



Alabama Chapter of The Wildlife Society

December 6, 2021
Senator Richard Shelby
304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Shelby,

The Alabama Chapter of The Wildlife Society (ACTWS) is requesting your support of the “**Recovering America’s Wildlife Act of 2021**” (S. 2372), introduced in July by Senators Martin Heinrich (D-NM) and co-sponsored by Senator Roy Blunt (R-MO). Senator Tuberville along with 31 other senators have “signed on” as co-sponsors while the counterpart House legislation (H. R. 2773) currently has 136 co-sponsors.

ACTWS is the professional society for wildlife biologists and managers in Alabama, with approximately 200 members representing dozens of federal, state, and local agencies, private industry, universities, and non-governmental organizations. We strive to sustain wildlife populations and habitat through science-based management, conservation, and policy.

Alabama ranks 5th in the country in plant and animal diversity, 1st in aquatic diversity and 3rd in the number of threatened and endangered animal species within our borders. The State of Alabama has **366** aquatic and terrestrial wildlife species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) as identified by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in their congressionally mandated conservation action blueprint, known as the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). The gopher frog, southern hognose snake, Alabama shad, reticulated flatwoods salamander, little brown bat and the Escambia crayfish are just a few of the species identified as at risk of extinction and needing immediate research and/or conservation action.

Alabama, like the vast majority of states has no dedicated funding for conservation of at-risk species other than the existing State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program (SWG). Although valuable and successful, the SWG does not provide enough funding (60-70 million dollars nationally) and only allows for conservation planning and management on short intervals. Long-term significant funding should provide opportunities to plan and implement management strategies and activities to enhance populations and improve habitat for SGCN and thus minimize potentially costlier outcomes such as Endangered Species Act listing.

Passage of the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act of 2021 (S. 2372 and H. R. 2773) will provide dedicated funds from the U.S. Treasury of \$1.3 billion to state fish and wildlife agencies and an additional \$97.5 million to Tribal Nations. Alabama’s 366 SGCNs will benefit greatly from passage of this legislation by providing an opportunity for long-term, collaborative conservation planning and management. Enactment of this legislation will also increase the power of federal conservation spending by leveraging matching funds from state agencies, Alabama universities, and non-governmental organizations.

On behalf of the Alabama Chapter of The Wildlife Society, we appreciate your positive consideration of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Ray Metzler
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