as identified within a SWAP, including research, habitat management, fish and wildlife surveys, and species restoration. Funds may also be used to update, revise, or modify a SWAP.¹

To access STWG funds; states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico must provide a minimum 25 percent match for SWAP planning-related activities and a 35 percent match for all other types of eligible activities, like implementation of SWAP projects.¹ Tribes and territories are exempt from this matching funds requirement.

Results

All 50 states and five territories have created a SWAP in response to STWG. Almost \$1.5 billion has been appropriated to STWG as of fiscal year (FY) 2022.² Collectively, STWG funds aid in the conservation of more than 12,000 SGCN, as identified by states and territories.

Discussion

STWG funds provide an ongoing basis for conserving the nation's fish and wildlife and are vital for the protection of all public-trust species. In 2016, the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish & Wildlife Resources recommended that Congress dedicate up to \$1.3 billion in new funding annually to effectively implement all SWAPs.³ In 2018, this proposal was updated to address much-needed funding for tribal conservation efforts. Past appropriations for STWG range from \$90 million in FY 2010 down to \$50 million in FY 2001 (Figure 2).²

Implications for Wildlife Professionals

STWG supports strong partnerships between federal, state, tribal, private, and nonprofit entities that enable wildlife professionals to implement conservation activities that conserve SGCN. Any reductions in STWG funding would constrict the ability of wildlife professionals to prevent further declines in these at-risk species.

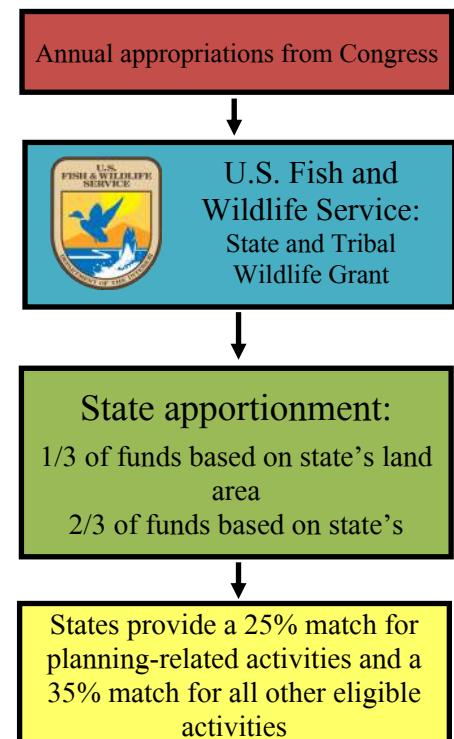


Figure 1. The process of appropriating funds to states and territories through the State and Tribal Wildlife Grant Program

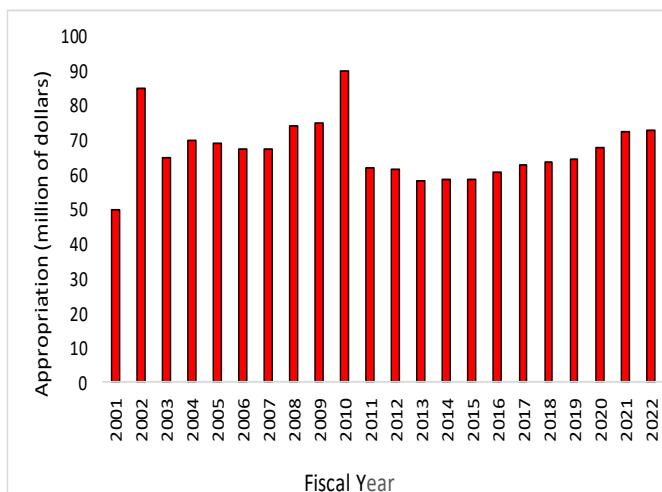


Figure 2. Annual appropriations for the STWG (Credit: Adapted from USFWS)²

State and Tribal Wildlife Grant Program: Success Stories



Swift Fox Recovery^{4,5,6}

STWG funds aided the successful recovery of the swift fox (*Vulpes velox*). Through broad cooperation between state, federal, tribal, and private entities in six western states receiving STWG funds, the swift fox was effectively removed from the federal endangered species candidate list in 2001. STWG funds now support the continued conservation of this species. From 2006 to 2009, a partnership involving Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks; the World Wildlife Fund; and the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, reintroduced 40 swift foxes in the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. The reservation now has a stable swift fox population, thus helping to ensure the long-term viability of this species.

Swift fox (Credit: Tony Ifland, USFWS)

Survey of Mountain Plovers in Nebraska^{4,5}

STWG funds can be used for a variety of conservation activities. In Nebraska, biologists used STWG funding to survey the range of the mountain plover (*Charadrius montanus*). Prior to the survey, the biologists knew of only two nesting pairs of the species in Nebraska. Throughout the survey hundreds more of the birds were discovered. The survey also increased the biologists' knowledge of habitats where the birds nest, indicating the common use of fallow farm lands. With that information, biologists were able to encourage farmers to till around the nests, thus increasing the survival rate of chicks. Nebraska now has a thriving mountain plover population, which helped contribute to the USFWS decision to not list the mountain plover as threatened or endangered in 2011.



Mountain plover (Credit: Seabamirum, Flickr)



Columbia Spotted Frog Listing Prevention^{5,7}

The Columbia spotted frog (*Rana luteiventris*) was designated as a candidate species for ESA listing in 1993. STWG funds were utilized in Utah to repatriate and successfully establish two populations of the frog in areas where they have been extirpated for over 30 years, thus helping to prevent the species from becoming endangered. STWG funds also provided the resources necessary to conduct the research used by USFWS in 2015 to determine that the species did not warrant federal listing. Through collaborative efforts—including clarifying objectives, utilizing sustainable grazing practices, creating ponds, and implementing effective conservation strategies—the frog population has rebounded across its range.

Columbia spotted frog (Credit: Kristin Lohr, USFWS)

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7. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2015. 12-Month Findings on Petitions to List 19 Species as Endangered or Threatened Species: Notice of 12-month petition findings. <<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2015-10-08/pdf/2015-25058.pdf>> Accessed May 2022.

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