



June 14, 2022

## **Bipartisan H.R. 2773, Recovering America's Wildlife Act** *This Wildlife Legislation Is The Most Significant Wildlife Bill in A Generation*

### **Key Points:**

- Today, the House will consider H.R. 2773, Recovering America's Wildlife Act. This legislation is the most significant investment in wildlife and habitat conservation in a generation. The bipartisan bill was introduced by Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-MI) and Rep. Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE) on April 22, 2021. On June 9, the Natural Resources Committee reported the bill to the House by a vote of 29 YEAS and 15 NAYS. There are currently 194 bipartisan cosponsors of the bill.
- The bill also has the broad support of conservation and sportsmen's leaders.
- The bill provides states, territories, and Tribes with an additional \$1.3 billion annually towards proactive conservation efforts for wildlife at risk. The bill also establishes a \$97.5 million annual, noncompetitive, Tribal Wildlife Conservation and Restoration grant program to assist Tribes in carrying out wildlife conservation and habitat restoration.
- The Recovering America's Wildlife Act will help states and tribes carry out wildlife conservation plans, combat invasive species, engage in law enforcement activities directly related to conservation, conduct education and recreational programs associated with wildlife, and implement programs to address wildfires, drought, and climate change. At least 15 percent of the funds must be spent on recovering species listed under the Endangered Species Act or considered threatened or endangered under tribal law.

### **Background:**

- In the United States, states, territories, and tribes carry out most wildlife management and conservation through their State Wildlife Action Plans, but these plans depend on consistent, reliable federal funding. Currently, federal funding sources, like the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Act, are exceedingly inadequate.

### **Some of the Key Reasons Why This Legislation Is So Badly Needed**

- We are in the midst of an unprecedented biodiversity crisis and we need action now. Right now, more than one-third of all wildlife species in the United States are at heightened risk of extinction – and demand immediate conservation action.
- America's wildlife face numerous threats, including habitat loss, climate change, invasive species, wildfires, drought, and emerging diseases.
- Examples of the severe threats faced by wildlife include the following:
  - A 2019 report in the journal Science estimated that North American bird populations have declined by nearly three billion or 29% since 1970.
  - Chronically Wasting Disease, a fatal disease to North America's deer, elk, and moose, has spread to 25 states, posing significant risks to those populations.
  - About 40 percent of America's freshwater fish species are rare or imperiled due to diminished water quality, over-fishing, and aquatic invasive species.
- The state wildlife agencies have identified more than 12,000 species in need of conservation attention.
- Several species are responsible for supporting services that contribute to water quality, pest control, fire mitigation, shoreline protection, food, recreation, cultural value, and other societal services.
- Federal funding is less than five percent of what is necessary to conserve these species, and the cost of inaction far outweighs the cost of safeguarding our Nation's wildlife.

- Supporting wildlife conservation will boost the outdoor economy, which currently employs over 7.6 million people and is supported by more than 100 million wildlife enthusiasts, hunters, anglers, birders, and hikers in the United States.
- Underlying conditions are making our ecosystems and communities vulnerable to climate impacts. Bold, proactive, on-the-ground conservation efforts are needed to conserve and restore habitats, fight invasive species, reintroduce native species, tackle emerging diseases, and mitigate wildlife risk.

### **Key Provisions of the Bill**

- Provides an additional \$1.3 billion per year to assist states, territories, and tribes in conserving, restoring, and protecting wildlife and wildlife habitat.
- Provides \$850 million for fiscal year 2023, \$1.1 billion for fiscal year 2024, \$1.2 billion for fiscal year 2025, and \$1.3 billion for each fiscal year thereafter that would be distributed as follows:
  - 10 percent for a competitive grant program to spur innovative tools, techniques, and strategies, and partnerships that effectively recover species and their habitats.
  - 90 percent apportioned to the states and territories to carry out wildlife conservation and habitat restoration activities focused on species of greatest conservation need and update and carry out wildlife conservation plans.
- Provides tribal nations \$97.5 million annually to fund proactive wildlife conservation efforts on roughly 140 acres of land.
- Provides \$75 million for 2023-2026 to establish and implement a grant and technical assistance program run by the National Fish and Wildlife Service to recover species listed as threatened or endangered under Section 4 of the Endangered Species Act by addressing the backlog in the development of recovery plans and implementing backing of activities identified in existing recovery plans.
- Provides \$75 million for 2023-2026 for the Fish and Wildlife Service to address interagency consultation responsibilities under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.
- Provides \$28.125 million for 2023-2026 for the Fish and Wildlife Service to work with non-federal entities, including through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife, the Coastal Program, and North American Wetlands Conservation Act. Conservation activities pertain to at-risk candidates, and proposed, listed, or threatened species, including through rescue and rehabilitation efforts, and conserving wildlife habitat.
- Provides \$9.375 million for 2023-2026 for the Fish and Wildlife Service to address development and permitting of voluntary conservation agreements under Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act.
- Funds conservation efforts for more than 12,000 species of wildlife and plants in need of assistance.
- Accelerates the recovery of 1,600 U.S. species already listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.
- Ensures wildlife recovery efforts will be guided by the Congressionally-mandated state Wildlife Action Plans, which identify specific strategies to restore the populations of species of greatest conservation need.
- Includes improvements to ensure funds are appropriately targeted to the areas of greatest need and facilitates additional investments in protecting at-risk plant species.

### **The Bill Has the Strong Support of Conservation and Sportsmen’s Leaders**

**Collin O’Mara, President and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation:** “Right now, more than one-third of all wildlife species in the United States are at heightened risk of extinction – and demand immediate conservation action. The bipartisan Recovering America’s Wildlife is the most significant piece of wildlife legislation since the Endangered Species Act passed in 1973. Thanks to the incredible leadership of Rep. Debbie Dingell, Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, Rep. Jared Huffman, Chair Raúl Grijalva, and more than 150 additional bipartisan cosponsors, this historic bill is making critical bipartisan progress in the House and is showing that even in these divided times, wildlife conservation can bring all Americans together.”

**Jeff Crane, President and CEO of the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation:** “The Committee passage of Recovering America’s Wildlife Act is a direct result of the tireless efforts of Congressional Sportsmen’s Caucus (CSC) Co-Chair Congresswoman Dingell and CSC Member Congressman Fortenberry and their leadership in championing this monumental legislation. This legislation is a smart, strategic effort to provide a desperately

needed source of dedicated funding to address the 21st century conservation challenges facing our fish and wildlife managers today.”

**Tony Wasley, President of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies:** “This bill would help expedite the recovery of thousands of at-risk species through proactive, collaborative conservation, and the economic value of that conservation to states and to taxpayers can’t be overstated.”