

American Bird Conservancy * Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies * Boone and Crockett Club * California Waterfowl * Delta Waterfowl * Ducks Unlimited * Maine Department of Inland, Fisheries and Wildlife * National Audubon Society * National Wildlife Federation * Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership * The Wildlife Society * Wildlife Management Institute

January 29, 2024

Martha Williams
Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Shalanda Young
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Williams and Director Young:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we offer our support for robust funding for the Migratory Bird Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the Fiscal Year 2025 budget request.

We are grateful for the recent budget requests for FWS programs that contribute to migratory bird conservation, and the important steps that have been taken under your leadership to advance vital conservation efforts.

For FY25, we encourage continued and growing support for bird conservation programs to address the ongoing needs and growing challenges facing migratory bird populations. The next fiscal year provides a significant opportunity to build on progress and increase the resources necessary to fulfill the Service's efforts to conserve migratory birds.

To that end, we recommend strong budgetary support for the elements of the Migratory Bird Program, to provide federal leadership on migratory bird conservation by implementing bedrock laws and grant programs, coordinating with partners across the nation and internationally, offering technical assistance, issuing permits, and more.

Conservation and Monitoring: This element provides critical conservation needs for the Program, including by supporting partnerships, working groups, and bird conservation planning efforts. The budget should ensure that each of the plans, including for waterfowl, landbirds, shorebirds, and waterbirds, have sufficient funding for staffing, coordination, and implementation. This element also supports key needs for population monitoring and surveys, research, technical assistance and guidance, species conflict reduction, and efforts such as the Urban Bird Treaty program, which helps to conserve habitat and enhance engagement with urban communities. At least \$53 million is needed for FY25 for this element to continue to meet these responsibilities, and the growing challenges facing migratory birds.

Permits: To help meet the Program's responsibilities for permitting, including under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, at least \$13.3 million is needed for staff capacity for the Permits element, along with further support for the ePermits program, to help promote efficient, modernized, and coordinated permitting efforts, including to address incidental take. These resources can help support regional office staff in processing permits and provide technical assistance and training to help meet the needs of the public.

Federal Duck Stamp: The Duck Stamp program has been a successful venture for decades, and funding helps to support implementation of this program, including the Duck Stamp contest, and more. The program has raised more than \$1 billion in funding since its inception, which has been invested back into wetland habitat conservation to benefit the National Wildlife Refuge System and the birds it supports, and at least \$1.12 million in FY25 will allow for continued success for the program.

North American Waterfowl Management/Joint Ventures: The network of Migratory Bird Joint Ventures provides highly valuable partnerships that bring together stakeholders to focus on landscape-level bird conservation delivery. Since 1986, partners have invested more than \$4.5 billion in conserving 27 million acres to benefit birds and people. To help support conservation needs, we recommend an increase in base funding, and a \$25 million funding level will provide an important step forward.

North American Wetlands Conservation Act: Since 1991, the NAWCA program has been a highly popular and successful conservation effort that protects and restores wetlands and associated habitats. It has leveraged more than \$4 billion to benefit more than 31 million acres from 3,200 projects in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, contributing to the long-term recovery of many wetland-dependent birds, and we urge continued robust funding levels for the program, with at least \$60 million for FY25.

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act: More than 350 species of birds migrate annually between the U.S. and Canada, and Latin America and Caribbean, including many species of songbirds and shorebirds facing steep declines. Increased funding for the NMBCA, with at least \$10 million for FY25, will support essential bird conservation needs across the Western Hemisphere. Since 2002, more than 700 projects funded by the NMBCA have positively impacted more than 5 million acres of migratory bird habitat in the U.S. and Canada, and more than 35 nations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests, and for your leadership. We look forward to continuing to work with you to advance conservation efforts to benefit birds and people across the nation and their international flyways.

Sincerely,

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cc: Jerome Ford, Assistant Director, Migratory Birds
Noah Matson, Deputy Assistant Director, Migratory Birds