



# THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Leaders in Wildlife Science, Management and Conservation

Date: 29 April 2024  
 Submitted to: Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies (int@appro.senate.gov)  
 Submitted by: The Wildlife Society – Ed Arnett, PhD, CWB®, Chief Executive Officer  
 Re: **FY 2025 Appropriations for USGS, FWS, BLM, and USFS**  
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The Wildlife Society appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony concerning the FY 2025 budgets for the **U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS)**. The Wildlife Society inspires, empowers, and enables wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and their habitat through science-based management and conservation. Founded in 1937, TWS and our network of affiliated chapters and sections represents more than 15,000 professional wildlife biologists, managers, and educators dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship. As leaders in wildlife science, management, and conservation, TWS promotes the use of science in all aspects of policy and decision-making. Appropriations for the following programs within the jurisdiction of the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies will affect current and future status of wildlife and wildlife professionals in North America.

FY 2025 Interior Appropriations Requests — The Wildlife Society			
Agency	Program	FY 24 Enacted	FY 25 TWS
<b>USGS</b>	Climate Adaptation Science Centers	63.1 M	69.3 M
	Cooperative Research Units	28.2 M	36 M
	National Wildlife Health Center	-	66 M
<b>USFWS</b>	National Wildlife Refuge System	527 M	602.3 M
	State and Tribal Wildlife Grants	72.4 M	100 M
	Ecological Services	288.3 M	338.2 M
	NMBCA	5 M	10 M
	Partners for Fish and Wildlife	59 M	68.1 M
	Migratory Bird Joint Ventures	16.8 M	25 M
<b>BLM</b>	Wildlife Habitat Management	143 M	153.4 M
<b>USFS</b>	Research and Development programs	300M	315.6 M

### **U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) - Ecosystems Mission Area**

The **Climate Adaptation Science Centers** program addresses evolving challenges posed by climate change on regional wildlife, ecosystems, and community-based stakeholders. Modest budget increases in recent fiscal periods have bolstered the program's ability to swiftly respond to demands and expand its capacity, facilitating proactive engagement of tribal communities in project design and resource allocation. Nevertheless, funding levels have failed to match identified needs, especially in equipping USGS with adequate resources to effectively convey scientific insights to stakeholders for actionable decision-making based on project outcomes. **For FY 2025, we recommend the full realization of the Administration's proposal, reaching no less than \$69.3 million.**

Located in Madison, WI, the Survey-wide **National Wildlife Health Center** is the sole federal BSL-3 facility dedicated exclusively to scientific inquiry and exploration of wildlife diseases impacting human, animal, and environmental welfare. It is the only national center dedicated to wildlife disease detection, prevention, and control throughout the United States. TWS expresses gratitude to Congress for the allocation of \$55 million in FY 2021 towards phase one enhancements at the Center. However, an estimated \$135 million in no-year funding remains necessary for comprehensive fulfillment of the project. Progress towards modernization is underway at the Center, with contracts already awarded for architectural design and environmental evaluation. Construction is expected to begin in FY27, making FY25 appropriations especially timely. **TWS advocates for the appropriation of at least \$66 million for FY 2025, available until fully expended, to allow continued modernization of the Center.**

The **Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Units (CRUs)** foster federal, state, non-government organization (NGO), and academic partnerships to provide actionable science tailored to the needs of natural resource managers. This science plays a pivotal role in the implementation of state and federal management decisions. CRUs are an exemplary model for cooperative natural resource science programming; with the support of collaborators this program leverages an average of three dollars in outside funds for every federal dollar invested. The Wildlife Society extends appreciation to appropriators for recognizing this critical need and for increased funding allocated in FY 2024. Thanks to support from Congress, Indiana was able to establish the Indiana Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit hosted by Purdue University. Despite growing interest from other states, limited federal funding has constrained the expansion of units and continues to result in vacancies at existing units. **To address this gap, The Wildlife Society recommends a funding increase to \$36 million in FY 2025, enabling CRUs to capitalize on emerging partnerships and fill vacancies in an effort to meet long-standing commitments.**

### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)**

With 850 million acres of lands and waters spanning across every U.S. state and territory, **the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS)** plays a key role in conservation of native species

and connects Americans to recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, and environmental education. The current NWRS Operations and Maintenance (O&M) budget fails to meet the needs of native species and the American public. In order to effectively conserve species on NWRS lands and align with the multiuse goals of the Refuge System, significant investments in O&M programming are required. Conservation planning, a core O&M subactivity that deals with the creation of multi-stakeholder Comprehensive Conservation Plans for refuge system units, has been chronically underfunded. As a result, 40 percent of these congressionally mandated plans are either out of date or do not exist. The NWRS has lacked funding to meet their own identified needs in bringing diverse audiences into USFWS programming. The Urban Wildlife Program, housed under NWRS O&M, seeks to target USFWS investments to underserved communities to bolster recreational access and conservation outreach. Through the Urban Wildlife Program, and more than 100 refuges located less than 25 miles from a city center, NWRS is well-positioned to engage diverse constituencies in the conservation of our native species. Unfortunately, NWRS is not able to meet these needs given currently available funding. **TWS urges Congress to consider the significant shortcomings of the budget of the National Wildlife Refuge System in FY 2025, and provide at least \$602 million in funding to begin making inroads on adequate visitor services, habitat management activities, and long-term conservation planning.**

**The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program (STWG)** is the nation's only program that encourages development and implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans. Collectively, STWG funds support strong partnerships among federal, state, tribal, private, and nonprofit entities that enable wildlife professionals to implement on-the-ground conservation activities that benefit over 12,000 at-risk species, with the goal of eliminating the need to list them under the Endangered Species Act. In FY 2010, appropriations were at \$90 million for the program – allowing states to complete more projects deemed necessary for monitoring and management of at-risk species. Subsequent budget reductions in STWG, however, have not allowed this highly successful program to reach its full potential. **TWS requests that Congress increase funding for the program to at least \$100 million annually.**

Through the **Ecological Services Program (ESP)**, USFWS works with diverse public and private partners to help identify species facing extinction, reduce threats to their populations, and return species back to the public trust responsibilities of states and tribes. Wildlife professionals in USFWS are working on new strategies to increase efficacy of ESP, though the primary impediment to effectiveness remains inadequate funding. **To effectively move species through all components of the ESA listing and delisting process, TWS requests full implementation of the Administration's FY 2025 request of no less than \$338.2 million for all subactivities.** Since 2002, the **Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA)** has provided more than \$80 million in grants to support 686 projects in 43 countries. These grants have enabled partner entities and wildlife professionals to conserve approximately 400 migratory bird species across more than 5 million acres. Moreover, NMBCA has achieved a partner match ratio of nearly 4:1 despite requiring only a 3:1 match. The needs of U.S. migratory bird species and

conservation efforts to keep these species common extends to landscapes far beyond U.S. borders. **As a result, TWS recommends Congress increase funding to no less than \$10 million in FY 2025 to achieve greater proactive conservation results under the NMBCA program.**

Further promoting USFWS' partnership with non-federal stakeholders is the **Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program**. This program allows voluntary habitat restoration goals, aligned with identified strategic priorities, on private lands to be achieved through cost-efficient financial and technical assistance. If adequately funded, this program has the potential to serve as a vital tool in implementing private land conservation efforts and proactively conserving at-risk species prior to reaching the point of Endangered Species Act listing. **TWS supports an increase in Partners for Fish and Wildlife program funding to no less than \$68.1 million in FY 2025.** **The Migratory Bird Joint Ventures (MBJV)**, part of USFWS' Migratory Bird Management program, are locally-directed partnerships that develop and implement science-based habitat conservation strategies for all species of birds across North America. These partnerships have leveraged federal funds at 31:1 to enhance and conserve over 27 million acres of avian habitat. The MBJV's Urban Bird Treaties grant program supports partnerships to conserve birds in urban environments by conserving nearby wetlands and creating parks for local communities to learn about wildlife. **TWS supports \$25 million in FY 2025 for the Migratory Bird Joint Ventures to enhance and promote the program's highly effective and collaborative partnerships.**

### **Bureau of Land Management (BLM)**

**The Wildlife Habitat Management** program maintains and restores fish, wildlife, and their habitat across a large portion of America's western landscapes. This includes projects to balance effects of multiple public land uses, such as energy development and livestock grazing, with the needs of native species. This program also includes management of approximately 300 listed species under the Endangered Species Act. **TWS recommends Congress support the Wildlife Habitat Management program with no less than the Administration request of \$153.4 million in FY 2025.**

### **U.S. Forest Service (USFS)**

**Research and Development (R&D) programs** within the USFS deliver science and science-based products that improve the health and management of forests and grasslands. These programs assist land managers in developing climate change adaptation and resilience strategies, recovering from wildfire damages, and protecting watersheds and drinking waters. Increased funding for R&D programs is needed to achieve objectives such as better understanding ways to reduce community exposure to wildfires and improving tools to help land managers anticipate and manage for impacts of drought. **TWS supports an increase in funding levels to \$315.6 million for USFS R&D programs to ensure the continued delivery of critical new science improving the health and use of our nation's forests and grasslands.**