



The National Steering Committee

American Fisheries Society - National Wildlife Federation - American Zoo and Aquarium Association - The Nature Conservancy
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation - National Wild Turkey Federation - Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies - Izaak Walton League of America
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership - The Wildlife Society - National Audubon Society - Wildlife Conservation Society - Wildlife Management Institute

Written Testimony for the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies

Regarding the State Wildlife Grants Program of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Submitted by Mark Humpert
Teaming With Wildlife Director, Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

May 15th, 2009

On behalf of the national Teaming with Wildlife Steering Committee, we urge you to support the president's request of \$115 million for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program in the Fiscal Year 2010 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. This funding level would enhance the ability of state fish and wildlife agencies and their partners to implement Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies (State Wildlife Action Plans) and address the impacts of climate change on wildlife and their habitats.

Teaming with Wildlife (www.teaming.com) is a coalition of more than 6,000 organizations and businesses who support increased funding for state-level wildlife programs aimed at keeping wildlife from becoming endangered. The Teaming with Wildlife coalition includes a diverse partnership of organizations and businesses that represent hunters and anglers, birdwatchers, hikers, nature-based businesses, community organizations like visitors' bureaus, and other conservationists who are working together to advance proactive wildlife conservation.

The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program is the only federal program dedicated to implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans. Congress required state and territorial fish and wildlife agencies to develop and implement these plans to reverse the decline of at-risk fish and wildlife. The plans are being used across the country to prioritize and guide wildlife conservation work. This work is helping to protect vital ecosystem services and recreational opportunities that are valued in the hundreds of billion of dollars. The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program is helping to sustain an economic engine that contributes millions of jobs to the economy.

Addressing climate change is one of the most daunting tasks facing the conservation community. The addition of \$40 million in climate change funding through the State Wildlife Grants program will provide states and tribes with the resources they need to conduct planning and implement conservation actions needed to mitigate the impacts of climate change and help wildlife adapt. We ask that the subcommittee consider reducing the federal:state match requirement for climate change activities to 90:10. State fish and wildlife agencies are facing significant budget declines during the economic downturn making it increasingly difficult to secure matching funds.



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We believe the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program makes efficient and effective use of scarce federal resources and puts them on the ground in a smart and proactive manner. Efforts to restore severely imperiled wildlife are often more costly and less successful. The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program provides states with a tool to avoid conservation catastrophes, concurrently saving wildlife and taxpayer dollars.

Following are two examples of projects funded by the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program:

Conserving Tri-colored Blackbirds

California is home to 99 percent of the world's population of tricolored blackbirds, which are listed as a state species of special concern. Along with the decline of native wetlands in California's Central Valley, the Tricolored Blackbird population has dropped severely in the last 60 years. While recent trends appear to indicate that the species population has stabilized at 250,000-300,000 birds, these numbers are far below the population in the 1930s. The birds commonly nest in silage fields, ditches and other areas around dairy farms in the San Joaquin Valley and in limited areas in southern California, and this presents a serious risk when fields are ready for harvest and young birds cannot yet fly. An alliance of 16 partners have come together to conserve habitat and restore tricolored blackbird populations without listing the species as threatened or endangered. This diverse partnership includes the California Department of Fish and Game, Audubon California, California Farm Bureau, California Cattlemen's Association, Pacific Gas & Electric Company, and University of California. This voluntary and proactive effort will conserve the tricolored blackbird and may avoid another costly endangered species listing.

Reclaiming Aquatic Habitat

Panther Branch, a tributary to Island Creek, Morgan County, Tennessee had been severely impacted by acid mine drainage (AMD) and mine refuse from old underground mine workings. The mining activity occurred in the early 1900's and the workings have been abandoned for about 100 years. During the mining process thousands of cubic yards of refuse was produced and disposed of in the channel of Panther Branch. Acid mine drainage lowered the pH of the water to an uninhabitable level. The stream was virtually devoid of aquatic life. Using State Wildlife Grant funds The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency partnered with the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, to remove the refuse, re-structure the stream channel, build an alkaline drainage system to reduce water acidity and construct artificial wetlands to remove any dissolved metals. Completed in the spring of 2007, Panther Branch is re-colonizing with aquatic life.

We are grateful for your leadership in providing funding for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program in the past. You have helped make this program and its emphasis on preventive conservation a priority for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We look forward to the U.S. Congress continuing to provide reliable and adequate funding to ensure the continued success of fish and wildlife conservation in all fifty states, the District of Columbia and territories. Thank you for your time.