

**BUDGET** The United States  
Department of the Interior  
**JUSTIFICATIONS**  
and Performance Information  
Fiscal Year 2024

**FISH AND WILDLIFE  
SERVICE**

NOTICE: These budget justifications are prepared for the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittees. Approval for release of the justifications prior to their printing in the public record of the Subcommittee hearings may be obtained through the Office of Budget of the Department of the Interior.



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**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

***Fiscal Year 2024 President's Budget***

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# Executive Summary



## The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is the oldest Federal conservation agency, tracing its lineage back to 1871, and the only agency in the Federal government whose primary responsibility is management of biological resources for the American public. The Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The Service is responsible for implementing some of our Nation's most important and foundational environmental laws, such as the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), Marine Mammal Protection Act, Lacey Act, and international agreements like the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages an unparalleled network of public lands and waters called the National Wildlife Refuge System. With more than 560 refuges spanning the country, this system protects iconic species and provides some of the best wildlife viewing opportunities on Earth.

In 2023 the Service is celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Endangered Species Act. The ESA is our country's most important law for protecting domestic fish, wildlife and plants. While the legal protections of the ESA focus on individual species, the ESA's purpose is to protect the ecosystems that fish, wildlife and plants need to survive and thrive. Endangered and threatened species are often the canary in the coalmine and their protection conserves other species that share their habitat.

Through close collaboration with our Federal, State, and Tribal partners, we have recovered species from the brink of extinction, restored critical habitat, and applied a balanced approach for building better natural and human communities. For example, on October 4, 2022, we celebrated, along with dozens of conservation partners, the recovery and removal of the snail darter from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Wildlife (50 CFR 17.11). The snail darter is the fifth fish species delisted due to recovery in the country and the first in the eastern United States, marking an important milestone in ESA's success in supporting biodiversity. “The recovery of the snail darter is a remarkable conservation milestone that tells a story about how controversy and polarization can evolve into cooperation and a big conservation success,” said Secretary Deb Haaland. “By protecting even the smallest creatures, we show who we are as a country; that we care about our environment and recognize the interconnectedness of our lands, wildlife and people.



*Snail darter, credit FWS*

The Service is a key player in the Administration's goals for its ambitious America the Beautiful initiative, which focuses on climate change, environmental justice, and species and habitat conservation. The Administration has set ambitious goals that will ensure America and the world can meet the urgent demands of the climate crisis, while empowering American workers and businesses to lead a clean energy revolution and puts the United States on a path to a net-zero emission economy.

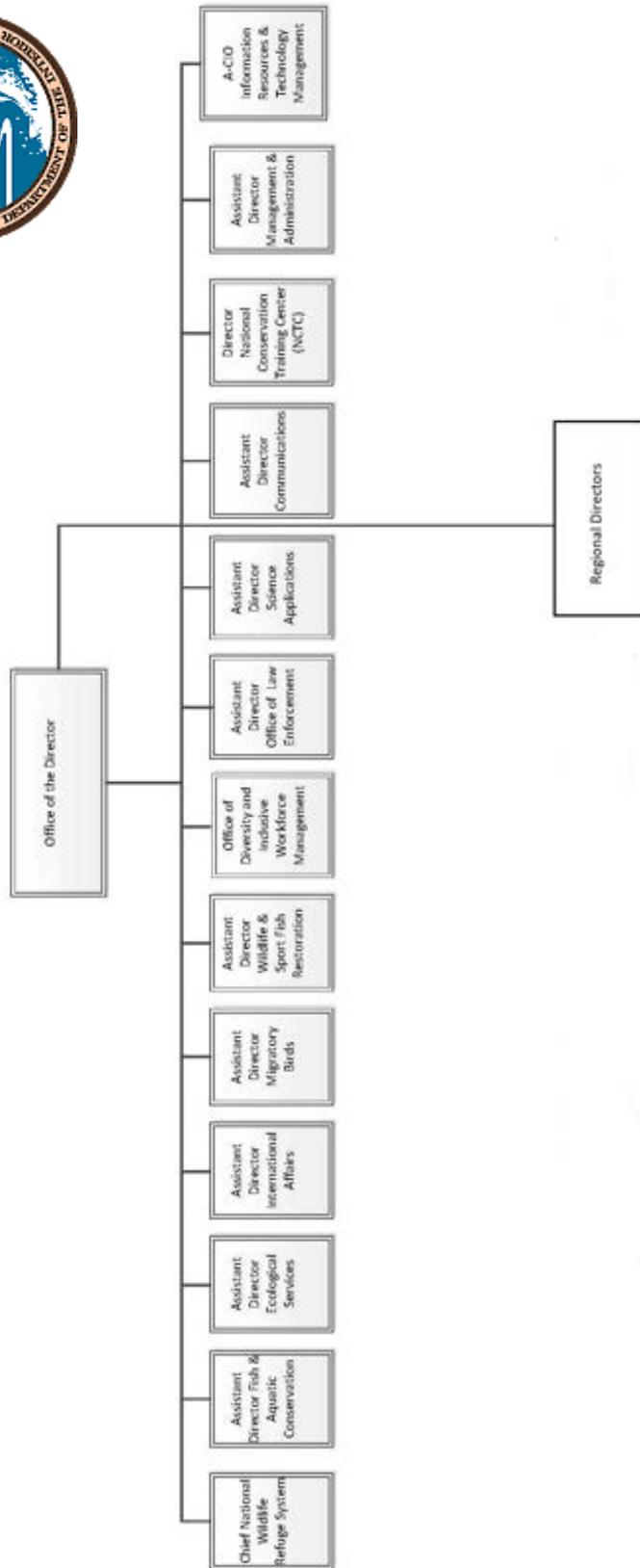
## The Service's Organization

The Service has headquarters in Washington, D.C. and Falls Church, Virginia, with regional offices and almost 800 field stations. These stations include 568 National Wildlife Refuges, 71 National Fish Hatcheries, 51 Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices, 79 Ecological Services Field Stations, nine Fish Health Centers, and seven Fish Technology Centers and three Law Enforcement support facilities. In addition the Service staffs 17 designated ports of entry and 11 embassies overseas. The Service manages more than 830 million acres of lands and waters, including the national wildlife refuges, 38 wetland management districts, 49 coordination areas, seven National Monuments, and 760 million acres in Marine National Monuments.

The Service works with many partners to accomplish its conservation mission, including other Federal agencies, State and local governments, Tribes, international organizations, and private organizations and individuals.

The Director reports to the Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, and has direct line authority over headquarters and eight Regional Directors. Headquarters-based Assistant Directors provide policy, program management, and administrative support to the Director. The Regional Directors guide policy and program implementation, supervising the field structures, and coordinating activities with partners across the 12 Department of the Interior Unified Regions.

(See organizational chart, next page)



## Overview of FY 2024 Budget Request

Budget Authority (\$000)	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024 Request	Change from 2023 (+/-)
<b>Current Authority*</b>	<b>1,803,982</b>	<b>2,110,837</b>	<b>2,178,778</b>	<b>+ 67,941</b>
<i>Bipartisan Infrastructure Law**</i>	100,144	90,545	90,545	
<i>Supplemental - Construction</i>	58,227	247,000		-247,000
<i>Rescission</i>	-2,185			
<b>Current Authority ex Supplementals</b>	<b>1,647,796</b>	<b>1,773,292</b>	<b>2,088,233</b>	<b>+314,941</b>
<b>Permanent Authority***</b>	<b>2,282,814</b>	<b>2,139,521</b>	<b>1,991,674</b>	<b>-147,847</b>
<b>Total – w/ supplementals</b>	<b>4,086,796</b>	<b>4,250,358</b>	<b>4,170,452</b>	<b>-79,906</b>
Discretionary	6,622	6,664	7,481	+817
Mandatory	322	384	413	+29
Transfers/Alloc.	1,476	1,488	1,513	+25
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>	<b>8,420</b>	<b>8,536</b>	<b>9,407</b>	<b>+871</b>

\*includes supplementals without rescissions

\*\* net of transfers

\*\*\*net of sequestration

## Overview

The 2024 President's Budget for FWS totals \$4.1 billion, \$314.9 million above 2023 enacted, including current appropriations of \$2.1 billion, and \$2.0 billion available under permanent appropriations, most of which is provided directly to States for fish and wildlife restoration and conservation. FWS estimates that staffing will equal 9,407 full-time equivalents (FTEs), an increase of 871 FTEs from the 2023 Enacted. The 2024 budget promotes strategic investments to implement the America the Beautiful initiative, including funds to address climate change effects on FWS trust resources, conserve species and habitats, reconnect Americans with the outdoors, enable economic development, and create good-paying job opportunities.

### The America the Beautiful Initiative

A major focus of the Service’s request this year is implementing the Administration’s America the Beautiful initiative. The initiative is rooted in the desire to better support and honor the people and communities who serve as stewards of our lands, waters, and wildlife—from Tribes and Indigenous peoples, to fishermen, farmers and ranchers, to local and State governments—and to ensure that all people of this Nation benefit from America’s rich and vibrant lands and waters.



*Secretary Haaland planting vegetation with youth at the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge. (Photo by DOI)*

The Administration has formulated eight principles by which the Nation should pursue this ambitious conservation effort. These principles commit the Administration to:

- Pursuing a Collaborative and Inclusive Approach to Conservation
- Conserving America’s Lands and Waters for the Benefit of All People
- Supporting Locally Led and Locally Designed Conservation Efforts
- Honoring Tribal Sovereignty and Support the Priorities of Tribal Nations
- Pursuing Conservation and Restoration Approaches that Create Jobs and Support Healthy Communities
- Honoring Private Property Rights and Support the Voluntary Stewardship Efforts of Private Landowners and Fishers
- Using Science as a Guide
- Building on Existing Tools and Strategies with an Emphasis on Flexibility and Adaptive Approaches

The Service’s budget supports the Administration’s call to action to support locally-led conservation and restoration efforts across public, private, State, and Tribal lands and waters.

**Conservation** – A key part of the America the Beautiful effort is Conservation. Since Conservation is the primary mission of the Service, many of our programs are reflected in this initiative. For example, the budget supports President Biden’s call to action to collaboratively conserve, connect, and restore 30 percent of U.S. land and water by 2030 through investments in partner programs, climate science, and habitat adaptation and resilience. Additional funding supports FWS land management and restoration, in collaboration with States, Tribes, and private landowners to conserve habitat while supporting working lands and engaging urban communities in conservation. Those investments will create job opportunities outdoors and through increased project consultation capacity to simultaneously support conservation and economic development. The budget will enhance FWS conservation programs aimed at stemming the effects of climate change, with increased support for permitting needed for responsible economic growth.

The Service’s ability to address the threats that face wildlife and ecosystems and effectively participate in the America the Beautiful challenge relies on the capacity of its programs. This budget invests heavily in

that capacity, with additional funds for Endangered Species consultation and other environmental permitting work, as well as funding for Recovery of listed species, migratory birds and native fish.

A critical component of the Administration's climate adaptation, conservation, and job creation objectives and the Service's need for capacity is the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS). The Refuge System's 830 million acres of lands and waters, includes 568 national wildlife refuges, waterfowl production areas in 209 counties managed within 38 Wetland Management Districts and 49 Coordination Areas, seven National Monuments, and 760 million acres in Marine National Monuments. The Refuge System delivers conservation on a landscape level, providing important ecosystem services such as improved water quality, flood mitigation, and habitat for the survival and protection of hundreds of threatened and endangered species. Wildlife Refuges also offer recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, and watching wildlife. Through the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program initiative, the Service is welcoming city dwellers to enjoy the outdoors by engaging new audiences in outdoor experiences, both on wildlife refuges and partner lands. The Budget includes \$83.3 million in additional funding for the NWRS, funding that will enable refuges to improve their ability to conserve species and habitats, and provide visitors with the opportunity to explore natural areas. The budget also funding expands opportunities for Americans in urban communities to connect with the outdoors and contribute to conservation. At least one wildlife refuge is within an hour's drive of most major cities and more than 260 wildlife refuges are near smaller cities. More than a dozen Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships are within 25 miles of cities like Baltimore, Maryland and Seattle, Washington, and offer access to outdoor experiences ranging from bird watching to fishing. The Refuge System and other Service programs will play a strong role in advancing youth corps programs by providing opportunities to put young people to work improving America's lands, waters, and infrastructure.

To further the conservation of species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and to work to prevent at-risk species from becoming further imperiled, the Service is requesting \$384.5 million for the Ecological Services program. The Service is instrumental in supporting economic growth and job creation in the United States as timely evaluations of proposed infrastructure, and other development projects, assisting permitting agencies, and issuing permits contributes to the continued success of the United States. To facilitate consultation under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act (BIL) as well as address increasing needs for consultation in a growing economy the Service is requesting \$171.4 million for Planning and Consultation. Environmental review functions constitute a large and growing workload for the Service, and we are continuously seeking ways to improve the efficiency, consistency, transparency, and effectiveness of environmental review and permitting development projects. As an example, the Service continues to enhance our Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) decision support system to streamline the environmental review process. In addition to the requested funding to increase environmental permitting capacity, the budget also proposes to expand authority beyond existing reimbursable and Economy Act authorities by enabling Federal agencies to more effectively transfer funds provided under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service. This authority in concert with existing authorities will improve efficiencies and increase capacity for environmental planning and consultation. This proposal is needed to address the unique workload surge anticipated from this legislation and would accelerate and improve environmental reviews in support of responsible development of priority infrastructure projects and energy solutions.

The budget proposes \$133.3 million for Recovery. These funds will contribute to the recovery and delisting of species currently listed under the Endangered Species Act. Preventing extinction and recovering listed species has always been, and will continue to be, one of the Service's highest priorities. The ESA is extraordinarily effective at preventing species from going extinct and has inspired action to conserve at-risk species and their habitat before they need to be listed as threatened or endangered. Since it was signed

into law 50 years ago in 1973, more than 99 percent of all species listed under the law are still with us today.

The Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program carries out aquatic resource conservation work through a nationwide network of more than 150 facilities that includes national fish hatcheries, fish and wildlife conservation offices, fish health centers, and fish technology centers. These facilities are neighbors to communities across the Nation, providing the American public a variety of long-standing outdoor opportunities to see and learn about fish and aquatic resources and enjoy nature. Through biological inventories, assessments, resource modeling, and conservation strategies, the Fisheries Program and its partners strive to understand and alleviate threats to aquatic resources by propagating fish, mussels, and other aquatic species to enhance wild populations, strategically improving habitat, restoring the connectivity of the Nation's waterways, and preventing new infestations of aquatic invasive species. The budget includes \$259.8 million for the Fisheries Program.

This budget builds on support in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law with \$18.6 million to provide for fish passage improvements to restore native fish habitat and reconnect fish migration routes. Barriers to fish passage have compromised the ability of the Nation's waterways to sustain healthy fish populations as many fish species and other aquatic life require open, free flowing rivers and streams to complete their life cycle. In addition, barriers can lead to public safety hazards, water quality degradation, and higher water treatment costs.

The budget for the Fish and Aquatic Conservation program includes \$49.0 million to address the continued threat of aquatic invasive species, including funding for a pilot project to demonstrate the effectiveness of rapid response in combatting these threats to habitat, infrastructure, and native species. This investment in control of invasive species will be most effective when it is also met with the statutory tools necessary to protect natural resources, human and animal health, infrastructure, and the economy. The budget supports efforts in Congress to amend Title 18 of the Lacey Act to return the longstanding authority of FWS to prohibit interstate transport of injurious species. Recent examples of injurious species contaminating commercial products demonstrate the need to restore this authority.

The budget includes \$92 million for the Migratory Bird Management Program, including \$13.5 million for the Service's e-permit system. The Migratory Bird program is the manager of the e-permit system which currently provides web-based permit application and approvals for several Service permits. With funding increases proposed in 2024, the Service will expand the availability of this system to include more permits, improve the customer experience, and maintain the system. The budget also includes robust support to modernize the permitting process for Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act permits and supporting systems to enable the use of the latest scientific information and energy production technologies when evaluating development proposals. This request will advance migratory bird management in an era of a changing climate, enable new habitat and species analyses, develop management techniques, and reduce uncertainties faced by industry.

The Service is focusing on climate change throughout all of its programs, including its Science Applications program, which is funded at \$55.5 million. The Science program works with partners to develop plans for conserving landscapes across the country, to address climate changes as well as other conservation needs. A central facet of the program is to deliver scientific information and tools partnerships needed to achieve conservation goals. The program addresses science gaps related to landscape and species conservation and climate adaptation strategies. Additionally, Science Applications provides essential internal science support to the Service's regulatory programs, focusing our work on cross-cutting conservation science needs that rise above program lines. A special emphasis in the program's work is the distillation of climate science to help natural resource managers implement climate adaptation strategies.

Implementing an aggressive agenda to tackle conservation in the face of climate change requires investments in support facilities and real property. The Service is responsible for more than \$50 billion in constructed real property assets that include over 25,000 structures (e.g., buildings and water management structures) as well as nearly 14,000 roads, bridges, and dams. These facilities allow manipulation of water levels in wetlands to support migrating wildlife, research to propagate at-risk species, and maintenance of land management equipment and vehicles – all which support conservation and counter the effects of climate change. The Great American Outdoors Act of 2020 (GAOA) provides up to \$95 million annually for five years for deferred maintenance projects within the Refuge System and the Service is using these funds for projects that will improve land management capabilities. The budget includes \$366.2 million for asset maintenance and construction. The Service will use these funds to address high-priority health and safety needs for Service-owned assets to begin a transition to a life-cycle maintenance strategy that will increase utilization rates while reducing long-term maintenance costs. Maintenance funding will support major energy and efficiency upgrades at fish hatcheries, coordination offices, and other facilities that are ineligible for deferred maintenance funding provided by GAOA.

The budget includes an increase of \$25.9 million for the Service’s Habitat Conservation program, which includes the Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW), Coastal Programs, and the Farm Conservation Program. This funding will support the program’s ability to contribute to biodiversity by providing technical and financial assistance to private landowners and other conservation partners to voluntarily protect, conserve, and restore private lands.

#### **Promoting Diversity**

The FWS budget includes \$8.1 million to support diversity, inclusion, equity and accessibility. The Service also has increases of \$3.5 million within its budget to support improved Co-stewardship and engage with Tribes on Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) research, conservation planning, and marine mammal management for the benefit of trust species through additional co-management agreements and partnerships.

#### **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)**

Directly supporting the Administration’s conservation objectives is funding from the mandatory LWCF, which was permanently and fully funded starting in 2021 in GAOA. The 2024 FWS portion of the LWCF permanent funding totals \$159.1 million, without sequestration applied. A detailed project list for the Federal land acquisition program is provided in Appendix F.

#### **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)**

President Biden signed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law on November 15, 2021, making a once-in-a-generation investment in the Nation’s infrastructure and economic competitiveness. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was directly appropriated \$455 million, including transfers to the DOI Office of Inspector General, over 5 years to help restore the Klamath Basin, restore Lake Tahoe, conserve the sagebrush ecosystem, restore the Delaware River basin, and provide fish passage improvements:

- The Klamath Basin Restoration Program projects will enhance captive rearing of listed sucker species, address water quality/quantity issues throughout the Basin, and support projects to improve conditions for migratory birds, waterfowl, salmon, suckers, and other native fish species throughout the Basin.
- Lake Tahoe Restoration Activities will deploy strategies to prevent the introduction or spread of aquatic invasive species in the Lake Tahoe region and reestablish a food chain for the benefit of native species, such as the imperiled Lahontan cutthroat trout.

- Working across 13 Western States and multiple jurisdictions, the FWS will build on an existing partnership to address the most pressing threats to a sustainable sagebrush ecosystem, such as invasive species and wildfire, and invest in tangible, measurable actions to address those threats in the face of a changing climate.
- The Delaware River Basin program provides grants for habitat conservation actions that support the priorities of fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flow management, and equitable access to nature for all communities.
- The National Fish Passage Program provides technical expertise, financial assistance, and coordination support to complete aquatic ecosystem restoration projects to restore fish passage and aquatic connectivity by removing or bypassing barriers.

### **Inflation Reduction Act**

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) provided the Service with \$250 million in funding for refuge climate adaptation and resiliency and Endangered Species recovery planning and implementation.

The Service will use the Inflation Reduction Act funding to support climate adaptation and resiliency projects in National Wildlife Refuge System and partnering State Wildlife Management Areas, prioritizing projects expected to achieve significant results which cannot be fully addressed through annual appropriations or other available funding. The Service is targeting projects which align with and advance Service priorities related to climate resilience, conservation, and equity. We will work with State partners to complete geographically diverse, large-scale projects that are mutually beneficial for national wildlife refuges and state conservation areas, including projects that benefit historically underserved communities to mitigate disparate impacts in an environmentally just way.

IRA funding will provide a much needed boost to the Service's species Recovery programs and will help to address backlogs in meeting statutory responsibilities (e.g., recovery planning, 5-year status reviews, down and delisting) and recovery needs. The additional IRA funding will enable the Service to better address the conservation of species that are not high-profile and are not be fully addressed within annual appropriations. For Recovery planning, the Service will target species that do not have recovery plans or have plans that are outdated. The Service will focus on the species of greatest need for information to either allow a change in listing status or prevent extinction. The Service will implement the IRA Recovery implementation funding using a strategic approach to identify recovery implementation actions that will achieve impactful conservation for listed species that have been historically underfunded.

### **Legislative Proposals**

Transfer authority for BIL permitting:

*Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the unobligated balances of funds made available in division J of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law 117-58) to any agency funded by this or any other Act may be transferred to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service for the costs of carrying out their responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) to consult and conference, as required by section 7 of such Act, in connection with activities and projects funded by Public Law 117-58: Provided, That amounts transferred pursuant to this section shall be in addition to amounts otherwise available for such purposes: Provided further, That the transfer authority provided in this section shall be in addition to any other transfer authority provided*

*by law: Provided further, That amounts transferred pursuant to this section that were previously designated by the Congress as an emergency requirement pursuant to a concurrent resolution on the Budget or the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 shall retain such designation.*

The budget includes \$171.4 million within ecological services, an increase of \$50.5 million from the 2023 enacted level, to increase environmental permitting capacity to facilitate timely implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Inflation Reduction Act, and reduce backlogs. The budget also proposes to expand authority beyond existing reimbursable and Economy Act authorities by enabling Federal agencies to transfer funds provided under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service. This authority in concert with existing authorities will improve efficiencies and increase capacity for environmental planning and consultation. This proposal is needed to address the unique workload surge anticipated from this legislation and would accelerate and improve environmental reviews in support of responsible development of priority infrastructure projects and energy solutions.

**Good Neighbor Authority and Stewardship Contracting Authority:** The budget also supports good neighbor and stewardship contracting authorities for the Service. The Good Neighbor Authority allows States, counties, and Tribes to enter into a Good Neighbor Agreement (GNA), currently with the US Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management to perform forest, rangeland, and watershed restoration work on the Federal land managed by those agencies. Authorized restoration services include treating insect- and disease-infested trees; reducing hazardous fuels; any other activities to restore or improve forest, rangeland, and watershed health, including fish and wildlife habitat. Stewardship contracting authority will allow FWS to trade forest products for land management and services. For example, in exchange for thinning the forest and keeping the trees to sell, a contractor or organization performs service-work that helps to achieve key land management goals such as improving wildlife habitat or reestablishing native plant species. The budget supports extension of these authorities to include the Service.

**Resource Protection:** Under current law, when Service resources are injured or destroyed, the costs of repair and restoration falls upon the appropriated budget for the affected field station or office. This is the case even when parties are ordered to pay restitution. Competing priorities can leave damaged Refuge System resources languishing until Congress appropriates funds to address the injury. This delay may result in more intensive injuries, higher costs of future redress of the injury, and long-term degradation of publicly-owned resources.

This provision would allow persons responsible for harm—not taxpayers—to pay for any injury they cause. Unlike some other land management agencies, the Service only has criminal penalties (fines) for those injuries occurring on Service property. In most cases, the injuries far exceed any fines recovered by the U.S. Government. With this authority, the recovery of damages for injury to Service resources would be used to reimburse assessment costs; prevent or minimize the risk of loss; monitor ongoing effects, and/or use those funds to restore, replace, or acquire resources equivalent to those injured or destroyed.

### **Resource Management**

For Ecological Services, the budget includes \$384.5 million to conserve, protect, and enhance listed and at-risk fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats. The budget supports the Administration's efforts to responsibly site, permit, and deploy clean energy solutions, including \$171.4 million, \$50.5 million more than the 2023 enacted amount, for the Service's planning and consultation activities. The request advances proactive, cooperative conservation with investments in programs aimed at preventing the listing of species under the Endangered Species Act. The request provides \$52.7 million, \$15.1 million above the 2023 enacted level, to support conservation of at-risk species and their habitats and \$27.0 million, \$3.7 million above 2023 enacted, to accelerate completion of 5-year species status reviews. Within the \$129.2 million provided for

recovery, an increase of \$19.2 million from the 2023 enacted amount will support delisting and downlisting efforts and catalyze the conservation of imperiled species.

The 2024 budget for the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is \$79.7 million, \$19.5 million more than 2023 enacted, and the Coastal Program request is \$20.4 million, \$6.5 million more than 2023 enacted, in recognition of the importance of cooperative conservation of private lands to habitat adaptation and resilience and a healthy economy. These citizen-centric programs work collaboratively with partners to restore, enhance, and protect habitat for priority Federal trust species. The projects provide other benefits to the local communities, such as enhancing drought resistance through water conservation projects, creating resilience to wildfire, and supporting habitat and migration corridors for game and other plants and animals of cultural significance.

The National Wildlife Refuge System is a model for conservation around the world. The 2024 budget for the refuge system is \$624.9 million, \$83.3 million above the 2023 enacted level. Funding for operations—including wildlife and habitat management, visitor services, refuge law enforcement, and planning—is \$454.3 million to support the FWS core mission to increase adaptive management, habitat resilience, and the use of science-driven decision making for conserving America's rich fish and wildlife heritage. The budget for those programs is \$63.0 million more than 2023 enacted, including \$4.0 million to increase representation in public lands, as part of a \$6.1 million increase overall for conservation planning. The effort to increase representation in public lands supports new and recently designated units that preserve and tell the stories of those people who have been historically unrepresented. The request for Refuge Maintenance is \$170.5 million, an increase of \$20.3 million from 2023 enacted.

The refuges are a focal point for youth corps programs that are putting people to work improving America's lands, waters, and infrastructure. The FWS budget includes \$8.0 million within Refuge Visitor Services and \$2.0 million in the request for the National Conservation Training Center in General Operations to develop the next generation of conservation workers and create a new pathway to good-paying jobs.

The budget includes \$78.5 million for Migratory Bird Management, \$24.6 million more than the 2023 enacted amount. Within that amount is funding to modernize the permitting process to enable the use of the latest scientific information and energy production technologies when evaluating development proposals. The Joint Venture program will support grants to improve the resilience of important habitats—and nearby communities—across the Nation's four migratory bird flyways. The program's Urban Bird Treaties grants support partnerships to conserve birds in urban environments by creating parks and restoring nearby wetlands—all while engaging local communities.

The launch of the ePermitting system in 2021 was a major step in improving the Service's customer service focus. Since the launch, the Service has continued to improve how customers apply for and receive permits, while bringing greater efficiency and consistency to the work that the Service does to process those applications. This budget consolidates \$13.5 million, \$6.0 million more than 2023 enacted, for ePermit system operations and enhancements into a single program supporting the transition of more permit types to fully online, self-service processes that will improve the customer experience.

Law Enforcement programs are funded at \$104.4 million in the budget, an increase of \$12.3 million from the 2023 enacted level. This program investigates wildlife crimes and enforces the laws that govern the Nation's wildlife trade. FWS continues to work with the State Department, other Federal agencies, and foreign governments to address the threat to conservation and global security posed by illegal wildlife trade and trafficking. The budget supports law enforcement efforts to stop illegal trade; ensure sustainable legal trade through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora; reduce the demand for illegal wildlife products; and provide technical assistance and grants to other nations to build local enforcement capabilities.

FWS provides international conservation grants and technical support to assist other countries' conservation and climate change adaptation and resilience efforts. The budget includes \$26.7 million, \$5.1 more than the 2023 enacted amount, for International Affairs to support expanded conservation capacity for iconic species such as elephants and rhinos and to support climate adaptation and resiliency efforts. The program complements FWS Law Enforcement efforts to reduce illegal wildlife trafficking and develops innovative conservation activities that target market and consumer demand for illegal products driving a rapid increase in the poaching of species such as tigers and pangolins.

The budget requests \$259.8 million to support the National Fish Hatchery System, aquatic habitat conservation and restoration, and the prevention and control of aquatic invasive species. That amount includes \$79.9 million for operation of the National Fish Hatchery System and \$49.7 million for National Fish Hatchery maintenance, \$3.6 and \$23.3 more than the 2023 enacted amount, respectively. The Hatchery System is an international leader in the propagation of imperiled aquatic species, and the budget expands capabilities to ensure the health of aquatic species. Advancing aquatic conservation requires modernizing and maintaining hatchery infrastructure, which is not eligible for funding under the Great American Outdoors Act. The budget also includes \$130.2 million for Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation. The request expands aquatic invasive species prevention, fully funds the National Fish Habitat Action Plan at the authorized level, and provides for aquatic species assessments and cooperative management to enhance habitat adaptation and resilience.

Subsistence practices are vital to Alaskan rural communities, especially Alaska Natives who depend heavily on subsistence practices for their nutritional, social, economic, and cultural needs. The 2024 budget proposes to shift the Office of Subsistence Management from FWS to Indian Affairs. The office provides administrative support to the Federal Subsistence Board and the Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils and supports the subsistence regulatory process and the Fisheries Resource Monitoring program. The shift of the office will facilitate expanded Tribal co-management partnerships and the incorporation of indigenous knowledge into subsistence management. Most of the funding associated with this transfer will shift from the Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation activity, with additional funding from the National Wildlife Refuge System, into the Operation of Indian Programs account within Indian Affairs. Separately, additional funding is requested to strengthen FWS' resource management activities supporting subsistence management.

The 2024 request for Science Applications is \$55.5 million, \$20.1 above the 2023 enacted level. The program supports science partnerships with States, Tribes, industry, local communities, and other stakeholders to design and implement conservation and habitat management strategies that support the development of landscape conservation objectives such as biodiversity, adaptation, and resilience. By weaving together conservation design principles and local conservation blueprints, the collaborations increase coastal resilience, mitigate desertification, control invasive species, and reduce the impacts of wildfires.

The General Operations budget totals \$206.2 million, an increase of \$39.9 from the 2023 enacted amount, including \$9.0 million to support the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Across multiple programs in FWS, the budget provides \$15.5 million to accelerate the transition to zero-emission vehicles as part of a coordinated effort across DOI.

### **Construction**

The 2024 Construction budget totals \$51.0 million, \$21.0 more than the 2023 enacted amount, including \$42.0 million for line-item construction projects. The budget includes \$9.3 million to modernize critical

field communication tools for users in the Southeastern United States, Hawaii and the Pacific Insular Areas, and Alaska.

### **Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund**

The budget requests \$23.7 million for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund to support State and local efforts to recover listed species. The budget also proposes funding for Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants to States through the permanent Land and Water Conservation Fund.

### **North American Wetlands Conservation Fund**

The 2024 budget is \$50.0 million, unchanged from the 2023 enacted amount, for the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund. Conservation grants from the fund are leveraged more than one-to-one with partners for wetlands and waterfowl conservation, supporting climate adaptation and resiliency and important outdoor activities for sportsmen and sportswomen.

### **Multinational Species Conservation Fund**

The 2024 budget includes \$22.0 million, \$1.0 million more than the 2023 enacted amount, for the Multinational Species Conservation Fund. These grants support the conservation and protection of African and Asian elephants, rhinoceroses, tigers, great apes, and marine turtles and leverage funds from partners to nearly triple the available funding for those species, which will foster improved species management and reduce human–animal conflicts.

### **Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund**

The 2024 request includes \$9.9 million for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, a \$4.8 million increase from the 2023 enacted amount. Populations of neotropical birds, such as the goldfinch, have declined due to climate change and habitat loss. These grants for the conservation of migratory birds are matched at least three-to-one by partners throughout the western hemisphere.

### **State and Tribal Wildlife Grants**

The request for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants is \$76.6 million, \$2.8 more than the 2023 enacted level, and includes \$9.0 million for the Tribal Competitive Grants Program. These grants support and leverage State management of non-game species and improve the resiliency of State and Tribal natural resources in the face of stressors, such as rising temperatures and changing weather patterns. This investment recognizes the important partnership between State and Tribal fish and wildlife managers and FWS.

### **Fixed Costs**

Fixed-cost increases of \$58.8 million are fully funded.

### **Good Accounting Obligation in Government Act Report (All Bureaus/Offices)**

The Good Accounting Obligation in Government Act (GAO-IG Act, P.L. 115-414) enacted January 3, 2019, requires that Agencies report the status of each open audit recommendation issued more than one year prior to the submission of the Agency’s annual budget justification to Congress. The Act requires Agencies to include the current target completion date, implementation status, and any discrepancies on closure determinations.

The Department of the Interior leadership takes audit follow-up very seriously and considers our external auditors, to include the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and Office of the Inspector General, valued partners in not only improving the Department’s management and compliance obligations but also enhancing its programmatic and administrative operations. As stewards of taxpayer resources, the

Department applies cost-benefit analysis and enterprise risk management principles in recommendation implementation decisions. The Department's GAO-IG Act Report will be available at the following link: <https://www.doi.gov/cj>

U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE MAJOR ACCOUNT SUMMARY OF FISCAL YEAR 2024							
Account	2022 Actual*	2023 Enacted	2024				Change from 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	2024 Request	
<b>Current Appropriations</b>							
Resource Management FTE incl. IRA and ARP, offsetting coll.FTE) * \$000	1,451,545	1,555,684	+58,320	-10,789	+251,843	1,855,058	+299,374
	6,534	6,637		-36	+882	7,483	+846
Construction \$000	12,847	29,904	+466		+20,581	50,951	+21,047
FTE	64	64			0	64	0
Land Acquisition LA \$000	0	0	0		0	0	0
FTE	3				0		0
National Wildlife Refuge Fund \$000	13,228	13,228	0		-13,228	0	-13,228
FTE	0	0				0	0
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund \$000	24,064	24,564	0		-862	23,702	-862
FTE	14	14			0	14	0
North American Wetlands Conservation Fund \$000	48,500	50,000	0		0	50,000	0
FTE	6	6			0	6	0
Multinational Species Conservation Fund \$000	20,000	21,000	0		+1,000	22,000	+1,000
FTE	5	5			0	5	0
Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation \$000	5,000	5,100	0		+4,810	9,910	+4,810
FTE	1	1			0	1	0
State and Tribal Wildlife Grants \$000	72,612	73,812	0		+2,800	76,612	+2,800
FTE	16	16			0	16	0
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total, Current Appropriations \$000</b>	<b>1,647,796</b>	<b>1,773,292</b>	<b>+58,786</b>	<b>-10,789</b>	<b>+266,944</b>	<b>2,088,233</b>	<b>+314,941</b>
<b>FTE</b>	<b>6,643</b>	<b>6,743</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-36</b>	<b>882</b>	<b>7,589</b>	<b>846</b>
<b>Supplemental - Construction [FTE in Construction] Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (net of transfers) [FTE in RM]</b>	<b>58,227</b>	<b>247,000</b>			<b>247,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-247,000</b>
		<b>[20]</b>					
	<b>100,144</b>	<b>90,545</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>90,545</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>[12]</b>						
<b>Total Current Appropriations</b>	<b>1,806,167</b>	<b>2,110,837</b>	<b>58,786</b>	<b>-10,789</b>	<b>19,944</b>	<b>2,178,778</b>	<b>67,941</b>
<b>Rescissions/Cancellations</b>							
Land Acquisition/Construction	-1,240	0	0		0	0	0
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund 5143/5479	-945	0	0		0	0	0
Subtotal, Rescissions/Cancellations	-2,185	0	0		0	0	0
<b>TOTAL, Current Appropriations with Supplemental/ Rescissions/ Cancellations.</b>	<b>1,803,982</b>	<b>2,110,837</b>	<b>58,786</b>	<b>-10,789</b>	<b>19,944</b>	<b>2,178,778</b>	<b>67,941</b>
<b>FTE</b>	<b>+6,643</b>	<b>+6,743</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-36</b>	<b>+882</b>	<b>+7,589</b>	<b>+846</b>

U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE MAJOR ACCOUNT SUMMARY OF FISCAL YEAR 2024 REQUEST								
Account		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change from 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	External Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	2024 Request	
<b>Permanent and Trust Accounts</b>								
	-							
National Wildlife Refuge Fund	\$000	8,829	8,055	0	0	-55	8,000	-55
	FTE	3	3		0	0	3	0
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund - Payment to Special Fund (TF)	\$000	96,371	100,241	0	0	-5,851	94,390	-5,851
	FTE	0	0		0	0	0	0
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund from LWCF	\$000	30,930	32,800	0	0	+7,362	40,162	+7,362
	FTE							
Land Acquisition MG ML		108,705	114,017			+4,935	118,952	+4,935
	FTE	69	73			0	73	0
North American Wetlands Conservation Fund MR	\$000	133	1,866	0	0	-1,725	141	-1,725
	FTE	1	1		0	0	1	0
Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration	\$000	494,656	517,616	0	0	+17,442	535,058	+17,442
	FTE	56	56		0	0	56	0
Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration	\$000	1,161,318	1,259,333	0	0	-167,637	1,091,696	-167,637
	FTE	50	50		0	0	50	0
Migratory Bird Conservation Account	\$000	115,152	88,818	0	0	-1,818	87,000	-1,818
	FTE	81	81		0	0	81	0
Federal Lands Recreational Enhancement Act	\$000	7,564	7,000	0	0	0	7,000	0
	FTE	25	25		0	0	25	0
Contributed Funds	\$000	3,004	5,000	0	0		5,000	0
	FTE	15	15		0	0	15	0
Miscellaneous Permanent Appropriations	\$000	6,152	4,775	0	0	-500	4,275	-500
	FTE	1	1		0	0	1	0
Inflation Reduction Act	\$000	250,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
	FTE							
<b>Subtotal, Permanent Appropriations</b>	<b>\$000</b>	<b>2,282,814</b>	<b>2,139,521</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-147,847</b>	<b>1,991,674</b>	<b>-147,847</b>
	<b>FTE</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Reimbursements, Offsetting Collections, Allocations From Others</b>								
RM Reimbursable	FTE	861	861			0	861	0
RM MF Offsetting Collections 1800 series in rm direct	FTE	0	0			0	0	0
RM OD Offsetting Collections 4000 series in rm direct'	FTE	0	0			0	0	0
National Parks and Public Lands GAO	FTE	69	69			0	69	0
Wildland Fire Management (incl. reimb)	FTE	441	452			+25	477	+25
Southern Nevada Lands	FTE	2	2			0	2	0
Federal Aid - Highway	FTE	17	17			0	17	0
ARP in Resource Management FTEs	FTE	0	0			0	0	0
NRDAR	FTE	60	60			0	60	0
Central HAZMAT	FTE	8	8			0	8	0
Forest Pest	FTE	0	0			0	0	0
Disaster Relief/Renewable Energy Coordination	FTE	4	5			0	5	0
Energy Act - Permit Processing	FTE	14	14			0	14	0
Subtotal, Other		1,476	1,488	0	0	+25	1,513	+25
<b>TOTAL FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE without Rescissions/ Cancellation</b>								
	<b>\$000</b>	<b>4,088,981</b>	<b>4,250,358</b>	<b>+58,786</b>	<b>-10,789</b>	<b>-127,903</b>	<b>4,170,452</b>	<b>-79,906</b>
	<b>FTE</b>	<b>8,420</b>	<b>8,536</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-36</b>	<b>+907</b>	<b>9,407</b>	<b>+871</b>
<b>Rescissions/ Cancellation</b>	<b>\$000</b>	<b>-2,185</b>	<b>0</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>+0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE with Rescissions/Cancellation of Balances</b>								
	<b>\$000</b>	<b>4,086,796</b>	<b>4,250,358</b>	<b>58,786</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-127,903</b>	<b>4,170,452</b>	<b>-79,906</b>
	<b>FTE</b>	<b>+8,420</b>	<b>+8,536</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-36</b>	<b>+907</b>	<b>9,407</b>	<b>+871</b>

# Budget at a Glance



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Budget At A Glance						
Dollars in Thousands (\$000)						
	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	2024 Request
<b>Appropriation: RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>						
<b>ECOLOGICAL SERVICES</b>						
<b>LISTING</b>	<b>21,279</b>	<b>23,398</b>	<b>+1,118</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+2,548</b>	<b>27,064</b>
General Program Activities					+2,548	
<b>PLANNING AND CONSULTATION</b>	<b>112,092</b>	<b>120,858</b>	<b>+5,567</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+44,949</b>	<b>171,374</b>
General Program Activities					+36,449	
Energy - Renewable Permitting					+8,000	
Pesticide Consultations					+500	
<b>CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION</b>	<b>35,666</b>	<b>37,653</b>	<b>+1,720</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+13,371</b>	<b>52,744</b>
Environmental Response and Restoration					+3,750	
Candidate Conservation					+4,871	
National Wetlands Inventory					+4,000	
Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA)					+500	
Marine Mammals					+250	
<b>RECOVERY</b>	<b>108,372</b>	<b>114,124</b>	<b>+4,092</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+15,089</b>	<b>133,305</b>
General Program Activities					+20,289	
Recovery Challenge					-1,500	
State of the Bird Activities					-1,250	
Prescott Grant Program					-1,100	
Florida Grasshopper Sparrow					-350	
Wolf Livestock Loss Demonstration Program					-1,000	
<b>ECOLOGICAL SERVICES TOTAL</b>	<b>277,409</b>	<b>296,033</b>	<b>+12,497</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+75,957</b>	<b>384,487</b>
<b>HABITAT CONSERVATION</b>						
<b>PARTNERS FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE</b>	<b>57,715</b>	<b>60,267</b>	<b>+1,807</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+17,643</b>	<b>79,717</b>
Nutria Eradication					-1,450	
General Program Activities					+19,093	
<b>COASTAL PROGRAM</b>	<b>13,616</b>	<b>13,957</b>	<b>+446</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+6,019</b>	<b>20,422</b>
General Program Activities					+6,019	
<b>HABITAT CONSERVATION TOTAL</b>	<b>71,331</b>	<b>74,224</b>	<b>+2,253</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+23,662</b>	<b>100,139</b>
<b>NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM</b>						
<b>WILDLIFE AND HABITAT MANAGEMENT</b>						
<b>Refuge Wildlife &amp; Habitat Management</b>	<b>249,517</b>	<b>260,529</b>	<b>+10,149</b>	<b>-2,835</b>	<b>+23,145</b>	<b>290,988</b>
General Program Activities					+26,370	
Inventory & Monitoring					+1,000	
Alaska Subsistence				-2,835	+1,025	
Nutria Eradication					-1,250	
Invasive Species					-3,500	
Refuge Water Efficiency/ Quivira					-500	
<b>Refuge Visitor Services</b>	<b>77,237</b>	<b>80,859</b>	<b>+3,584</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+16,668</b>	<b>101,111</b>
General Program Activities					+11,668	
Urban Wildlife Conservation Program					+5,500	
Youth and Careers in Nature					-500	
<b>Refuge Law Enforcement</b>	<b>41,915</b>	<b>46,272</b>	<b>+2,127</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+4,000</b>	<b>52,399</b>
General Program Activities					+4,000	
<b>Refuge Conservation Planning</b>	<b>2,594</b>	<b>3,684</b>	<b>+137</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+6,000</b>	<b>9,821</b>
Refuge Planning					+6,000	
<b>Refuge Maintenance</b>	<b>147,498</b>	<b>150,211</b>	<b>+3,288</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+17,049</b>	<b>170,548</b>
Annual Maintenance					+7,895	
Maintenance Support					+7,154	
Equipment and Vehicle Management					+2,000	
<b>NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM TOTAL</b>	<b>518,761</b>	<b>541,555</b>	<b>+19,285</b>	<b>-2,835</b>	<b>+66,862</b>	<b>624,867</b>

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Budget At A Glance						
Dollars in Thousands (\$000)						
	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	2024 Request
<b>CONSERVATION AND ENFORCEMENT</b>						
<b>MIGRATORY BIRD MANAGEMENT</b>						
<b>Conservation and Monitoring</b>	29,921	30,935	+1,282		+13,358	45,575
General Program Activities					+9,058	
Energy					+3,400	
Urban Bird Treaties					+900	
<b>Permits</b>	3,513	5,513	+186	0	+7,612	13,311
General Program Activities					+7,612	
<b>Duck Stamp Office</b>	572	591	+30	0	+500	1,121
General Program Activities					+500	
<b>North American Waterfowl Management Plan</b>	15,562	16,821	+402	0	+1,269	18,492
General Program Activities					+1,269	
<b>Migratory Bird Management Total</b>	<b>49,568</b>	<b>53,860</b>	<b>+1,900</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+22,739</b>	<b>78,499</b>
<b>LAW ENFORCEMENT</b>						
<b>Law Enforcement Operations</b>	88,878	91,189	+4,111	0	+8,234	103,534
General Program Activities					+8,234	
<b>Equipment Replacement</b>	910	910	0	0	0	910
<b>Law Enforcement Total</b>	<b>89,788</b>	<b>92,099</b>	<b>+4,111</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+8,234</b>	<b>104,444</b>
<b>INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS</b>						
<b>International Conservation</b>	9,899	10,098	+286	0	+2,514	12,898
General Program Activities					+3,514	
Theodore Roosevelt Genius Prize					-1,000	
<b>International Wildlife Trade</b>	15,466	18,981	+489	-7,500	+1,847	13,817
General Program Activities				-7,500	+1,847	
<b>International Affairs Total</b>	<b>25,365</b>	<b>29,079</b>	<b>+775</b>	<b>-7,500</b>	<b>+4,361</b>	<b>26,715</b>
<b>EPERMITTS</b>						
<b>ePermits</b>	0	0	0	+7,500	+6,000	13,500
ePermits Operations				+5,000	+1,000	
Program Enhancements				+2,500	+5,000	
<b>ePermits Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+7,500</b>	<b>+6,000</b>	<b>13,500</b>
<b>CONSERVATION AND ENFORCEMENT TOTAL</b>	<b>164,721</b>	<b>175,038</b>	<b>+6,786</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+41,334</b>	<b>223,158</b>
<b>FISH AND AQUATIC CONSERVATION</b>						
<b>National Fish Hatchery Operations</b>	71,776	76,356	+2,476	-6,000	+7,114	79,946
General Program Activities				-6,000	+18,014	
Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Program					-400	
Warm Springs Fish Health Center					-8,000	
Pacific Salmon Treaty					-2,500	
<b>Maintenance and Equipment</b>	26,046	26,314	+431	0	+22,906	49,651
Deferred Maintenance					+15,000	
Annual Maintenance					+7,906	
<b>Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation</b>						
<b>Habitat Assessment and Restoration</b>	46,326	51,826	+684	+3,000	-7,506	48,004
National Fish Habitat Action Plan					+500	
General Program Activities				+3,000	+494	
Delaware River Basin Conservation Act					-1,500	
Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement					-7,000	

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Budget At A Glance						
Dollars in Thousands (\$000)						
	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	2024 Request
<b>Population Assessment and Cooperative Mgmt.</b>	<b>33,965</b>	<b>36,932</b>	<b>+904</b>	<b>-4,954</b>	<b>+239</b>	<b>33,121</b>
General Program Activities				<b>+3,000</b>	+2,267	
Alaska Fisheries Subsistence				<b>-7,954</b>	+2,750	
Great Lakes F&W Restoration Program					-2,110	
Snakehead Eradication					-1,000	
Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey					-818	
Pacific Salmon Treaty					-150	
Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission					-700	
<b>Aquatic Invasive Species</b>	<b>42,713</b>	<b>50,143</b>	<b>+694</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-1,775</b>	<b>49,062</b>
Prevention					+6,675	
Invasive Carp					-5,000	
Contract Fishing (Invasive Carp)					-1,000	
Lake Tahoe Restoration					-950	
Hydrilla, Eel and Milfoil Invasive Grasses					-1,500	
<b>Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation Subtotal</b>	<b>123,004</b>	<b>138,901</b>	<b>+2,282</b>	<b>-1,954</b>	<b>-9,042</b>	<b>130,187</b>
<b>FISH AND AQUATIC CONSERVATION TOTAL</b>	<b>220,826</b>	<b>241,571</b>	<b>+5,189</b>	<b>-7,954</b>	<b>+20,978</b>	<b>259,784</b>
<b>SCIENCE APPLICATIONS</b>						
<b>Science Partnerships</b>	<b>29,202</b>	<b>26,400</b>	<b>+802</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+12,698</b>	<b>39,900</b>
General Program Activities					+20,698	
Chesapeake WILD					-8,000	
<b>Service Science</b>	<b>6,833</b>	<b>8,972</b>	<b>+109</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+6,471</b>	<b>15,552</b>
General Program Activities					+6,471	
<b>SCIENCE APPLICATIONS TOTAL</b>	<b>36,035</b>	<b>35,372</b>	<b>+911</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+19,169</b>	<b>55,452</b>
<b>GENERAL OPERATIONS</b>						
<b>Central Office Operations</b>	<b>26,766</b>	<b>31,077</b>	<b>+2,258</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+4,069</b>	<b>37,404</b>
Office of Communications					+1,245	
Office of the Director					+81	
Native American Coordination Office					+805	
Diversity Office					+1,276	
Regional Directors					+662	
<b>Management and Administration</b>	<b>47,484</b>	<b>51,249</b>	<b>+5,564</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+17,961</b>	<b>74,774</b>
JAO					+5,340	
Information Resources and Technology Mgmt					+8,195	
Zero-Emission Vehicles					+4,426	
<b>Servicewide Bill Paying</b>	<b>44,667</b>	<b>46,581</b>	<b>+2,503</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-357</b>	<b>48,727</b>
Communication, Information Technology and Security					-357	
<b>Aviation Management</b>	<b>3,255</b>	<b>3,296</b>	<b>+72</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>3,372</b>
Baseline Capacity					+4	
<b>National Fish &amp; Wildlife Foundation</b>	<b>7,022</b>	<b>7,032</b>	<b>+10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+2,000</b>	<b>9,042</b>
NFWF					+2,000	
<b>National Conservation Training Center</b>	<b>26,455</b>	<b>27,015</b>	<b>+992</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+4,845</b>	<b>32,852</b>
Annual Maintenance					+2,801	
Youth and Careers in Nature					+2,000	
General Program Activities					+44	
<b>GENERAL OPERATIONS TOTAL</b>	<b>155,649</b>	<b>166,250</b>	<b>+11,399</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+28,522</b>	<b>206,171</b>
<b>Stewardship Priorities</b>	<b>6,813</b>	<b>25,641</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-25,641</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Damage Recovery Provision</b>					<b>+1,000</b>	<b>1,000</b>
<b>TOTAL - RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>1,451,545</b>	<b>1,555,684</b>	<b>+58,320</b>	<b>-10,789</b>	<b>+251,843</b>	<b>1,855,058</b>

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Budget At A Glance						
Dollars in Thousands (\$000)						
	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	2024 Request
<b>Appropriation: CONSTRUCTION</b>						
Nationwide Engineering Services	5,537	5,821	+466	0	+235	6,522
Core Engineering Services					+235	
Dam, Bridge and Seismic Safety	2,427	2,427	0	0	0	2,427
Construction Projects	4,883	21,656	0	0	+20,346	42,002
Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure					+11,047	
Field Communication Modernization					+9,299	
<b>TOTAL - CONSTRUCTION</b>	<b>12,847</b>	<b>29,904</b>	<b>+466</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+20,581</b>	<b>50,951</b>
<b>Appropriation: NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE FUND</b>						
National Wildlife Refuge Fund	13,228	13,228	0	0	-13,228	0
<b>Appropriation: COOPERATIVE ENDANGERED SPECIES CONSERVATION FUND</b>						
HCP Land Acquisition	24,064	24,564	0	0	-862	23,702
Conservation Grants					-362	
					-500	
<b>Appropriation: NORTH AMERICAN WETLANDS CONSERVATION FUND</b>						
	48,500	50,000	0	0	0	50,000
<b>Appropriation: MULTINATIONAL SPECIES CONSERVATION FUND</b>						
Multinational Species Conservation	20,000	21,000	0	0	+1,000	22,000
<b>Appropriation: NEOTROPICAL MIGRATORY BIRD CONSERVATION FUND</b>						
Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation	5,000	5,100	0	0	+4,810	9,910
<b>Appropriation: STATE &amp; TRIBAL WILDLIFE GRANTS</b>						
Tribal Grants	72,612	73,812	0	0	+2,800	76,612
					+2,800	
<b>TOTAL, FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (Current Disc.)</b>	<b>1,647,796</b>	<b>1,773,292</b>	<b>+58,786</b>	<b>-10,789</b>	<b>+266,944</b>	<b>2,088,233</b>
<b>RESCISSION / CANCELLATION OF BALANCES</b>						
Account: COOPERATIVE END. SPECIES CONSERVATION FUND	-945	0	0	0	0	0
Account: CONSTRUCTION	-1,240	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL, FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (Discretionary)</b>	<b>1,645,611</b>	<b>1,773,292</b>	<b>+58,786</b>	<b>-10,789</b>	<b>+266,944</b>	<b>2,088,233</b>

**FY 2024 Summary of Fixed Cost Changes by Appropriation**

Dollars in Thousands (\$000)

Fixed Cost Component	Resource Management		Construction	TOTAL
Change in Pay Days	4,022	34		4,056
CY 2023 Pay Raise - One Quarter	11,398	97		11,495
CY 2024 Pay Raise - Three Quarters	39,299	335		39,634
FERS Employer Contribution Increase	314	0		314
Departmental Working Capital Fund	2,043	0		2,043
Workers' Compensation Payments	262	0		262
Unemployment Compensation Payments	126	0		126
GSA and non-GSA Space Rental Payments	102	0		102
Net O&M Baseline Adjustment	1,048	0		1,048
<b>TOTAL, Fixed Costs</b>	<b>58,614</b>	<b>466</b>		<b>59,080</b>

# Resource Management



## Resource Management

### Appropriations Language

For necessary expenses of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, as authorized by law, and for scientific and economic studies, general administration, and for the performance of other authorized functions related to such resources, [\$1,555,684,000/\$1,854,058,000, to remain available until September 30, [2024] 2025, of which not to exceed \$15,000 may be for official reception and representation expenses: Provided, That not to exceed [\$23,398,000]\$27,064,000 shall be used for implementing subsections (a), (b), (c), and (e) of section 4 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1533) (except for processing petitions, developing and issuing proposed and final regulations, and taking any other steps to implement actions described in subsection (c)(2)(A), (c)(2)(B)(i), or (c)(2)(B)(ii) of such section): Provided further, That of the amount appropriated under this heading, \$25,641,000, to remain available until September 30, 2025, shall be for projects specified for Stewardship Priorities in the table titled "Interior and Environment Incorporation of Community Project Funding Items/Congressionally Directed Spending Items" included for this division in the explanatory statement described in section 4 (in the matter preceding division A of this consolidated Act): Provided further, That amounts in the preceding proviso may be transferred to the appropriate program, project, or activity under this heading and shall continue to only be available for the purposes and in such amounts as such funds were originally appropriated]

(Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023.)

### Justification of Language Change

Addition of the following wording:

of which not to exceed \$15,000 may be for official reception and representation expenses:

This change adds language to enable the Service to use up to \$15,000 of appropriated amounts for courtesy and social responsibilities associated with official duties, primarily for outreach, engagement and consultation with Tribal partners to honor traditions. This request would provide the Bureau similar authority provided to other agencies to extend hospitality to official visitors without bureau employees bearing expenses from their own personal funds.

### Authorizing Statutes

*African Elephant Conservation Act*, (16 U.S.C. 4201-4245, 1538). Authorizes funding for approved projects for research, conservation, management or protection of African elephants. Authorizes prohibitions against the sale, importation, and exportation of ivory derived from African elephants.

*Agricultural Credit Act*, (P. L. 100-233). Section 616 authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to transfer lands, interest therein, to Federal or State agencies for conservation purposes. The Fish and Wildlife Service assesses inventory lands to determine when such lands would be of benefit to the National Wildlife Refuge System and makes transfer recommendations.

*Airborne Hunting Act*, (16 U.S.C. 742 j-1). Section 13 of the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 prohibits taking or harassing wildlife from aircraft, except when protecting wildlife, livestock, and human health or safety as authorized by a Federal or State issued license or permit.

*Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act*, (16 U.S.C. 410hh-3233, 43 U.S.C 1602-1784). Provides for the designation and conservation of certain public lands in Alaska, including units of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and for the continuing subsistence needs of the Alaska Natives. Sec. 42(g) of this Act makes use of such Native lands subject to refuge regulations.

***Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act***, (43 U.S.C. 1601-1624). Provides various measures for settling the claims of Alaska Native peoples to land in Alaska, including authorization of selection and ownership of land within National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska by Native Corporations.

***Anadromous Fish Conservation Act***, (P. L. 89-304). Authorizes the Secretaries of the Interior and Commerce to enter into cooperative agreements with the States and other non-Federal interests for the conservation, development, and enhancement of anadromous fish, including those in the Great Lakes, and to contribute up to 50 percent of the costs of carrying out such agreements.

***Antarctic Conservation Act***, (16 U.S.C. 2401). Provides for the conservation and protection of the fauna and flora of Antarctica, and their ecosystems.

***Archaeological Resources Protection Act***, (16 U.S.C. 470aa-47011). Provides for protection of archaeological resources and sites on public and Tribal lands and for increased cooperation between government authorities, the professional archaeological community, and private collectors with collections obtained before October 31, 1979.

***Arctic Tundra Habitat Emergency Conservation Act***, (P.L.106-108). Requires the Secretary of the Interior to prepare, and as appropriate implement, a comprehensive, long-term plan for the management of mid-continent light geese and conservation of their habitat.

***Asian Elephant Conservation Act***, (16 U.S.C. 4261-4266, 1538). Provides for cooperative projects for the conservation and protection of Asian elephants.

***Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act***, (16 U. S.C. 5151-5158). The purpose of this Act is to support and encourage development, implementation, and enforcement of effective interstate action regarding the conservation and management of Atlantic striped bass. The Act recognizes the commercial and recreational importance of Atlantic striped bass and establishes a consistent management scheme for its conservation. The three partners which share management responsibility for Atlantic striped bass are the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Every two years, the Services are required to produce an Atlantic Striped Bass Biennial Report to Congress on the status and health of Atlantic Coast Striped Bass Stocks.

***Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act***, (16 U.S.C. 668-668d). This Act provides for the protection of Bald Eagles and Golden Eagles by prohibiting take, possession, sale, purchase, transport, export or import of such eagles or their parts or nests. Take, possession, and transport are permitted for certain authorized purposes.

***Brown Tree Snake Eradication and Control Act***, (P.L. 108-384). Through this Act, the U.S. Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture support a multi-agency and partner effort to eradicate brown tree snakes in Guam and to prevent introduction or establishment of this invasive species on other Pacific islands or the U.S. mainland.

***Billy Frank Jr. Tell Your Story Act***, (P.L. 114-101). Establishes the Medicine Creek Treaty National Memorial within the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge. The Department of the Interior must: (1) establish the boundaries of the Medicine Creek Treaty National Memorial and to provide for its administration and interpretation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and (2) coordinate with representatives of the Muckleshoot, Nisqually, Puyallup, and Squaxin Island Indian Tribes in providing for that interpretation.

***Chehalis River Basin Fishery Resources Study and Restoration Act***, (P. L. 101-452). Authorizes a joint Federal, State, and Tribal study for the restoration of the fishery resources of the Chehalis River Basin, Washington.

***Coastal Barrier Resources Act, as amended by the Coastal Barrier Improvement Act of 1990***, (16 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.). Requires the Secretary (delegated to the Service) to maintain the maps of the Coastal Barrier Resources System, to review the system at least every five years for changes which have occurred as a result of natural forces, and to make minor and technical changes to the maps of the System reflecting those natural changes. It also requires the Secretary to submit a study to Congress on the need to include the west coast in the system, and to lead an interagency task force to provide recommendations to Congress for legislative action and Federal policies on developed and undeveloped coastal barriers.

***Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act***, (16 U.S.C. 3951-3156). Provides a Federal grant program for the acquisition, restoration, management, and enhancement of coastal wetlands of States adjacent to the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, the Great Lakes, and the Pacific, including Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Pacific U.S. insular areas. Provides that the Service update and digitize wetlands maps in Texas and conduct an assessment of the status, condition, and trends of wetlands in that State. Provides permanent authorization to appropriate receipts, coastal wetlands conservation grants and North American Wetlands Conservation projects.

***Coastal Zone Management Act***, (16 U.S.C. 1451-1464). Establishes a voluntary national program within the Department of Commerce to encourage coastal States to develop and implement coastal zone management plans. Activities that affect coastal zones must be consistent with approved State programs. The Act also establishes a National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS).

***Colorado River Floodway Protection Act***, (43 U.S.C 1600; 42 U.S.C. 4029). Establishes a Task Force to advise the Secretary of the Interior on the specific boundaries for and management for the area.

***Colorado River Storage Project Act***, (43 U.S.C. 620). Provides that facilities will be built and operated to mitigate losses of, and improve conditions for, fish and wildlife in connection with the Colorado River Storage.

***Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act***, (42 U.S.C. 9601, et seq.). Provides that responsible parties, including Federal landowners, investigate and clean up releases of hazardous substances. Trustees for natural resources, which includes the Secretary of the Interior, may assess and recover damages for injury to natural resources from releases of hazardous substances and use the damages for restoration, replacement or acquisition of equivalent natural resources. Provides permanent authorization to appropriate receipts from responsible parties.

***Coral Reef Conservation Act***, (16 U.S.C. 6401 et seq.). Promotes wise management and sustainable use of coral reef ecosystems and develop sound scientific information on the condition of coral reef ecosystems and threats to them. Provides financial resources to local communities and nongovernmental organizations to assist in the preservation of coral reefs. It establishes a formal mechanism for collecting and allocating monetary donations from the private sector to be used for coral reef conservation projects.

***Delaware River Basin Restoration Act***, (P.L. 114-322). Establishes a Delaware River Basin restoration program and directs the Secretary to produce a basin-wide strategy that draws on existing conservation efforts, involves partners, and provides for the implementation of a shared set of science-based restoration and protection activities, including cost-effective projects with measurable results that maximize conservation outcomes with no net gain of Federal employees. Establishes a voluntary grant and technical

assistance program. Sunsets on September 30, 2023. Enacted as part of the Water Resources Development Act of 2016.

***Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt Wildlife Trafficking Act of 2016***, (P.L. 114-231). Sets forth a national policy on wildlife trafficking and several directions for the U.S. Secretary of State. Creates a Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking, the co-chairs of which include the Secretary of the Interior. Authorizes anti-poaching and anti-trafficking programs. Amends the Pelly Amendment to the Fisherman's Protection Act to require that Pelly certifications made to the President by the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior be reported to Congress.

***Emergency Wetlands Resources Act***, (16 U.S.C. 3901). Provides for the collection of entrance fees, thirty percent of which may be used for refuge operations and maintenance, and for the Secretary of the Interior to establish and periodically review a national wetlands priority conservation plan for Federal and State wetlands acquisition, complete National Wetlands Inventory maps for the contiguous United States by September 30, 1998, to update the report on wetlands status and trends by September 30, 1990, and at 10-year intervals thereafter.

***Endangered Species Act***, (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544). Prohibits the import, export, or taking of fish and wildlife and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered species; provides for adding species to and removing them from the list of threatened and endangered species, and for preparing and implementing plans for their recovery; provides for interagency cooperation to avoid take of listed species and for issuing permits for otherwise prohibited activities; provides for cooperation with States, including authorization of financial assistance; and implements the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES).

***Fallon-Paiute Shoshone Indian Water Settlement Act***, (P.L. 101-618). Establishes the Lahontan Valley and Pyramid Lake Fish and Wildlife Fund. Funds are administered by the Service for use in restoring Lahontan Valley wetlands and recovering the endangered and threatened fish of Pyramid Lake. Section 206(a) authorizes the acquisition of water rights for restoring wetlands in Lahontan Valley. The Act stipulates that sufficient water rights be acquired to restore and sustain, on a long-term average, approximately 25,000 acres of primary wetland habitat within Nevada's Lahontan Valley.

***Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Control Act***, (7 U.S.C. 136-136y). Provides for the registration of pesticides to avoid unreasonable adverse effects to humans or the environment. Such registrations are considered Federal actions and are subject to consultations with the Service under the Endangered Species Act.

***Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA)***, (16 U.S.C. 6801-6814). Through this Act, Congress authorized Federal collection of fees for recreational use of public lands managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service.

***Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA)***, (43 U.S.C. 2301-2306). Allows the sale of BLM lands identified for disposal, with sales proceeds used for land acquisition by the various land management agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

***Federal Power Act***, (161 S.C. 791a et seq.). Provides that each license for hydropower projects issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission includes fish ways prescribed by the Secretary of the Interior or Commerce, and that conditions for the protection, mitigation and enhancement of fish and wildlife based on recommendations of the Service and other agencies.

***Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act)***, (33 U.S.C. 1251-1387). Section 404 (m) authorizes the Service to comment on permit applications submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the discharge of dredged or fill material into navigable waters of the United States. Section 208(i) authorizes the Service to provide technical assistance to States in developing management practices as part of its water pollution control programs and to continue with the National Wetlands Inventory. Section 320 authorizes the establishment of a State/Federal cooperative program to nominate estuaries of national significance and to develop and implement management plans to restore and maintain the biological and chemical integrity of estuarine waters.

***Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956***, (16 U.S.C. 742(a)-754). Establishes a comprehensive national fish and wildlife policy and authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to take steps required for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fisheries resources and wildlife resources through research, acquisition of refuge lands, development of existing facilities, and other means.

***Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act***, (16 U.S.C. 2901-2911). Directs the Secretary of the Interior to undertake research and conservation activities, in coordination with other Federal, State, international and private organizations, to fulfill responsibilities to conserve migratory nongame birds under existing authorities. The Secretary is required, for all species, subspecies, and migratory nongame birds, to monitor and assess population trends and status; to identify environmental change and human activities; and to identify species in need of additional conservation and identify conservation actions to ensure perpetuation of these species.

***Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act***, (16 U.S.C. 661-666(e)). Directs the Service to investigate and report on proposed Federal actions that affect any stream or other body of water and to provide recommendations to minimize impacts on fish and wildlife resources.

***Fisheries Restoration and Irrigation Mitigation Act***, (16 U.S.C. 777 note; P.L. 106-502). Congress reauthorized the Fisheries Restoration and Irrigation Mitigation Act (FRIMA) as part of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, P.L. 111-11. FRIMA was established in 2000 and has been an important tool for addressing fish screening and fish passage needs in the Pacific Northwest States.

***Fishery Conservation and Management Act***, (Magnuson-Stevens Act), (16 U.S.C. 1801-1882, 90 Stat. 331). Authorizes the conservation and management of the fishery resources found within the Exclusive Economic Zone of the United States, including anadromous species, through eight Regional Fishery Management Councils. Establishes the Service as a nonvoting member of the Councils.

***Food Security Act***, (16 U.S.C. 801-3945). Provides that the Secretary of Agriculture consult with the Secretary of the Interior on the identification of wetlands, determinations of exemptions, and issuance of regulations to carry out the provisions of this Act. Requires the Service to concur in wetland mitigation plans in association with minimal effect exemptions and to concur in conservation plans for lands proposed for inclusion in the Wetlands Reserve program. Establishes a program to protect and restore wetlands on Farmers Home Administration inventory property and provides for the Service to identify such wetlands.

***Great Ape Conservation Act***, (16 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.). Authorizes grants to foreign governments, the CITES secretariat, and non-governmental organizations for the conservation of great apes. The funds are to be a sub-account of the Multinational Species Conservation Fund.

***Great Lakes Critical Programs Act***, (P.L. 101-596). Authorization for Service activities is contained in title III, the "Lake Champlain Special Designation Act of 1990".

***Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act***, (P.L. 109-326). The 2006 reauthorization places new emphasis on terrestrial wildlife projects, whereas the previous Acts were primarily devoted to fisheries. The bill also reauthorizes the existing State and Tribal grant program and provides new authority for the Service to undertake regional restoration projects. In addition, it directs the Service to create and maintain a website to document actions taken as a result of the Act. Under authority of the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act of 2006, the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act Grant Program provides Federal grants on a competitive basis to States, Tribes and other interested entities to encourage cooperative conservation, restoration and management of fish and wildlife resources and their habitat in the Great Lakes basin.

***Great Lakes Fishery Act***, (16 U.S.C. 931-939). Implements the Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries between the United States and Canada, and authorizes the Secretary of the Interior and the Service to undertake lamprey control and other measures related to the Convention.

***Highlands Conservation Act***, (P.L. 108-421). Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to provide financial assistance to the States of Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania (Highland States) to preserve and protect high priority conservation land in the Highlands region, an area depicted on a National Forest Service map entitled "The Highlands Region" dated June 2004.

***Inflation Reduction Act***, (P.L. 117-169). Originally called the Build Back Better Act, this law represents the largest investment in addressing climate change through large national investments in environmental programs along with other social and infrastructural programs. It included funding for recovery planning and implementation along with environmental review funding for DOI agencies.

***Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act***, (P.L. 117-58). Also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), among other provisions, this legislation provides new funding for infrastructure projects ranging from roads, bridges, and major projects; passenger and freight rail and transit systems; airports; ports and waterways; power; etc. The Service received some funding under BIL for ecosystem restoration, fish passage, and invasive species. Certain sections of the law allow for direct fund transfer to the Service to support environmental reviews

***Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program Act***, (16 U.S.C. 719 et seq.). Authorizes an annual Junior Duck Stamp competition and environmental education program for school children; provides for the licensing and marketing of winning designs, with proceeds used for awards and scholarships to participants. Public Law 109-166 reauthorizes the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program Act of 1994.

***Klamath River Basin Fishery Resources Restoration Act***, (16 U.S.C.460ss et seq.). Requires the Secretary to develop and implement a restoration plan for the Klamath River Basin.

***Lacey Act Amendments of 1981***, (18 U.S.C. 42; 16 U.S.C. 3371-3378). Provides that the Secretary of the Interior designate injurious wildlife and ensure the humane treatment of wildlife shipped to the United States. Prohibits importation, exportation, transportation, sale, or purchase of fish and wildlife taken or possessed in violation of State, Federal, Indian Tribal, and foreign laws. Provides for enforcement of Federal wildlife laws, and Federal assistance to the States and foreign governments in the enforcement of non-Federal wildlife laws.

***Marine Mammal Protection Act***, (16 U.S.C. 1361-1407). Establishes a moratorium on taking and importing marine mammals, including parts and products. Defines the Federal responsibility for conservation of marine mammals, with management authority vested in the Department for the sea otter, walrus, polar bear, dugong, and manatee.

***Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grants***, (16 U.S.C. 1421f; 114 Stat. 2765. Title II of P.L. 106-555). Amends the Marine Mammal Protection Act to authorize grants to non-governmental organizations which participate in the rescue and rehabilitation of stranded marine mammals.

***Marine Turtle Conservation Act***, (16 U.S.C. 6601-6607). Establishes a Marine Turtle Conservation Fund in the Multinational Species Conservation Fund. The fund is a separate account to assist in the conservation of marine turtles, and the nesting habitats of marine turtles in foreign countries.

***Migratory Bird Conservation Act***, (16 U.S.C. 715-715d). Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to conduct investigations and publish documents related to North American birds and establishes a Migratory Bird Conservation Commission (MBCC) to approve areas recommended by the Secretary for acquisition. The MBCC also approves wetlands conservation projects recommended by the North American Wetlands Conservation Council under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act.

***Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act***, (16 U.S.C. 718). This Act, commonly referred to as the Duck Stamp Act, requires waterfowl hunters, 16 years of age or older, to purchase and possess a valid Federal waterfowl hunting stamp prior to taking migratory waterfowl. The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to use \$1 million from sales of migratory bird hunting and conservation stamps to promote additional sales of stamps.

***Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918***, (16 U.S.C. 703-712). Implements four international treaties that affect migratory birds common to the United States, Canada, Mexico, Japan, and the former Soviet Union. Establishes Federal responsibility for protection and management of migratory and non-game birds, including the establishment of season length, bag limits, and other hunting regulations, and the issuance of permits to band, possess or otherwise make use of migratory birds.

***National Aquaculture Development Act***, (16 U.S.C. 2801-2810). Establishes a coordinating group, the Joint Subcommittee on Aquaculture (JSA). The JSA has been responsible for developing the National Aquaculture Development Plan. The plan establishes a strategy for the development of an aquaculture industry in the United States.

***National Environmental Policy Act of 1969***, (NEPA), (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.). Provides that the Service examine the environmental impacts, incorporate environmental information, and use public participation in the planning and implementation of all actions; integrate NEPA with other planning requirements; prepare NEPA documents to facilitate better environmental decision making; and review Federal agency environmental plans and documents when the Service has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impacts involved.

***National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Establishment Act***, (16 U.S.C. 3701-3709). Establishes a federally-chartered, nonprofit corporation to encourage and administer donations to benefit Service programs and other activities to conserve fish, wildlife, and plant resources.

***National Historic Preservation Act of 1966***, (16 U.S.C. 470-470b, 470c-470n). Directs Federal agencies to preserve, restore, and maintain historic cultural environments.

***National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act***, (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.). Provides authority, guidelines and directives for the Service to improve the National Wildlife Refuge System; administers a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and restoration of fish, wildlife and plant resources and habitat; ensures the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of refuges is maintained; defines compatible wildlife-dependent recreation as appropriate general public use of refuges; establishes hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education

as priority uses; establishes a formal process for determining compatible uses of refuges; and provides for public involvement in developing comprehensive conservation plans for refuges.

***The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act***, (P.L. 105-57). Spells out wildlife conservation as the fundamental mission of the refuge system; requires comprehensive conservation planning to guide management of the refuge system; directs the involvement of private citizens in land management decisions; and provides that compatible wildlife-dependent recreation is a legitimate and appropriate use that should receive priority in refuge planning and management.

***The National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act***, (P.L. 106-408). Reinforces *National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act* provisions to raise public understanding and appreciation for the refuge system; calls on the Secretary of the Interior to establish a Centennial Commission to oversee special public outreach activities leading up to and during the Centennial year, leverage resources with public and private partners for outreach efforts, and plan and host a major conference in 2003; calls on the Service to develop a long-term plan to address the highest priority operations, maintenance, and construction needs of the National Wildlife Refuge System; and requires an annual report assessing the operations and maintenance backlogs and transition costs associated with newly acquired refuges lands.

***National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act*** (P.L. 105-242) Amended the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 to promote volunteer programs and community partnerships for the benefit of National Wildlife Refuges.

***National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer Improvement Act***, (P.L. 111-357). Authorizes cooperative agreements with nonprofit partner organizations, academic institutions, or State and local governments to construct, operate, maintain, or improve refuge facilities and services, and to promote volunteer, outreach, and education programs.

***Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act*** (P.L. 101-601). addresses the rights of lineal descendants, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations (parties with standing) to Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony (cultural items). It requires Federal agencies and museums to provide information about Native American cultural items to parties with standing and, upon presentation of a valid claim, ensure the item(s) undergo disposition or repatriation.

***Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act***, (16 U.S.C. 6101 et. seq.). Authorizes grants for the conservation of neotropical migratory birds in the United States and Latin America and the Caribbean, with 75 percent of the amounts made available to be expended on projects outside the United States. The funds are to be a sub-account of the Multinational Species Conservation Fund. Title III of P.L. 109-363, reauthorized appropriations for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act.

***New England Fishery Resources Restoration Act***, (P.L. 101-593). Authorizes the Service to formulate, establish, and implement cooperative programs to restore and maintain nationally significant interjurisdictional fishery resources in New England river systems.

***Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Species Prevention and Control Act, as amended by the National Invasive Species Act***, (NISA, 16 U.S.C. 4701 et seq.). Authorizes the Service to develop and implement a program to prevent and control infestations of zebra mussels and other nonindigenous aquatic invasive species in waters of the United States.

***North American Wetlands Conservation Act***, (16 U.S.C. 4401). Authorizes grants to public-private partnerships in Canada, Mexico and the U.S. to protect, enhance, restore, and manage waterfowl, other

migratory birds and other fish and wildlife, and the wetland ecosystems and other habitats upon which they depend, consistent with the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. There is a Standard and a Small Grants Program. Both are competitive grants programs which require that grant requests be matched by partner contributions at no less than a 1-to-1 ratio. Funds from U.S. Federal sources may contribute towards a project but are not eligible as match. Public Law 109-322 reauthorized the North American Wetlands Conservation Act.

***Nutria Eradication and Control Act***, (P.L. 108-16). Provides for the States of Maryland and Louisiana to implement nutria eradication or control measures and restore marshland damaged by nutria.

***Oil Pollution Act***, (P.L. 101-380). Provides that the Service consult with others on the development of a fish and wildlife response plan for the protection, rescue, and rehabilitation of, and the minimization of risk of damage to fish and wildlife resources and their habitat harmed or jeopardized by an oil discharge.

***Partnerships for Wildlife Act***, (16 U.S.C. 3741-3744). This Act establishes a Wildlife Conservation and Appreciation Fund to receive appropriated funds and donations from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and other private sources to assist the State fish and game agencies in carrying out their responsibilities for conservation of nongame species and authorizes grants to the States for programs and projects to conserve nongame species.

***Partners for Fish and Wildlife Act***, (16 U.S.C. 3771-3774). Provides for the restoration, enhancement, and management of fish and wildlife habitats on private land through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, a program that works with private landowners to conduct cost-effective habitat projects for the benefit of fish and wildlife resources in the United States.

***Pelly Amendment to the Fishermen's Protective Act***, (22 U.S.C. 1978). Authorizes the President to embargo wildlife products, including fish, and limit other imports from nations whose nationals are determined by the Secretary of the Interior or Commerce to be engaging in trade or take that undermines the effectiveness of any international treaty or convention for the protection of endangered or threatened species to which the United States is a party.

***Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act***, (P.L. 113-239). Authorizes the Service to permanently allow any State to provide hunting and conservation stamps for migratory birds (referred to as Federal Duck Stamps) electronically. The electronic stamps would remain valid for 45 days to allow for the physical stamps to arrive in the mail.

***Public Lands Corps Act of 1993*** (P.L. 91-378, amended through P.L. 116-9). Establishes a pilot program in the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture designated as the Youth Conservation Corps.

***Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act***, (16 U.S.C. 2602-2645) and ***Energy Security Act of 1980***, (16 U.S.C. 792-828(c)). Authorizes the Service to investigate and report on effects of hydropower development on fish and wildlife during the licensing process of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

***Recreational Use of Fish and Wildlife Areas***, (16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4). Commonly known as the Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to administer refuges, hatcheries, and other conservation areas for recreational use when such use does not interfere with the primary purpose for which these areas were established.

***Refuge Recreation Act***, (16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4). Public Law 87-714, approved September 28, 1962 (76 Stat.653) as amended by Public Law 89-669, approved October 14, 1966, (80 Stat.930) and P.L. 92-534, approved October 23, 1972, (86 Stat. 1063). Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to administer refuges,

hatcheries and other conservation areas for recreational use, when such uses do not interfere with the areas' primary purposes.

***Resource Conservation Recovery Act***, (42 U.S.C. 6901). Establishes standards for Federal agencies on the treatment, transportation, storage, and disposal of solid and hazardous wastes on Federal lands and facilities.

***Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act***, (16 U.S.C. 5306(a), 1538). Authorizes grants to other nations and to the CITES Secretariat for programs directly or indirectly assisting in the conservation of rhinoceros and tigers. Prohibits the sale, importation, and exportation of products derived from any species of rhinoceros and tiger.

***Salmon and Steelhead and Conservation and Enhancement Act of 1980***, (16 U.S.C. 3301, 11-15, 21-25, 31-36, 41-45). Provides for management and enhancement planning to help prevent a further decline of salmon and steelhead stocks, and to assist in increasing the supply of these stocks within the Columbia River conservation area and the Washington conservation area.

***Sikes Act***, (16 U.S.C. 670a-670o). Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to cooperate with the Department of Defense, Department of Energy, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Bureau of Land Management, and State agencies in planning, developing, maintaining and rehabilitating Federal lands for the benefit of fish and wildlife resources and their habitat.

***Strategic Response to Asian Carp Invasion Act***, (P.L. 113-121). Requires the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in coordination with the Army Corps of Engineers, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey, to lead a multiagency effort to slow the spread of Asian Carp in the Upper Mississippi and Ohio River basins and tributaries by providing high-level technical assistance, coordination, best practices, and support to State and local government strategies, to slow, and eventually eliminate, the threat posed by such Carp. Enacted in the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014.

***Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act***, (30 U.S.C. 1201 et seq.). Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to regulate surface mining and reclamation at existing and future mining areas. The Service provides technical assistance for fish and wildlife aspects of the Department of the Interior's programs on active and abandoned mine lands.

***Water Resources Development Act***, (90 Stat. 2921). Authorizes the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan to mitigate fish and wildlife losses caused by power generation at four Corps of Engineers dams on the Lower Snake River in Washington.

***Wild Bird Conservation Act***, (16 U.S.C. 4901-4916). Requires that all trade in wild birds involving the United States is biologically sustainable and to the benefit of the species, and by limiting or prohibiting imports of exotic birds when not beneficial to the species.

***Wilderness Act of 1964*** (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136) Established the National Wilderness Preservation System, a national network of more than 800 federally-designated wilderness areas. These wilderness areas are managed by the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and US Forest Service.

***Youth Conservation Corps Act***, (16 USC 1701-1706) as amended by P.L. 93-408, September 3, 1974. Expands and makes permanent the Youth Conservation Corps, and for other purposes. The Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program, started in 1971, is a summer employment program for young men and women (ages 15–18) from all segments of society who work, learn, and earn together by doing projects for

the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System lands and National Fish Hatcheries. The objectives of this program (as reflected in Public Law 93-408) authorize the Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service to operate the YCC Program.

### **Executive Orders**

The Executive Orders listed are not an exhaustive list and are those most frequently referenced and used by the Service.

***Floodplain Management***, (Executive Order 11988). Requires that federally-owned floodplains be protected through restricting future activities that would harm the floodplain resource or withhold such properties from lease or disposal to non-Federal public or private partners.

***Migratory Birds***, (Executive Order 13186). Directs Federal agencies taking actions that may have measurable negative impacts on migratory bird populations to enter into memoranda of understanding (MOU) with the Service to promote conservation of migratory bird populations and directs the Secretary of the Interior to establish a multi-agency Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds.

***Protection of Wetlands***, (Executive Order 11990). Requires that federally-owned wetlands proposed for lease or conveyance to non-Federal public or private parties be protected through restricting any future uses that would degrade or harm the wetland resource in the conveyance or withhold such properties from lease or disposal.

***Recreational Fisheries***, (Executive Order 12962). Directs Federal agencies to improve the quantity, function, and sustainable productivity, and distribution of U.S. aquatic resources for increased resources for recreational fishing opportunities. The Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service are ordered to promote compatibility and to reduce conflicts between the administration of the *Endangered Species Act* and recreational fisheries. The Secretary of the Interior is directed to expand the role of the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership council to monitor specific Federal activities affecting aquatic systems and the recreational fisheries they support.

***Combating Wildlife Trafficking***, (Executive Order 13648). Directs agencies to combat the illegal poaching and wildlife trade of protected species, both domestically and internationally. Wildlife trafficking not only endangers the survival of wildlife species, but also contributes to global instability and undermines security. The Secretary of the Interior will co-chair a Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking with the Secretary of State and Attorney General, or their designees.

***Improving Performance of Federal Permitting and Review of Infrastructure Projects***, (Executive Order 13604). Directs agencies to make the Federal permitting and review process of infrastructure projects efficient and effective to support economic growth while ensuring the health, safety, and security of the environment and communities. Agencies are to provide transparency, consistency, and predictability in the process for both project sponsors and affected communities.

***Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis***, (Executive Order 13990). Directs all executive departments and agencies to immediately review and, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law, take action to address the promulgation of Federal regulations and other actions during the last 4 years that conflict with national objectives, and to immediately commence work to confront the climate crisis.

***Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad***, (Executive Order 14008). Directs climate considerations be an essential element of United States foreign policy and national security. The United

States will work with other countries and partner to put the world on a sustainable climate pathway and build resistance against the impacts of climate change.

### **Major Treaties and Conventions**

The Service is party to numerous International Treaties and Conventions, all of which cannot be listed here due to space constraints. However, those listed below are more pertinent to the daily activities of Service programs.

***Convention on International Trade in Endangered Flora and Fauna***, (TIAS 8249). Parties who signed the Convention in March of 1973 agreed to restrict international trade in all species threatened with extinction (Appendix I species), all species which may be threatened with extinction unless trade is halted or restricted (Appendix II species), and all species which the parties identify as being subject to regulation for the purpose of preventing or restricting exploitation (Appendix III species). Many species listed under CITES are also listed under the *Endangered Species Act*. The Service is responsible for issuing all CITES permits in the United States.

***Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere***, (56 Stat. 1354). Signed in October of 1940, this Convention authorizes the contracting parties to establish national parks, national reserves, nature monuments, and strict wilderness reserves for the preservation of flora and fauna, especially migratory birds.

***Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar)***, (TIAS 11084). The Ramsar Convention, ratified by over 90 nations, promotes the sustainable management of important wetlands around the world, especially as habitat for waterfowl. The Service's objective with this initiative is to strengthen worldwide collaboration regarding conservation and management of wetlands habitats which sustain resources shared by or of importance to all countries of the globe.

<b>Summary of Requirements</b> <b>Appropriation: Resource Management</b> <i>(Dollars in Thousands)</i>													
	2022 Actual		2023 Enacted		Fixed Costs	Internal Transfers		Program Changes (+/-)		2024 Request		Change from 2023 Enacted (+/-)	
	FTE	Amount	FTE	Amount	(+/-)	FTE	Amount	FTE	Amount	FTE	Amount	FTE	Amount
<b>Ecological Services</b>													
Listing	121	21,279	121	23,398	+1,118	0	0	+14	+2,548	135	27,064	+14	+3,666
Planning and Consultation	621	112,092	626	120,858	+5,567	0	0	+225	+44,949	851	171,374	+225	+50,516
Conservation and Restoration	181	35,666	181	37,653	+1,720	0	0	+57	+13,371	238	52,744	+57	+15,091
Recovery	470	108,372	470	114,124	+4,092	0	0	+38	+15,089	508	133,305	+38	+19,181
<b>Subtotal, Ecological Services</b>	<b>1,393</b>	<b>277,409</b>	<b>1,398</b>	<b>296,033</b>	<b>+12,497</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+334</b>	<b>+75,957</b>	<b>1,732</b>	<b>384,487</b>	<b>+334</b>	<b>+88,454</b>
<b>Habitat Conservation</b>													
Partners for Fish and Wildlife	215	57,715	215	60,267	+1,807	0	0	+39	+17,643	254	79,717	+39	+19,450
Coastal Program	46	13,616	46	13,957	+446	0	0	+6	+6,019	52	20,422	+6	+6,465
<b>Subtotal, Habitat Conservation</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>71,331</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>74,224</b>	<b>+2,253</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+45</b>	<b>+23,662</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>100,139</b>	<b>+45</b>	<b>+25,915</b>
<b>National Wildlife Refuge System</b>													
Wildlife and Habitat Management	1,199	249,517	1,205	260,529	+10,149	-11	-2,835	+38	+23,145	1,232	290,988	+27	+30,459
Refuge Visitor Services	482	77,237	482	80,859	+3,584	0	0	+65	+16,668	547	101,111	+65	+20,252
Refuge Law Enforcement	211	41,915	211	46,272	+2,127	0	0	+6	+4,000	217	52,399	+6	+6,127
Conservation Planning	14	2,594	20	3,684	+137	0	0	+15	+6,000	35	9,821	+15	+6,137
Refuge Maintenance	509	147,498	509	150,211	+3,288	0	0	+55	+17,049	564	170,548	+55	+20,337
<b>Subtotal, National Wildlife Refuge System</b>	<b>2,415</b>	<b>518,761</b>	<b>2,427</b>	<b>541,555</b>	<b>+19,285</b>	<b>-11</b>	<b>-2,835</b>	<b>+179</b>	<b>+66,862</b>	<b>2,595</b>	<b>624,867</b>	<b>+168</b>	<b>+83,312</b>
<b>Conservation and Enforcement</b>													
Migratory Bird Management	192	49,568	196	53,860	+1,900	0	0	+45	+22,739	241	78,499	+45	+24,639
ePermits	0	0	0	0	0	+8	+7,500	+4	+6,000	12	13,500	+12	+13,500
Law Enforcement	320	89,788	320	92,099	+4,111	0	0	+32	+8,234	352	104,444	+32	+12,345
International Affairs	72	25,365	79	29,079	+775	-8	-7,500	+6	+4,361	77	26,715	-2	-2,364
<b>Subtotal, Conservation and Enforcement</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>164,721</b>	<b>595</b>	<b>175,038</b>	<b>+6,786</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+87</b>	<b>+41,334</b>	<b>682</b>	<b>223,158</b>	<b>+87</b>	<b>+48,120</b>
<b>Fish and Aquatic Conservation</b>													
National Fish Hatchery System Operations	318	71,776	335	76,356	+2,476	-15	-6,000	+26	+7,114	346	79,946	+11	+3,590
Maintenance and Equipment	61	26,046	64	26,314	+431	0	0	+20	+22,906	84	49,651	+20	+23,337
Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation	292	123,004	293	138,901	+2,282	-10	-1,954	+34	-9,042	317	130,187	+24	-8,714
<b>Subtotal, Fish and Aquatic Conservation</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>220,826</b>	<b>692</b>	<b>241,571</b>	<b>+5,189</b>	<b>-25</b>	<b>-7,954</b>	<b>+80</b>	<b>+20,978</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>259,784</b>	<b>+55</b>	<b>+18,213</b>
<b>Science Applications</b>													
Science Partnerships	73	29,202	64	26,400	+802	0	0	+32	+12,698	96	39,900	+32	+13,500
Service Science	16	6,833	22	8,972	+109	0	0	+17	+6,471	39	15,552	+17	+6,580
<b>Subtotal, Science Support</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>36,035</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>35,372</b>	<b>+911</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>+19,169</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>55,452</b>	<b>+49</b>	<b>+20,080</b>
<b>General Operations</b>													
Central Office Operations	217	26,766	217	31,077	+2,258	0	0	+17	+4,069	234	37,404	+17	+6,327
Management and Administration	617	47,484	617	51,249	+5,564	0	0	+49	+17,961	666	74,774	+49	+23,525
Service-wide Bill Paying	0	44,667	0	46,581	+2,503	0	0	+6	-357	6	48,727	+6	+2,146
Aviation Management	8	3,255	7	3,296	+72	0	0	0	+4	7	3,372	0	+76
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	1	7,022	1	7,032	+10	0	0	0	+2,000	1	9,042	0	+2,010
National Conservation Training Center	102	26,455	102	27,015	+992	0	0	+7	+4,845	109	32,852	+7	+5,837
<b>Subtotal, General Operations</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>155,649</b>	<b>944</b>	<b>166,250</b>	<b>+11,399</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+79</b>	<b>+28,522</b>	<b>1,023</b>	<b>206,171</b>	<b>+79</b>	<b>+39,921</b>
BIL/ARP	43		43			0	0	0	-25,641	43	0	0	-25,641
Stewardship Priorities		6,813		25,641	0	0	0	0	+1,000	0	1,000	0	+1,000
Damage Recovery Provision													
<b>Total, Resource Management</b>	<b>6,401</b>	<b>1,451,545</b>	<b>6,446</b>	<b>1,555,684</b>	<b>+58,320</b>	<b>-36</b>	<b>-10,789</b>	<b>+853</b>	<b>+251,843</b>	<b>7,263</b>	<b>1,855,058</b>	<b>+817</b>	<b>+299,374</b>

<p align="center"><b>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service</b>  <b>Resource Management</b>  <b>Justification of Fixed Costs Changes</b>  <i>(Dollars In Thousands)</i></p>			
<b>Fixed Cost Element</b>	<b>2023 Enacted Total or Change</b>	<b>2023 Enacted to 2024 Request Change</b>	<b>Description</b>
Change in Number of Paid Days	-3,664	+4,000	This column reflects changes in pay associated with the change in the number of paid days between 2023 and 2024. 2024 has one day more than 2023.
Pay Raise	+38,091	+50,425	The President's Budget for 2024 includes one quarter of the 4.6% pay raise for 2023 and three quarters of a planned 5.2% pay raise for 2024.
Employer Share of Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS)	0	+314	This column reflects no budgeted increase to the employer contribution to the Federal Employee Retirement System and a 0.6% increase to the employer contribution for the Law Enforcement Federal Employees Retirement System.
Departmental Working Capital Fund (WCF)	1,915	+2,043	The change reflects the final 2024 Central Bill approved by the Working Capital Fund Consortium.
Workers' Compensation Payments	(414)	+262	The amounts reflect final chargeback costs of compensating injured employees and dependents of employees who suffer accidental deaths while on duty. Costs for 2024 will reimburse the Department of Labor, Federal Employees Compensation Fund, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 8147(b) as amended by Public Law 94-273.
Unemployment Compensation Payments	-	+126	The amounts reflect projected changes in the costs of unemployment compensation claims to be paid to the Department of Labor, Federal Employees Compensation Account, in the Unemployment Trust Fund, pursuant to Public Law 96-499.
Rental Payments	3,218	+102	The amounts reflect changes in the costs payable to General Services Administration (GSA) and others for office and non-office space as estimated by GSA, as well as the rental costs of other currently occupied space. These costs include building security. Costs of mandatory office relocations, i.e. relocations in cases where due to external events there is no alternative but to vacate the currently occupied space, are also included.
Baseline Adjustments for O&M Increases	72	+1,048	In accordance with space maximization efforts across the Federal Government, this adjustment captures the associated increase to baseline operations and maintenance requirements resulting from movement out of GSA or direct-leased (commercial) space and into Bureau-owned space. While the GSA portion of fixed costs will go down as a result of these moves, Bureaus often encounter an increase to baseline O&M costs not otherwise captured in fixed costs. This category of funding properly adjusts the baseline fixed cost amount to maintain steady-state funding for these requirements.
<b>Account Total Fixed Cost</b>	<b>+39,218</b>	<b>+58,320</b>	

<b>Internal Realignments and Non-Policy/Program Changes</b>	<b>2024 (+/-)</b>
<b>Fish and Aquatic Conservation: National Fish Hatchery Operations: General Program Activities</b> This moves funds from National Fish Hatchery Operations to Habitat Assessment and Restoration and Population Assessment and Cooperative Management. The Hatcheries, Fish Health Centers, and Fish Technology Centers work in conjunction with Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices (FWCOs) to recover and restore aquatic species. General Program Activities funding for FWCOs fund field staff who provide assistance to Federal, State, and Tribal partners in efforts to maintain self-sustaining, healthy, and diverse populations of fish and other aquatic species. As Hatcheries increase propagation and applied science research, FWCOs will require additional resources and staff to manage, inventory, and monitor the fish propagated and stocked and the habitats they occupy.	-6,000
<b>Fish and Aquatic Conservation: Habitat Assessment and Restoration: General Program Activities</b> This moves funds from National Fish Hatchery Operations to Habitat Assessment and Restoration and Population Assessment and Cooperative Management. The Hatcheries, Fish Health Centers, and Fish Technology Centers work in conjunction with Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices (FWCOs) to recover and restore aquatic species. General Program Activities funding for FWCOs fund field staff who provide assistance to Federal, State, and Tribal partners in efforts to maintain self-sustaining, healthy, and diverse populations of fish and other aquatic species. As Hatcheries increase propagation and applied science research, FWCOs will require additional resources and staff to manage, inventory, and monitor the fish propagated and stocked and the habitats they occupy.	+3,000
<b>Fish and Aquatic Conservation: Population Assessment and Cooperative Management: General Program Activities</b> This moves funds from National Fish Hatchery Operations to Habitat Assessment and Restoration and Population Assessment and Cooperative Management. The Hatcheries, Fish Health Centers, and Fish Technology Centers work in conjunction with Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices (FWCOs) to recover and restore aquatic species. General Program Activities funding for FWCOs fund field staff who provide assistance to Federal, State, and Tribal partners in efforts to maintain self-sustaining, healthy, and diverse populations of fish and other aquatic species. As Hatcheries increase propagation and applied science research, FWCOs will require additional resources and staff to manage, inventory, and monitor the fish propagated and stocked and the habitats they occupy.	+3,000
<b>International Affairs: International Wildlife Trade: Permitting Modernization</b> This moves funds from International Affairs to a standalone Epermits subactivity to clarify that it is a cross-program effort. This will cover Operations, maintenance, customer support and customer experience required to operate an easy to use, modern, and secure system that streamlines the end-to-end process for all Service permits. ePermits Operations includes building base system functionality of a fully operational and integrated system that meets the basic needs of external and internal users. Funding supports a variety of activities and functions. It covers Service positions that are engaged in the management, implementation, and monitoring of the ePermits system and activities. These funds also cover costs associated with designing, building, maintaining, and supporting the system.	-7,500
<b>EPERMITTS</b> This moves funds from International Affairs to a standalone Epermits subactivity to clarify that it is a cross-program effort. This will cover Operations, maintenance, customer support and customer experience required to operate an easy to use, modern, and secure system that streamlines the end-to-end process for all Service permits. ePermits Operations includes building base system functionality of a fully operational and integrated system that meets the basic needs of external and internal users. Funding supports a variety of activities and functions. It covers Service positions that are engaged in the management, implementation, and monitoring of the ePermits system and activities. These funds also cover costs associated with designing, building, maintaining, and supporting the system.	+7,500
<b>Fish and Aquatic Conservation: Population Assessment and Cooperative Management: Subsistence Management</b> The Department is proposing to transfer management of the Office of Subsistence Management to the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in response to feedback received from Alaska Native communities and people through a series of Departmental Tribal consultations and listening sessions focused on the Federal subsistence management program.	-7,954
<b>National Wildlife Refuge System: Wildlife and Habitat Management: Subsistence Management</b> The Department is proposing to transfer management of the Office of Subsistence Management to the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in response to feedback received from Alaska Native communities and people through a series of Departmental Tribal consultations and listening sessions focused on the Federal subsistence management program.	-2,835

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# Ecological Services



# Ecological Services

## ACTIVITY: ECOLOGICAL SERVICES

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change from 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Listing	(\$000)	21,279	23,398	+1,118	0	+2,548	27,064	+3,666
	FTE	121	121	0	0	+14	135	+14
Planning and Consultation	(\$000)	112,092	120,858	+5,567	0	+44,949	171,374	+50,516
	FTE	621	626	0	0	+225	851	+225
Conservation and Restoration	(\$000)	35,666	37,653	+1,720	0	+13,371	52,744	+15,091
	FTE	181	181	0	0	+57	238	+57
Recovery	(\$000)	108,372	114,124	+4,092	0	+15,089	133,305	+19,181
	FTE	470	470	0	0	+38	508	+38
<b>Total, Ecological Services</b>	(\$000)	<b>277,409</b>	<b>296,033</b>	<b>+12,497</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+75,957</b>	<b>384,487</b>	<b>+88,454</b>
	FTE	<b>1,393</b>	<b>1,398</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+334</b>	<b>1,732</b>	<b>+334</b>

### Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Ecological Services

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Listing	+2,548	+14
Planning and Consultation Activities	+36,449	+175
Energy	+8,000	+47
Pesticide Consultations	+500	+3
Environmental Response and Restoration	+3,750	+22
Candidate Conservation	+4,871	+27
National Wetlands Inventory	+4,000	+3
Coastal Barrier Resources Act	+500	+3
Marine Mammals	+250	+2
Recovery Activities	+20,289	+38
Florida Grasshopper Sparrow	-350	+0
Wolf-Livestock Demonstration Program	-1,000	+0
Prescott Grant Program	-1,100	+0
State of the Birds Activities	-1,250	+0
Recovery Challenge	-1,500	+0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+75,957</b>	<b>+334</b>

## Overview

### Program Mission

In 1973, Congress found that “various species of fish, wildlife, and plants in the United States have been rendered extinct as a consequence of economic growth and development untempered

by adequate concern and conservation” and enacted the Endangered Species Act. For over 50 years, the Ecological Services Program has been implementing the Act to conserve the “species of fish, wildlife, and plants of esthetic, ecological, educational, historical, recreational, and scientific value to the Nation and its people” through various authorities provided by the ESA and other conservation legislation such as the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, Federal Power Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act and many others. The responsibility to develop and maintain conservation programs for “better safeguarding, for the benefit of all citizens, the Nation’s heritage in fish, wildlife, and plants” is placed on all Federal agencies and we are to encourage the States, Tribes and other interested partners to join us. Thus, much of what the Service does is serve as a conductor of an orchestra, determining the music to follow to achieve recovery for federally listed endangered and threatened species and providing technical support to others to best contribute given their expertise and resources.



*Conservation partners celebrated the recovery of the snail darter in October 2022. The snail darter is the fifth fish to be removed from the list of threatened and endangered wildlife in the country and the first in the eastern United States, marking an important milestone in Endangered Species Act success in supporting biodiversity. USFWS photo.*

Through close collaboration with our Federal, State, and Tribal partners, we have recovered species from the brink of extinction, restored critical habitat, and applied a balanced approach for building better natural and human communities. For example, on October 4, 2022, we celebrated, along with dozens of conservation partners, the recovery and removal of the snail darter from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Wildlife (50 CFR 17.11). The snail darter is the fifth fish species delisted due to recovery in the country and the first in the eastern United States, marking an important milestone in ESA's success in supporting biodiversity. “The recovery of the snail darter is a remarkable conservation milestone that tells a story about how controversy and polarization can evolve into cooperation and a big conservation success,” said Secretary Deb Haaland. “By protecting even the smallest creatures, we show who we are as a country; that we care about our environment and recognize the interconnectedness of our lands, wildlife and people.

Yet, according to experts involved in a 2019 United Nations report, up to one million species are threatened with extinction, many within decades. [Source: [The Extinction Crisis | Tufts Now](#) ]

“The health of ecosystems on which we and all other species depend is deteriorating more rapidly than ever,” said Sir Robert Watson, chair of the United Nations Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), which issued the report. “We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide.” The report estimates that dozens of species are going extinct every day, with as many as 30-50 percent of all species going extinct by 2050.

The private and public lands and waters that sustain the nation’s fish, wildlife and plants and inspire people to enjoy nature also help define our character as a nation. This responsibility has become more urgent in the face of mounting global environmental threats such as climate change, habitat loss, wildlife disease and invasive species. Action now can help minimize species decline throughout the world, avert catastrophic invasive species takeover, build a more climate-resilient future, and address systemic exclusion of underrepresented people in wildlife appreciation and conservation. Wildlife Conservation in the 21st Century is the Service’s framework for addressing the biodiversity crisis, by promoting conservation that ensures access to nature for all, alleviates a variety of crises facing wildlife worldwide, and ensures that functional ecosystems remain for future generations.

The ESA is our country’s most important law for protecting imperiled fish, wildlife and plants. While the legal protections of the ESA focus on individual species, the ESA’s purpose is to protect the ecosystems that fish, wildlife and plants need to survive and thrive. Endangered and threatened species are often the canary in the coalmine and their protection conserves other species that share their habitat. For example, the listing of the coastal California gnatcatcher as threatened put a spotlight on the significant, rapid loss of coastal sage scrub habitat in southern California. The listing changed the way cities and counties planned development and open space. The result was landscape-level conservation planning that permits continued development while protecting plants and animals, including the gnatcatcher, that depend on coastal sage scrub through a series of connected preserves.

To be successful in protecting biodiversity and preventing further extinction, the significant increase in funding provided in this budget request is needed. The ESA is the collaborative tool that meets conservation challenges of today and tomorrow. Most immediately, this budget request invests in building capacity and improving the tools to work across landscapes to protect the species most threatened by climate change and other threats, while building collaborative conservation to support our economy. It invests in technology that forecasts future scenarios to anticipate threats, build collaborative conservation ethics across our communities, and accelerate recovery of species of concern before it is too late to prevent extinction.

While the ESA is often top of mind, all of the FWS authorities contribute to making this happen. For example, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act mandates the Service to identify species, subspecies and populations of all migratory nongame birds that without additional conservation action are likely to become candidates for listing under the ESA. The Migratory Bird Program meets this mandate by scientifically assembling and publishing the Birds of Conservation Concern list. Our latest report identifies 269 individual bird taxa of conservation concern. Of these, 135 taxa are of conservation concern at the Continental scale, 29 taxa on Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and 35 taxa on Hawaii and the Pacific Islands. These species could be further prioritized by conservation risk, geography, or habitat types. Combining targeted investments

across the Service in honor of the ESA's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the tremendous attention the loss of 3 billion birds has received, the public's intense interest and support of birds, the Service's long history and cross-programmatic capacity for bird conservation, and far-reaching external bird conservation "infrastructure" would be a powerful agent of change for conserving imperiled species.

This Administration is leading the way in tackling the loss of biodiversity. Through the ESA at 50 campaign in 2023, we are taking the time to review the lessons learned through implementation of the ESA over its first 50 years to create the foundation for achieving the objectives of the ESA in the next 50 years: to protect and conserve threatened and endangered plants, animals and the ecosystems that support them. With the investment in the ESA in this request, we can move closer to achieving the ESA's over-arching goal: to prevent species from becoming extinct.

As we move forward, the Ecological Services program is also well situated to integrate climate change data and projections into our processes, implement the America the Beautiful initiative, and advance an agency-wide culture of sustainability and future readiness while guiding the conservation, development, and management of the Nation's fish, wildlife and plant resources.

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### Subactivities

To achieve our mission and the Administration's priorities, the Ecological Services Program is comprised of the following subactivities:

- **Listing** – Uses the best scientific and commercial information available to identify plant and animalspecies that are in danger of extinction or are likely to become in danger of extinction within the foreseeable future, and thus need protection under the ESA.
- **Planning and Consultation** – Provides integrated advanced project planning, environmental review, and permitting assistance to resolve environmental concerns in support of economic growth, renewable energy production, landscape planning, and resilient community development.
- **Conservation and Restoration** – Delivers species conservation in partnership with States, Tribes, local governments, and private landowners to prevent the need to list a species when possible; protect and restore habitat important to Federal trust species; and provide databases and mapping products that are essential tools for conservation and restoration of species and habitats bylandowners, other Federal and State agencies, and the public.
- **Recovery** – Works with communities and stakeholders to recover endangered and threatened species, with the goal to minimize or reduce threats to a listed species and improve their status so the species no longer needs Federal protection.

### Applicable Laws and Acts

The Service has the statutory mandate and trust responsibility to fulfill its mission derived from various statutes and authorities. The Ecological Services Program plays a significant role in implementing the roles and responsibilities assigned to for the Service under the following authorities (not an exhaustive list):

- *American Rescue Plan* (P.L. 117-2). This authority provided relief to address the continued impact of COVID-19 to benefit the economy and public health; recipients were state and local governments, individuals and businesses. Section 6003(2) of the Act provides \$30M to the Service "for the care of captive species listed under the

Endangered Species Act of 1973, for the care of rescued and confiscated wildlife, and for the care of Federal trust species in facilities experiencing lost revenues due to COVID-19.”

- *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)* also known as the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)*, (P.L. 117-58). Among other provisions, this legislation provides new funding for infrastructure projects ranging from roads, bridges, and major projects; passenger and freight rail and transit systems; airports; ports and waterways; power; etc. The Service received some funding under BIL for ecosystem restoration, fish passage, and invasive species. Certain sections of the law allow for direct fund transfer to the Service to support environmental reviews.
- *Coastal Barrier Resources Act*, as amended by the *Coastal Barrier Improvement Act of 1990*, (16 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.). Under this authority, the Service, acting for the Secretary of Interior, maintains the maps of the Coastal Barrier Resources System (CBRS), including proposing changes to Congress to correct mapping errors and add qualifying areas to the CBRS.
- *Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act*, (42 U.S.C. 9601, et seq.). Under this authority, the Service investigates releases of hazardous substances and works with trustees for natural resources to assess and recover damages for injury to natural resources from releases of hazardous substances and to use the damages for restoration, replacement or acquisition of equivalent natural resources.
- *Emergency Wetlands Resources Act*, (16 U.S.C. 3901). Under this authority, the Service’s National Wetlands Inventory maintains the wetlands data layer on behalf of the Federal Government and provides the national report card on wetland status and trends at 10- year intervals that are used in policy direction across the government.
- *Endangered Species Act (ESA)*, (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544). The purpose of the ESA is to protect and recover imperiled species and the ecosystems upon which they depend. The Service and the Commerce Department’s National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) administer the ESA. The Service has primary responsibility for terrestrial and freshwater organisms, while the responsibilities of NMFS are mainly marine wildlife such as whales and anadromous fish such as salmon.
- *Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act)*, (33 U.S.C. 1251-1387). Section 404 (m) authorizes the Service to comment on permit applications submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the discharge of dredged or fill material into navigable waters of the United States. Section 208(i) authorizes the Service to provide technical assistance to States in developing management practices as part of its water pollution control programs and to continue with the National Wetlands Inventory.
- *Federal Power Act*, (161 S.C. 791a et seq.). This Act provides that each license for hydropower projects issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission includes fish ways prescribed by the Secretary of the Interior or Commerce, and that conditions for the protection, mitigation and enhancement of fish and wildlife are based on recommendations of the Service and other agencies.
- *Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA)*, (16 U.S.C. 661-666(e)). One of the early conservation laws, this Act directs the Service to investigate and report on proposed Federal actions that affect any stream or other body of water and to provide recommendations to minimize impacts on fish and wildlife resources.
- *Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA)* (P.L. 117-169). Originally called the Build Back Better Act, this law represents the largest investment in addressing climate change through large national investments in environmental programs along with other social and infrastructural programs. It included funding for recovery planning and implementation along with environmental review funding for DOI agencies.

- *Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)*, (16 U.S.C. 1361-1407). Under this authority, the Service manages the conservation of certain marine mammals, such as sea otter, walrus, polar bear, dugong, and manatee, consistent with the provisions of the Act.
- *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)*, (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.). The Service implements this Act to examine the impacts of its actions on the human environment, using public participation in the planning and implementation of all actions. The Service also reviews Federal agency environmental plans and documents when the Service has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impacts involved.
- *Oil Pollution Act (OPA)*, (P.L. 101-380). Under this authority, the Service consults with others on the development of a fish and wildlife response plan for the protection, rescue, and rehabilitation of, and the minimization of risk of damage to fish and wildlife resources and their habitat harmed or jeopardized by an oil discharge.

**ACTIVITY: ECOLOGICAL SERVICES**

**Subactivity: Listing**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Change from 2023 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Listing	(\$000)	21,279	23,398	+1,118	0	+2,548	27,064	+3,666
	FTE	121	121	0	0	+14	135	+14

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Listing**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Listing	+2,548	+14
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+2,548</b>	<b>+14</b>

**Program Overview**

The purpose of the ESA is to conserve endangered and threatened species and the ecosystems on which they depend, and thus advance wildlife conservation. Before a plant or animal species can receive protection provided by the ESA, it must first be added to the Federal lists of threatened and endangered wildlife and plants. Placing a species on the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife (50 CFR 17.11) or the List of Endangered and Threatened Plants (50 CFR 17.12), and designating critical habitat as required under the ESA, focuses resources and efforts by the Service and its partners on recovering the species. The Service uses the best scientific information available to identify foreign and domestic plant and animal species that are in danger of extinction or likely to become in danger of extinction within the foreseeable future and thus meet the ESA’s definition of endangered or threatened. This determination helps identify and address the conservation needs of the species, including the designation of critical habitat. Legal protections afforded under sections 7 and 9 of the ESA become effective upon listing, preventing the decline and extinction of many species. Information sought and compiled through the rule-making process associated with the listing determination informs and streamlines subsequent section 7 consultation and section 10 permitting activities and provides information crucial for recovery planning and implementation. In many ways, the listing process sets the stage for recovery needs and objectives, which facilitates early response and implementation.

The ESA uses the following definitions for listing determinations:

ESA DEFINITIONS	
<i>Endangered</i>	<i>Threatened</i>
A species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.	A species is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Listing determinations, critical habitat designations, and their associated processes are important tools that support the Service's goal to recover species. This support stems in large part from the information developed when conducting the analysis of whether a species meets the definition of threatened or endangered. The Service works closely with States and Tribes during the listing process, which includes the development of a species status assessment (SSA) that reflects the best available scientific and commercial information regarding life history, biology, and the factors affecting the viability of a species, including the impacts of a changing climate. The Service maintains a National Listing Workplan to encourage States, Tribes and the public to undertake conservation activities now for species on the workplan so that the species does not need the protection of the ESA.<sup>1</sup> Recovery efforts for species are also initially outlined based on information to address threats identified within the listing rules. In this way, listing packages are a crucial step on the road to recovery.

The broad range of management tools for domestic species includes recovery planning and implementation under ESA section 4, cooperation with States under section 6, coordination with other Federal agencies under section 7, full take prohibitions under section 9, management agreements and permits under section 10, and other laws and treaties such as the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) or Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). In contrast, foreign species' management tools are limited to import and trade restrictions through ESA section 9 and CITES, education and public awareness, and conservation funding through grants. The continuation of a budget sub-cap for listing allows the Service, within its existing resources, to balance its duty to protect both foreign and domestic species in a way that will not detract from its efforts to protect imperiled domestic species.

### 2024 Program Activities

The 2024 budget will:

- Support implementation of the approved National Listing Workplan. This plan identifies and prioritizes 12-month findings, listing rules, and critical habitat rules that are required by law. Based on the requested funding level for FY 2024, the Service plans to publish 12-month findings, listing rules, and critical habitat rules for 63 species in FY 2024. Listing determinations will be based on SSAs.
- Support staff work on SSAs, petition findings, rules, public hearings, printing, and economic analyses for critical habitat.

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### Program Changes

The 2024 budget request for Listing is \$27,064,000 and 135 FTE, a program change of +\$2,548,000 and +14 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Listing (+\$2,548,000/+14 FTE)** - Mostly due to receiving a large number of petitions to list species between 2007 and 2010, the FWS has more outstanding work than we have funds to accomplish, with over 300 species awaiting status reviews. We need a significant investment to eliminate this backlog and handle petitions to list additional species. Foundational to these species reviews is the best available scientific and commercial information regarding life history, biology, and the factors affecting the viability of a species. As we anticipate the conservation

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<sup>1</sup> <https://fws.gov/project/national-listing-workplan>

challenges of tomorrow, we need to invest in technology and forecasting tools that help identify changes in threats to these species so that we can more accurately provide protection for the species and habitats that are most affected by a changing climate. We also need to use these funds to incorporate the vast understanding of species available through Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) for the benefit of conserving these species together. With this increase, the Service anticipates starting 5 new species status assessments for species on the listing workplan.

**ACTIVITY: ECOLOGICAL SERVICES**

**Subactivity: Planning and Consultation**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Change from 2023 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Planning and Consultation	(\$000)	112,092	120,858	+5,567	0	+44,949	171,374	+50,516
	FTE	621	626	0	0	+225	851	+225

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Planning and Consultation**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Planning and Consultation Activities	+36,449	+175
Energy	+8,000	+47
Pesticide Consultations	+500	+3
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+44,949</b>	<b>+225</b>

**Program Overview**

Within Planning and Consultation, the Service advances the Administration’s focus on sustainability and future readiness by providing a field-based, landscape-level approach that works collaboratively with industry, agencies, Tribes, and other stakeholders to balance conservation and development needs. The Service works with stakeholders at the planning stages of federally-authorized, licensed, or funded land, water, and energy development projects—from highway expansions to energy development—to ensure that development has minimal impact on wildlife and habitats. The Service provides expertise in numerous statutory authorities, including the ESA, Clean Water Act, NEPA, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, Federal Power Act, MBTA and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. The Service saves the taxpayer money, by engaging in development processes early, streamlining the permitting process, reducing paperwork, and ensuring minimized environmental and community impacts of development projects. Advanced biological planning and conservation design also assists communities and industry in adapting to climate change.

Early coordination and involvement in the project siting and design process can minimize the impacts of a project on fish and wildlife. Through the NEPA process, the Ecological Services Program works closely with the lead Federal agency to streamline the review process for Federal projects, including infrastructure and renewable energy. Exercising authority for interagency consultation under section 7 of the ESA, the Service collaborates with Federal agencies and applicants to identify opportunities to reduce their proposed actions’ effects on listed species, while ensuring economic activity may proceed.

Environmental review functions constitute a large and growing workload for the Service, and we are continuously seeking ways to improve the efficiency, consistency, transparency, and effectiveness of environmental review and permitting development projects. As an example, the Service continues to enhance our Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) decision support system to streamline the environmental review process. IPaC is able to (1) identify listed species, critical habitat, and other trust resources (e.g., migratory birds) within a project area and generating ESA section 7 species lists; (2) provide conservation recommendations that minimize impacts to ESA-listed species and other trust resources; (3) delivers concurrence letters for implementation of programmatic consultations through determination keys (DKeys); and (4) assist Federal agencies and applicants in their development of biological evaluations and assessments needed to comply with section 7 of the ESA. In FY 2022, the IPaC program delivered 23,425 streamlined consultation documents and generated over 103,500 official species lists in response to user requests. The Service estimates that IPaC-delivered documents saved the equivalent of 22 employees. On average, FWS completes about 1,000 formal and 11,000 informal section 7 consultations each year. IPaC’s assistance with this work has been growing to assisting with about 25% of the consultation workload.

The Service continues to prioritize investing in automation that provides greater transparency and consistency in the ESA section 7 consultation process to improve conservation outcomes. As an example, the Service recently released a new feature within IPaC (i.e., Consultation Package Builder). The CPB guides Federal agencies through the development and creation of biological evaluations and assessments, documents required by Federal agencies and applicants to comply with section 7 of the ESA. This new feature is being integrated with the new ECOSphere platform to improve consultation reporting and expand our delivery of consultations to cover more species and locations. Relatedly, the Service has refined over 1,000 species range maps in a way that is transparent and repeatable, with a goal to have refined range maps for all listed species within the next 5 years. Improving range maps for listed species further streamlines the environmental review process by helping avoid impacts to listed species and trust resources, and ensure environmental reviews focus where listed species and trust resources are most likely to be affected by proposed projects.



*Working collaboratively with a landowner. Photo by Gary Peeples.*

Using the incidental take permit authority under section 10 of the ESA, the Service also provides technical assistance to non-Federal entities under this program in the development of incidental take permit applications that include Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), and issues incidental take permits. The Service’s incidental take permit program is a flexible process for addressing

situations in which a non-Federal property owner's otherwise lawful activities might result in incidental take of listed wildlife. Under section 10, the Service facilitates private and other non-Federal land development through species and conservation planning that strikes a regulatory balance for development while mitigating impacts to species.

### **Water Quality and Pesticide Consultations**

As part of our ESA consultations process, the Service works with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to improve and refine methods to conduct ESA section 7 consultations on pesticide registrations under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). The Service also works closely with EPA to conduct section 7 consultations on water quality such as establishing national water quality standards, issuing national general permits for discharges, and conducting National Aquatic Resources Surveys. The Service develops and implements scientifically rigorous protocols for national consultations with EPA to protect threatened and endangered species and their designated critical habitats by assessing impacts from pesticides and other pollutants. This rigorous and thorough assessment process for evaluating risks to listed species and their critical habitats greatly improve how the Service conducts section 7 consultations on pesticide registrations and discharge permits. Increasing the scientific and technical capacity of the Service will help ensure ESA compliance for pesticides early in the registration process, minimize the threat of lawsuits, and provide more certainty and guidance to applicants for how those chemicals can continue to be available for production of food and fiber in this country, while ensuring the protection of listed species.

### **Renewable Energy**

One of the Administration's priorities for which the Department of the Interior will play a prominent role is in securing a sustainable energy future that involves the responsible use of our resources. The unparalleled drive toward clean and renewable domestic energy has increased emphasis on expanding and accelerating hydroelectric, solar, geothermal, wind, tidal, and hydrokinetic energy projects. At the same time, traditional energy sources, such as oil and gas, continue to be developed. Consequently, the Service is increasingly engaged in extensive coordination with other Department of the Interior bureaus, other Federal agencies, States, Tribes, and industry early in the process to ensure conservation of trust resources and racial equity as the Nation transitions to carbon pollution free electricity by 2035 and a net-zero emission economy by 2050. Examples include environmental review of nearly 3,000 megawatts of renewable energy projects in support of the Bureau of Land Management's Renewable Energy Coordination Offices; and coordination with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management on specific projects, and well as programmatic approaches to streamline environmental review and permitting, while ensuring that trust resource concerns are addressed early in the offshore wind energy planning process.

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## **2024 Program Activities**

The 2024 budget will:

- Provide integrated advanced project planning, environmental review, and permitting assistance to address environmental concerns while supporting the Nation's efforts to build back better through energy production, infrastructure, and other development activities.

- Support development and population of data in IPaC, our web-based application, to streamline the ESA consultation process and provide transparency and predictability for Federal agencies and applicants.
- Encourage collaboration with partners by providing technical assistance in evaluating the impacts of proposed Federal activities on fish, wildlife, and plants.
- Provide for consideration of the needs of local underserved communities when advising on siting determinations, the impacts of Federal projects, and adapting to climate change.

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### Proposed Program Changes

The 2024 budget request for Planning and Consultation is \$171,374,000 and 851 FTE, a program change of +\$44,949,000 and +225 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Planning and Consultation Capacity and Tools (+\$36,449,000/+175 FTE)** - Additional capacity is needed for environmental reviews of projects to support timely review and decision-making on critical infrastructure development. Service biologists provide species-oriented technical assistance to other Federal agencies, States, Tribes, contractors, and private industry to assist with project siting and minimization and mitigation of impacts, while addressing climate change impacts, thereby facilitating timely environmental reviews, improving conservation outcomes, implementing compliance and effectiveness monitoring, and helping others understand and plan for the effects of climate change, especially in disadvantaged communities.

The Service is requesting additional field office capacity to ensure Service project review and permitting functions are not bottlenecks in the environmental clearance process for priority economic revitalization projects. With this increase, the Service anticipates conducting an additional 282 formal consultations and 3,114 informal consultations yearly. Other Federal agencies are undertaking a wide variety of development projects ranging from energy efficiency projects funded through the Department of Energy, to culvert replacements funded by Department of Transportation, to significant construction on our Nation's rivers and harbors by the Army Corps of Engineers. All of these projects will require extensive coordination with the Service to avoid or mitigate impacts to fish and wildlife and the habitats on which they depend. As evidenced by implementation of Title 41 of the FAST Act, although the FWS is rarely the lead permitting agency for infrastructure projects, the Service often has an important environmental review role, especially with respect to section 7 of the ESA. The Service often also serves as a cooperating agency as other agencies comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. By engaging early in project development, Service staff can bring their extensive knowledge in numerous authorities, including the ESA, and NEPA to streamline the permitting process and minimize environmental and community impacts of development projects.

BIL and IRA are investments in rebuilding our roads and bridges; making public transportation accessible; facilitating clean water infrastructure; expanding affordable, high-speed internet; tackling legacy pollution and advance environmental justice; upgrading the power grid; and are the largest investments in domestic manufacturing of batteries and the critical minerals that power them. All of these efforts may affect federally listed species and require environmental review under section 7 or 10 of the ESA and other conservation laws. Because the Service did not receive funding for environmental reviews under these laws, the Service is depending on this increase and transfer funding, when agencies provide it, to complete its important role in reviewing, permitting, and providing technical assistance on these projects. For example, the Department is providing transfer funding under section 50303 of IRA to the Service to facilitate environmental reviews of DOI bureau projects funded under IRA, however, this is insufficient to support

environmental reviews for non-DOI agencies IRA funded projects. A legislative proposal will allow more transfer funds from non-DOI agencies for the environmental reviews of their BIL funded projects. However, transfer funding alone will be insufficient to address the long-standing backlog of work, complete project reviews for projects on private lands, and improve the permit process through programmatic consultations and other streamlining efforts. The Service's technical assistance helps our partners make informed decisions about the effects of their possible actions so resources are focused on actions with the most conservation value. Proactive planning and improved mitigation will create, sustain, and enhance habitats.

The Service is also seeking these additional resources to provide more automated tools to facilitate environmental reviews and coordination. The Service would add new functionality to its IPaC system to streamline the Section 7 consultation process in a transparent and consistent way. The development of ECOSphere, which hosts IPaC, into a robust tracking and transactional workflow system will allow Service biologists to manage work for listed species and other trust resources throughout the continuum of the species protection provided by the ESA. ECOSphere is a cloud-based pool of applications and workflows that provides access to Service data related to threatened and endangered species, conservation of habitat and species, refuges, and migratory birds. ECOSphere provides a central point to gather and store information from Federal, State, and Tribal partners to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States. Expanding the data management and delivery of information used by Service biologists to manage the conservation and recovery of these species will boost efforts internally and externally, as well as streamline the review of high priority infrastructure and renewable energy development projects. Workflows that centralize the information and manage data in a consistent manner, including timeline dependencies and notifications, will create efficiencies in process and streamline coordination across offices, biologists, and partners for conservation.

### Legislative Proposal – Transfer Authority for BIL Permitting

In addition to the increases proposed for planning and consultation work, the budget also proposes to expand authority beyond existing reimbursable and Economy Act authorities by enabling Federal agencies to transfer funds provided under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service. This authority in concert with existing authorities will improve efficiencies and increase capacity for environmental planning and consultation. This proposal is needed to address the unique workload surge anticipated from this legislation and would accelerate and improve environmental reviews in support of responsible development of priority infrastructure projects and energy solutions.

*Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the unobligated balances of funds made available in division J of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law 117-58) to any agency funded by this or any other Act may be transferred to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service for the costs of carrying out their responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) to consult and conference, as required by section 7 of such Act, in connection with activities and projects funded by Public Law 117-58: Provided, That amounts transferred pursuant to this section shall be in addition to amounts otherwise available for such purposes: Provided further, That the transfer authority provided in this section shall be in addition to any other transfer authority provided by law: Provided further, That amounts transferred pursuant to this section that were previously designated by the Congress as an emergency requirement pursuant to a concurrent resolution on the Budget or the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 shall retain such designation.*

**Energy Staffing (+\$8,000,000/+47 FTE)** - In order to effectively support the Administration's priorities for accelerating renewable energy production in the United States, the Service is requesting additional field office capacity to ensure that project review and permitting functions are not bottlenecks in the environmental clearance process for renewable energy projects. This new capacity will enable and deepen the Service's contribution to the Government-wide approach to addressing the climate crisis envisioned in E.O. 14008. For example, E.O. 14008 states the Administration's goal of doubling offshore wind energy production by 2030 while ensuring robust protection for our lands, waters, and biodiversity and creating good jobs. Concurrently, E.O. 14008 also stresses the importance of revitalizing the economics of coal, oil and gas, and power plant communities for economic and social recovery. Strengthened Service programs will help advance the clean energy transition by efficiently reviewing projects on public lands, in offshore waters and elsewhere to increase renewable energy production while ensuring robust protections for wildlife.

Additional field office capacity will allow the Service to focus on early engagement in renewable energy development processes. When the Service engages early, our recommendations save taxpayers money by facilitating timely decisions and ensuring that environmental and community impacts are minimized. Additional field office capacity will also allow the Service to provide timely and expert support to non-Federal entities and landowners seeking incidental take permits for renewable energy projects. Lastly, new capacity will support pro-active biological planning

and conservation design, which will help communities address climate change and industry make better decisions regarding where to pursue renewable energy development.

**Pesticide Consultations (+\$500,000/+3 FTE)** - On February 28, 2022, the Service released its Biological and Conference Opinion on the Registration of Malathion, based on our review of the Environmental Protection Agency's proposal national registration of malathion and its effect on endangered and threatened species and designated critical habitat. This opinion reflects five years of analyses about the "effects of the action" and whether the effects caused by the action to be "reasonably certain to occur". The section 7 consultations on pesticide registrations are a complex, ongoing process involving the EPA, the National Marine Fishers Service (NMFS), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), registrants and the public. EPA's extensive consultation needs for registration of new pesticides, new pesticide uses, and the required registration review of existing pesticides is currently driven by litigation. Several lawsuits have been filed against EPA, the Service, and NMFS by non-governmental organizations citing the threat to listed species and their designated critical habitats arising from noncompliance of pesticide registration with section 7 of the ESA. Due in part to these lawsuits and related settlements, EPA has a large backlog of section 7 consultations for pesticide registrations and, in addition to 6 recent consultation requests, will most likely be requesting initiation of consultation for many more of these chemicals in the coming years. These national consultations often address most or all domestically listed species and their critical habitats. The Service is seeking additional resources to support these consultations, given the development of new pesticides and technologies as well as new uses that will result in increasing numbers of pesticide registrations and consultation requests in the coming years.

**ACTIVITY: ECOLOGICAL SERVICES**

**Subactivity: Conservation and Restoration**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Change from 2023 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Conservation and Restoration	(\$000)	35,666	37,653	+1,720	0	+13,371	52,744	+15,091
	FTE	181	181	0	0	+57	238	+57

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Conservation and Restoration**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Candidate Conservation	+4,871	+27
National Wetlands Inventory	+4,000	+3
Environmental Response & Restoration	+3,750	+22
Coastal Barrier Resources Act	+500	+3
Marine Mammals	+250	+2
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+13,371</b>	<b>+57</b>

**Program Overview**

Through the Conservation and Restoration program, the Service supports collaborative species conservation efforts, works to protect and restore habitats that are important to Federal trust species, and provides mapping products and databases that are essential tools for conservation and restoration of species and habitats by other Federal and State agencies, Tribes, and the public. Activities under this program will further the Administration’s priorities in multiple areas by providing technical experts to improve habitat connectivity and protect wildlife and habitat; providing tools and technologies to assist other Federal agencies, industry, States, Tribes and other partners in their decision-making to advance conservation of listed and at-risk species while balancing the needs of the communities; aligning conservation with the needs of landowners through different working models for partnerships; reducing the potential of harm to the environment through planning and preparedness for oil and hazardous materials spill response; encouraging mitigation/adaptation efforts for riverine or coastal projects and providing information and tools to advance community planning in order to prevent repeated damage from natural disasters; and supporting land acquisition and restoration projects that connect underserved communities with their local natural resources and wildlife.

As we move forward, we are integrating the Administration’s priorities for climate change adaptation and resilience, and diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility into our processes. Examples include:

- Encouraging mitigation and adaptation efforts for riverine or coastal projects and providing information and tools to support community planning to prevent repeated damage from natural disasters;
- Reducing the potential of harm to the environment through planning and preparedness for oil and hazardous materials spill response and restoration;
- Supporting restoration projects that connect underserved communities with their local natural resources and wildlife;
- Pursuing hiring practices that recruit from all segments of our communities so that our workforce reflects our Nation; and
- Providing a safe, inclusive culture so more communities are heard and have equal opportunity to advance the mission of the Ecological Services Program.

### **Candidate Conservation**

Candidate Conservation focuses on two primary activities: species assessment and facilitating voluntary conservation efforts for species under consideration for listing under the ESA. Candidate Conservation uses all available information to conduct a scientifically rigorous assessment process that identifies species that warrant listing. The Service uses a species status assessment framework (SSA), which is an analytical approach to deliver foundational science for informing all ESA decisions. The 2021 Candidate Notice of Review, published on May 3, 2022, identified a total of 8 domestic species as candidates for listing.

The ESA not only inspires diverse partnerships to prevent species extinctions and recover listed species, it also supports proactive collaborations with States, private landowners, conservation groups and industry to conserve species before they require Federal protections. The Service's Candidate Conservation Program works with landowners to develop conservation agreements for actions to save at risk species and that may prevent the need to list the species in the future. Proactive conservation for at-risk species requires close engagement with communities and landowners. A majority of at-risk species are found on private lands. It takes private citizens, state and local government, and businesses to care and invest in saving these species. The Service's partnerships with these entities and support through technical assistance is critical to ensure that these partners are backed by the best available science and knowledge of the threats facing the species. These agreements contribute to the conservation of at-risk species while providing participating landowners regulatory assurances via permits that authorize any harm to species that is incidental to carrying out beneficial management actions. Currently, the Service has 62 agreements with over 27 million acres and 93 stream miles enrolled. These agreements have been successful for preventing listing for many species such as: the Arctic grayling, Virgin River spinedace, Washington ground squirrel, and Graham's beardtongue, but have the potential to do even more. Increasing the number of these place-based agreements helps to protect not only species, but habitat and other species as well. By increasing the use of these agreements and adjusting them to meet today's challenges, we can collaborate with communities and landowners to bring innovative solutions to our biodiversity challenges.

### **Marine Mammals**

Marine mammals are a resource of great cultural, aesthetic, economic, and recreational significance. Enacted in 1972, the MMPA is one of the most important statutory authorities for conserving and managing marine mammals. This statute provides protection by prohibiting (with certain exceptions): (1) take of marine mammals in U.S. waters and by U.S. citizens on the

high seas, and (2) the import, export, and sale of marine mammals and marine mammal parts and products in the U.S. Under the MMPA, marine mammal populations, and the health and stability of marine ecosystems upon which they depend, are required to be maintained at, or returned to, healthy levels. The MMPA assigns the Department of the Interior, through the Service, responsibility for the conservation and management of polar bears, walruses, sea and marine otters, three species of manatees, and dugongs. Through regular monitoring, the Service can learn more about the health and dynamics of marine mammal populations and the effects of global changes on marine and coastal environments.

Meeting the Service’s mandate for the conservation of marine mammal species requires communication and cooperation with other Federal agencies, State governments, Alaska Native Organizations, scientists from numerous institutions and organizations, industry groups, and nongovernmental organizations. Through active collaboration and coordination, the Service is able to enhance the effectiveness of implementing the MMPA and achieve its goal of optimum sustainable population levels for marine mammal stocks. As an example, the Service is working with partners to sustain efforts to survey and assess population status and trends for sea otters, Pacific walruses, polar bears, and West Indian manatees and will continue to support response efforts for stranded or beached marine mammals. The Service will also continue efforts to maintain current stock assessment reports for all 10 marine mammal stocks under the jurisdiction of the Service. Working with Alaska Native people and local communities, the Service continues to coordinate management of the Pacific walrus stock and the two polar bear stocks that occur in Alaska in support of our existing international agreements. The Service will continue to review requests for marine mammal incidental take authorizations and ensure any authorizations issued have a negligible impact on the stock as required under the MMPA.



*Sand Lake Wetland Management District, South Dakota. Photo by Tom Koerner*

**National Wetlands Inventory**

The Service is the principal Federal agency tasked with providing publicly available information on wetlands data and the status and trends of our Nation's wetlands. Wetlands data are critical in supporting the Administration’s priorities related to climate change and infrastructure funding. Wetlands filter surface runoff, reduce flooding, and dissipate coastal storm surge. They provide habitat for many commercially important fish, as well as

wildlife and plants. They also provide food and fiber in support of Tribal culture. Unfortunately, it is estimated that over half of America’s wetlands have been lost since 1780, and these wetland losses continue. The National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) manages the Federal wetlands data layer and provides online mapping resources on the abundance, characteristic, and distribution of America’s wetlands. The NWI website is the most visited in the Service, and over 305,000 wetland maps were downloaded in 2022 by the public. The wetlands data layer is used to expedite conservation and business decisions on, for instance, siting of infrastructure or other

development projects to reduce impacts to wetlands and promote a wide array of environmental benefits including climate resiliency. The Service works extensively with other Federal, State and Tribal partners to continually update the data layer and mapper. However, approximately 70% of NWI data are over 20 years old and do not meet modern data quality standards and over half of Alaska is unmapped. In FY 2024, the Service will continue to partner with other Federal and State agencies to update priority wetland data through cost sharing and will publish the sixth decadal report to Congress on the status and trends of the Nation's wetlands. As required by law, this report provides an assessment of the quantity of America's wetlands, supporting the Federal Government's "no net loss of wetlands" goal and informing policy and management decisions across the Federal Government.

### **Coastal Barrier Resources Act**

In the early 1980s, Congress recognized that certain Federal actions and programs have historically subsidized and encouraged development on coastal barriers, resulting in the loss of natural resources; threats to human life, health, and property; and the expenditure of millions of tax dollars each year. To remove the Federal incentive to develop these areas, CBRA and subsequent authorizations designated relatively undeveloped coastal barriers along the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, Great Lakes, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico coasts as part of the John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System (CBRS), which made these areas ineligible for most new Federal expenditures and financial assistance. CBRA does not prohibit or restrict development conducted with non-Federal funds.

Implementing CBRA relies on mapping capabilities. The Service continues to take significant steps to improve efficiencies and effectiveness of CBRA administration including: (1) maintaining the official CBRS maps and the mappers that make CBRS data more accessible to property owners, project proponents, and other interested stakeholders and (2) supporting CBRA consultations for federally funded projects affecting the CBRS. In FY 2024, the Service will conduct comprehensive remapping projects for certain CBRS units in Alabama, Florida, and Texas and conduct 5-year review (to account for geomorphic change) for about 30% of the CBRS acreage.

### **Environmental Response and Restoration**

Our coasts, rivers, estuaries, wetlands and other natural places are home to spectacular native wildlife and provide Americans with unrivaled places to fish, hunt, and experience the great outdoors. They also play a critical role in our economy, generating revenues from tourism and recreational activities, while providing us with clean water and performing countless other important ecological functions. There are many pressures on wildlife resources along coastal ecosystems including the ongoing effects of hazardous materials and toxic chemicals released from facilities damaged by hurricanes. Climate change-induced sea level rise and more intense hurricanes put not only our coastal refuges at direct risk, but also the vast petrochemical industry sharing these ecosystems. The Service's Environmental Response and Restoration Program protects and restores fish and wildlife populations, and habitats that have been injured by the release of oil or hazardous substances. To be effective in responding to emergency spills, the Service must maintain a cadre of trained responders. Funding for this preparedness is critical to maintain the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's required training certificates or medical monitoring, to supply responders and Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) practitioners with the equipment and supplies to prevent exposure and/or minimize injuries to spilled oil or environmental contaminants, and to conduct associated pre-assessment investigations. Trained responders increase the Service's capacity to provide technical support and expertise to the U.S. Coast Guard and Environmental Protection Agency

who rely on the Service to identify resources at risk and oversee the collection and rehabilitation of oiled birds and other wildlife during spill events.

The Environmental Response and Restoration program oversees the NRDAR activities nationwide, managing over 90% of the 430 active Departmental NRDAR cases. To achieve restoration, the Service uses its technical expertise to convert damage assessment recoveries to on-the-ground restoration. The Service uses appropriated funding to support ongoing cases and conduct early investigations that could potentially lead to restoration projects worth millions of dollars. The program has a commitment to the public in restoring injured natural resources and supporting local communities, rural economies, States, and Tribes.

In FY 2022, the Service put more than \$25 million of recovered funds on the ground to restore habitat, fish and wildlife for the American people, enhancing, restoring, or protecting almost 20,000 acres and 64 stream miles. As a result, 47 restoration projects with direct benefits to threatened and endangered species were completed, and more than 2,370 acres and 55 miles of waterways were made available for public recreational activities. The economic impact of NRDAR restoration generates millions of dollars for the local economy and hundreds of year-long jobs.

### **2024 Program Activities**

The 2024 budget request will allow Ecological Services to:

- Review and process section 10 enhancement of survival permit applications for candidate and other at-risk species.
- Update the national wetlands layer data by working extensively with other Federal and State partners; and submit the sixth decadal report to Congress on the status and trends of the Nation's wetlands.
- Prioritize NRDAR activities to identify opportunities for new cases, accelerate assessment casework that has a nexus to underserved communities, and increase capacity for restoration implementation to address injuries to natural resources and benefit economic recovery.
- Participate in oil spill planning meetings and training, spill drills, the formulation of Regional Contingency Plans and Area Contingency Plans and carry out section 7 consultation on those plans and response actions.
- Address requests from property owners who seek revisions to CBRS maps and improve the Service's engagement with Federal action agencies and our responsiveness to their requests for CBRA consultations.
- Maintain current stock assessment reports for MMPA protected species, process and issue Incidental Take Regulations, and engage in and support conservation partnerships to address animal standings and unusual mortality events.

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### **Proposed Program Changes**

The 2024 budget request for Conservation and Restoration is \$52,744,000 and 238 FTE, a net program change of +\$13,371,000 and +57 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Environmental Response and Restoration (+\$3,750,000/+22 FTE)** – Climate change-induced sea level rise and more intense hurricanes put not only our coastal refuges at direct risk, but they also impact the vast petrochemical industry sharing these ecosystems. The Service's

Environmental Response and Restoration Program protects and restores fish and wildlife populations, and habitats that have been injured by the release of oil or hazardous substances. To be effective in responding to emergency spills, the Service must maintain a cadre of trained responders. Funding for this preparedness is critical to maintain the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's required training certificates or medical monitoring, to supply responders and Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) practitioners with the equipment and supplies to prevent exposure and/or minimize injuries to spilled oil or environmental contaminants, and to conduct associated pre-assessment investigations. Trained responders increase the Service's capacity to provide technical support and expertise to the U.S. Coast Guard and Environmental Protection Agency who rely on the Service to identify resources at risk and oversee the collection and rehabilitation of oiled birds and other wildlife during spill events.

The challenge of managing oil spills in the United States is increasing in complexity and magnitude. Oil spills threaten millions of miles of coastline, river systems, lakes, and terrestrial habitat daily, particularly where there is extensive oil drilling, refining, and transport. Serious, and potentially permanent, ecological damage is possible where chronic spills or spills of national significance occur. Past spills are a testament to the significant risk spills pose to our trust resources. In FY 2022, the Service evaluated more than 1,500 spill reports and initiated a response for nearly 400. With the recent increase in weather related events and the number of oil and gas facilities currently in existence, particularly those along the coast, this request ensures that employees responsible for planning and responding to spills and other natural disasters to be effectively trained in those areas. With this funding increase, the Service will increase spill response capacity nationwide to ensure a consistent approach and better train, plan, prepare and respond to incidents to minimize impacts to fish and wildlife and their habitats and facilitate restoration of those resources. Service staff will be able to participate in area contingency planning meetings, regional response team meetings, and critical exercises and drills to improve our ability to provide support to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and EPA. The USCG and EPA rely on the Service to participate in the formulation of Area Contingency Plans; carry out section 7 consultation on those plans and response actions, prevent or reduce impacts of spilled oil on fish and wildlife and their habitats, oversee the collection and rehabilitation of oiled birds and other wildlife, and conduct natural resource damage assessments to facilitate restoration of fish and wildlife resources affected by the spill. A major component for accomplishing these goals would be the creation of a dedicated Service Spill Incident Management Assistance Team (SIMAT), committed to its role as a partner in conserving America's natural resources, and effectively responding to spills.

In support of the NRDAR program, the Service will use the requested increase to expand capacity to work with Tribal, State, and other Federal co-trustees to conduct assessment activities, accelerate restoration planning and implementation, and increase opportunities for employee development through establishment of a mentoring and training program. There are currently 430 active Departmental NRDAR cases, of which the Service manages 90%. To achieve restoration, the Service uses its technical expertise to convert damage assessment recoveries to on-the-ground restoration. The Service will prioritize backlogged casework, with an eye toward opportunities for restoration in underserved communities. We will also focus on land acquisition projects with restoration activities that can offset climate impacts and increase conservation to contribute to the Administration's America the Beautiful initiative. In FY 2022, the Service put more than \$25 million of recovered funds on the ground to restore habitat, fish and wildlife for the American people, enhancing, restoring, or protecting almost 20,000 acres and 64 stream miles. As a result, 47 restoration projects with direct benefits to threatened and endangered species were completed, and more than 2,370 acres and 55 miles of waterways were made available for public recreational

activities. The economic impact of NRDAR restoration generates millions of dollars for the local economy and hundreds of year-long jobs.

**Candidate Conservation (+\$4,871,000 /+27 FTE)** - Integrating the conservation objectives of candidate conservation, along with our other authorities, helps the Service and local communities achieve a balance between species conservation and economic and local priorities. This funding will be used to support conservation efforts at different scales, at the State agency level for landscape conservation efforts as well as at the local landowner level. The Service will focus on increasing our capacity to work with landowners to develop conservation agreements and, as appropriate, permit them to provide regulatory assurances for participating landowners. Guided by the National Listing Workplan, the States can leverage their localized expertise and relationships to provide landowners with technical assistance to achieve specific conservation goals for candidate and petitioned species and thus provide regulatory certainty to participating landowners and potentially eliminate the need to list a species. Candidate Conservation was highlighted as a conservation priority in the Administration's report outlining the America the Beautiful initiative.

For many listed species, conservation happens through voluntary efforts on private working lands. These voluntary conservation actions are key to helping to prevent species from needing the protection of the Act while contributing to pollinator and wildlife habitat and providing carbon-sequestering opportunities. Additional capacity would allow the Service to stand up a specialized team that would simplify and accelerate the process for getting section 10 permits and associated candidate conservation plans in place and functioning for working lands. The team would develop, permit, and monitor implementation of these voluntary landowner agreements. The Service would also be able to expand its effort in working with other Federal agencies, such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service, to offer regulatory predictability when partnering with farmers, ranchers and forest landowners to keep their working lands working, similar to the Working Lands for Wildlife Program.

**Updating National Wetlands Inventory maps (+\$4,000,000/+3 FTE)** - Use of NWI data by environmental consulting firms saves an additional estimated \$7.8 million annually. For example, the States of Michigan and Minnesota save \$750,000 and \$1 million, respectively, each year by using the NWI dataset to support their regulatory review and planning programs. Government and private sector organizations rely on NWI data to enhance and streamline infrastructure planning, permitting, and mitigation decisions. Contemporary wetlands data get infrastructure projects to the construction phase faster, while supporting the long-term health and resilience of our environment. However, the dataset needs substantive reinvestment to continue to support informed public and private sector decision-making. The Service estimates that a long-term increase of \$40 million is needed to complete mapping for unmapped portions of Alaska and updated data in coastal areas and areas of rapid economic development in the lower 48 states. The increase will be used to update about 10 percent of infrastructure development priority areas and Alaska. The focus will be to strategically update wetlands data in areas of significant change and development interest, where wetlands function to abate flooding from storms and provide water storage and filtration, as well as provide habitat for many of the Service's trust resources, including about half of threatened and endangered species.

**CBRA Consultation Reviews (+\$500,000/+3 FTE)** - The Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA) is an under used tool that restricts most new Federal expenditures (e.g., flood control projects, disaster assistance, and flood insurance) that encourage development of ecologically sensitive and unstable coastal areas. The proposed increase in funding would be directed towards providing technical assistance and guidance to other Federal agencies to support CBRA consultations for federally funded projects affecting these coastal areas, as recommended in the Government

Accountability Office's report issued March 10, 2021 (GAO-21-258 – <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-21-258>).

**Marine Mammals (+\$250,000/+2 FTE)** - The Service has responsibility for 10 marine mammal stocks protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA): West Indian manatees, southern and northern sea otters, Pacific walrus, and polar bears. All 10 stocks are highly vulnerable to climate change, especially those in Alaska, and manatees along the Atlantic Coast of Florida are experiencing a large and ongoing mortality event associated with algal blooms and loss of seagrass. Additional capacity would provide the necessary staff to meet the Service's MMPA conservation and management obligations within mandatory timeframes for all 10 stocks. Funding will be used to engage with Tribes on Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) research, conservation planning, and marine mammal management for the benefit of trust species. Funding will also be used to support the Service's efforts to conserve manatees and to advance the conservation of southern sea otters, including continued consideration of reintroduction to currently unoccupied areas along the Pacific Coast.

**ACTIVITY: ECOLOGICAL SERVICES**

**Subactivity: Recovery**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Budget Request	Change from 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Recovery	(\$000)	108,372	114,124	+4,092	0	+15,089	133,305	+19,181
	FTE	470	470	0	0	+38	508	+38

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Recovery**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Recovery Activities	+20,289	+38
Florida Grasshopper Sparrow	-350	+0
Wolf-Livestock Demonstration Program	-1,000	+0
Prescott Grant Program	-1,100	+0
State of the Birds Activities	-1,250	+0
Recovery Challenge	-1,500	+0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+15,089</b>	<b>+38</b>

**Program Overview**

Preventing extinction and recovering listed species has always been, and will continue to be, one of the Service’s highest priorities. The ESA is extraordinarily effective at preventing species from going extinct and has inspired action to conserve at-risk species and their habitat before they need to be listed as threatened or endangered. Since it was signed into law in 1973, more than 99 percent of all species listed under the law are still with us today. The goal of the Recovery program is to minimize or remove the threats that led to the species’ listing and to work toward improving the status of listed species so that protection under the Act is no longer necessary. This process requires planning, monitoring, and management together with close coordination with Service partners. The Service plays a vital role in guiding the recovery planning process, and in facilitating, supporting, and monitoring the implementation of recovery actions by the Service and others.

Recovery plans, which are non-regulatory blueprints for the conservation work that needs to be done to recover a species, are required under the ESA. Recovery plans identify specific recovery tasks, establish downlisting and delisting criteria, and provide timetables and cost estimates. Recovery criteria provide specific targets to measure delisting and downlisting objectives in recovery plans ensuring that funding and other resources are directed towards those actions that will have the most benefit for the species and regulated communities. Recovery plans are often developed collaboratively with interested partners and may address multiple species. The Service provides the opportunity for public review and comment for each draft recovery plan. The Service strives to enhance and increase partnerships with agencies and organizations to implement highest priority recovery actions identified in recovery plans for endangered and threatened species under the trusteeship of the Service in the United States and its Territories, such that known threats to the species may be reduced or eliminated.

The standards for delisting a species consider the same five statutory factors as the listing of a species (see section on listing, above). This requirement ensures that all species proposed for delisting receive the same careful analysis to determine whether or not they meet the statutory definitions of a threatened or endangered species as is done for determining whether to add a species to the list. To encourage collaboration, the Service maintains a national downlisting and delisting workplan to enable our partners participate in a substantive way to ensure that species ready for delisting or downlisting meet their recovery plan objectives.



*Decades of collaborative conservation efforts on U.S. Navy-owned San Clemente Island resulted in the recovery of the San Clemente Bell's sparrow and four other species—San Clemente Island paintbrush, lotus, larkspur and bush-mallow plants. The Service announced the delisting of these species from the Endangered Species Act in January 2023. Photo by Nicole Desnoyers, Institute for Wildlife Studies, CC-BY-4.0.*

Service biologists support the implementation of the ESA via collaborative conservation actions that are advantageous, feasible, and practicable for all parties. Staff provide technical assistance to our partners to support and guide recovery projects. Recovery projects can range from habitat restoration to captive rearing and reintroduction to landowner agreements that provide habitat for one or more listed species for a set period of time. The Service also provides technical assistance in the development of Safe Harbor Agreements, which are voluntary landowner agreements that benefit species and provide assurances that landowner conservation actions (e.g., habitat restoration, reintroduction), will not result in additional regulation on the landowner.

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## 2024 Program Activities

The 2024 budget will:

- Support work to complete the recovery responsibilities required by statute - preparing recovery plans for newly listed species within two and a half years of the final listing, reducing the recovery plan backlog, completing 5-year reviews for approximately 20% of listed species annually, acting on the recommendations to reclassify or delist species, and encouraging collaborative partnerships with others for recovery implementation.
- At the requested funding level, the Service expects to propose or finalize 25 delisting or downlisting rules.
- Provide staff and funds to support on-the-ground recovery of listed species that prevent extinction and expand recovery efforts.
- Initiate a multi-year investment in partnerships, especially those with economically disadvantaged landowners, that will facilitate conservation within these communities while expanding recovery activities across the range of listed species, thus leading to delisting or downlisting sooner.

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**Proposed Program Changes**

The 2024 budget request for Recovery of Listed Species is \$133,305,000 and 508 FTE, a net program change of +\$15,089,000 and +38 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Catalyzing Recovery for Listed Species and Preventing Extinction (+\$20,289,000/+38 FTE)** –As the most recently published report on ESA expenditures documents, less than \$5,000 was reported by any Federal or State agency for 37% of the species in 2018 ([Endangered and Threatened Species Expenditures: Fiscal Year 2018 \(fws.gov\)](#)). As a result, there are many species for which the Service or other stakeholders have few resources available to engage in recovery efforts. Federal funding is often necessary to leverage the collaborative conservation necessary to guide species back from the brink of extinction and restore populations to self-sustaining levels. Funding through this increase would be used to support the increasing costs of maintaining current recovery programs to reduce human/wildlife interactions, manage captive populations until reintroductions back to the wild are possible, and support our partners, state and local, who have insufficient resources to recover these species.

To engage new partners in supporting recovery efforts, a significant portion of the requested increase would be provided for voluntary conservation efforts on private lands to implement recovery actions that could lead to species recovery or prevent extinction. The Service piloted similar efforts during the past two decades that led to the delisting or downlisting of more than 34 species including the interior least tern delisted in February 2021. For many listed species, recovery happens through voluntary conservation on private lands, consistent with the Administration’s goals for the America the Beautiful initiative. These voluntary conservation actions are key to meeting delisting or downlisting goals while respecting the management objectives of landowners.

In FY 2024, these funds will provide capability for Service offices to catalyze and support high priority recovery activities that contribute to conservation actions outlined in Service recovery plans for priority species. There are over 15,000 priority 1 actions identified in recovery plans, of which most need additional funding to achieve the intended outcome. Most of the requested funding will be supporting projects to immediately implement or expand recovery efforts or prevent the extinction of the most imperiled endangered species. Simultaneously, these projects often mitigate the effects of climate change, including high-severity wildfire and invasive species. The demand exists to fund recovery actions that do not require a cost match from the States or private landowners. Most of the Service’s current funding for recovery projects, such as Recovery Challenge grants or the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund grants to States, require a cost-match, limiting the ability to engage with economically-disadvantaged landowners or communities with limited resources. Dedicating funding to support on-the-ground recovery of listed species, with an emphasis on partnerships with economically-disadvantaged landowners, will facilitate conservation within these communities while expanding recovery activities across the range of listed species, thus leading to delisting or downlisting sooner.

With the remaining funds, we will dedicate resources to completing recovery plans for newly listed species with a focus on ecosystem recovery strategies and investing in building tools to integrate the Service’s information related to the status of listed species to inform decisions. As the America the Beautiful report recommended, the Nation needs to accelerate recovery implementation at the landscape level. The Service is moving away from managing species by species to focus on place-based recovery plans that include considerations of changing climates. By providing ecosystem recovery strategies for the future, we can leverage public and private resources to achieve our conservation objectives across landscapes.

Using ECOSphere, centralizing the information needed to support recovery actions and status



*The Service announced a record high number of whooping cranes wintered in Texas in 2021-2022, signifying continued winter range expansion for the endangered bird. An estimated 543 whooping cranes arrived in Texas after migrating 2,500 miles from their breeding grounds in Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada. Photo by Ryan Hagerty, USFWS.*

determinations for listed species will help prioritize recovery actions, while also informing consultations with other agencies and technical assistance to landowners. Bringing information from on-the-ground recovery actions, grants, and technical assistance together will enable Service and our partners to make decisions about current and future recovery activities based on the best available information. Connecting all of this information spatially will provide visibility to ensure that local and regional efforts are coordinated to ensure the best return on the investment, for the species and the taxpayer. This multi-year investment in information management will provide our field staff with better tools to develop recovery plans, monitor

the status of species, and prioritize and implement recovery actions. This investment will build off similar investments in other aspects of the ES program to integrate the information so decision-making is based on the best available science and continually updated to reflect the status of a listed species.

**Florida Grasshopper Sparrow (-\$350,000/-0 FTE)** - The budget does not request dedicated funding for this program in order to focus on other recovery activities. Recovery efforts for the Florida grasshopper sparrow will continue using general program activity funding and other funding sources.

**Wolf Livestock Demonstration Program (-\$1,000,000/-0 FTE)** - The budget does not request funding for this program in order to focus on other recovery activities. Funding for recovery of listed species is limited and the Service is focused on preventing extinction and recovery of species that have not yet met their recovery objectives.

**Prescott Grant Program (-\$1,100,000/-0 FTE)** - The budget does not request this additional funding for this program in order to focus on other recovery activities. Funding for recovery of listed species is limited and is focused on statutory responsibilities and recovery of the most imperiled listed species.

**State of the Birds Activities (-\$1,250,000/-0 FTE)** - The budget does not request this additional funding for this program in order to focus on other recovery activities. Funding for recovery of listed species is limited and the Service is focused on statutory responsibilities and recovery of the most imperiled listed species.

**Recovery Challenge (-\$1,500,000/-0 FTE)** - The budget does not request this additional funding for this program in order to focus on other recovery activities. Funding for recovery of listed species is limited and the Service is focused on statutory responsibilities and recovery of the most imperiled listed species.

# Habitat Conservation



# Habitat Conservation

## Activity: Habitat Conservation

Program Element	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024				Change From 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Partners for Fish and Wildlife (\$000)	57,715	60,267	+1,807	0	+17,643	79,717	+19,450
FTE	206	232	0	0	+39	271	+39
Coastal Program (\$000)	13,616	13,957	+446	0	+6,019	20,422	+6,465
FTE	43	48	0	0	+6	54	+6
<b>Total, Habitat Conservation (\$000)</b>	<b>71,331</b>	<b>74,224</b>	<b>+2,253</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+23,662</b>	<b>100,139</b>	<b>25,915</b>
FTE	<b>249</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+45</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>+45</b>

### Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Habitat Conservation

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Activities	+19,093	+39
Coastal Program Activities	+6,019	+6
Nutria Eradication	-1,450	+0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+23,662</b>	<b>+45</b>

### Program Mission

Habitat Conservation, which includes the Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW), Coastal Programs, and the Farm Conservation Program, provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners and other conservation partners to voluntarily protect, conserve, and restore private lands. By working together, the Service achieves voluntary and collaborative habitat conservation by providing technical and financial assistance that benefits Federal trust species while meeting needs of the landowners and communities. Through these partnerships, Service biologists deliver strategic landscape-scale habitat conservation planning, design, and implement habitat improvement and protection projects. These projects achieve a broad array of benefits, such as recovery of species of greatest conservation concern, enhanced biodiversity, habitat connectivity, restoration of ecosystem health, resilience, and mitigation of the effects of climate change. Supporting voluntary conservation is critical to achieving the vision of the President’s America the Beautiful initiative addressing the impacts of climate change, building back better by supporting nature-based infrastructure, providing support to underserved communities, and promoting racial equity and environmental justice. The Service’s PFW and Coastal programs are well positioned to enhance landscape level coordination internally (across programs and regions), with other Federal Agencies, Tribes, states, non-governmental organizations, private landowners, and with local communities to support the America the Beautiful initiative.

### Program Elements

The PFW and Coastal Programs work through collaborative partnerships to promote, identify, and support approaches that utilize Nature-Based Solutions for conservation and restoration in an ecologically connected network of lands and waters. These programs support the America the Beautiful initiative, including the goal of conserving 30 percent of the Nations’ lands and waters by 2030 and addressing the biodiversity crisis, through the delivery of cooperative, on-the-ground conservation in targeted geographic areas and biologically sensitive landscapes. Field-based biologists have an intimate knowledge of the natural resource concerns and

conservation challenges in local communities. The PFW and Coastal Program biologists are fluent in project management and design, public relations and partnerships, grant writing, and implementing projects/programs. They cooperate with local stakeholders to leverage partners' resources and Federal dollars to support conservation strategies on Tribal, public, and private lands by supporting grant development, compliance, and implementation from any granting agency or organization, such as the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). These efforts help conserve America's natural resources and traditional land use for future generations, while supporting healthy, biologically diverse fish and wildlife populations; addressing conservation challenges such as climate change resiliency, habitat fragmentation, invasive species; and reducing the threat of climate change impacts to important infrastructure.

The PFW and Coastal Programs channel Federal and private dollars to local communities where they create work to support new jobs and provide income to local contractors and other industries. Money spent in support of projects circulates through the economy, creating more jobs and generating economic activity. The impacts of PFW and Coastal Program funds are multiplied in two dimensions. First, the program expertise and funding can leverage additional resources from other partners that support projects. Second, spending creates work, generates tax revenues, and stimulates economic activity as wages and purchases flow through the economy.

A large part of PFW work involves coordinating with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide technical assistance in the development, implementation, and evaluation of Farm Bill conservation programs and initiatives to meet shared conservation goals. This coordination includes the continuation of effective partnerships with USDA, such as the Working Lands for Wildlife model of conservation that contributes to the recovery of declining wildlife populations, while helping to sustain agricultural production on working landscapes. Coordination efforts also include delivery of fish and wildlife technical assistance in support of USDA's efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change by helping landowners implement climate-smart agriculture and forestry practices.

### **Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders**

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The PFW and Coastal Program are implemented under the following authorities:

- *Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act* (16 U.S.C. 661) directs the Service to investigate and report on proposed Federal actions that affect any stream or other body of water, and to provide recommendations to minimize impacts on fish and wildlife resources.
- *Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956* (16 U.S.C. 742 a-j) establishes a comprehensive national fish and wildlife policy and authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to take steps required for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fisheries resources and wildlife resources through research, acquisition of refuge lands, development of existing facilities, and other means.
- *Partners for Fish and Wildlife Act* (16 U.S.C. §§3771-3774) provides for the restoration, enhancement, and management of fish and wildlife habitats on private land through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, a program that works with private landowners to conduct cost-effective habitat projects for the benefit of fish and wildlife resources in the United States.
- *Title VII of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019* (P.L. 116-9) pertaining to Wildlife Habitat and Conservation, which reauthorizes the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

**Activity: Habitat Conservation**  
**Subactivity: Partners for Fish and Wildlife**

Program Element	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change From 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Partners for Fish and Wildlife (\$000)	57,715	60,267	+1,807	0	+17,643	79,717	+19,450
FTE	206	232	0	0	+39	271	+39

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Partners for Fish and Wildlife**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Activities	+19,093	+39
Nutria Eradication	-1,450	-0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+17,643</b>	<b>+39</b>

**Program Overview**

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) program is a voluntary, citizen, and community-based stewardship program for fish and wildlife conservation on private land. Nearly 70 percent of land in the United States is privately-owned. To implement landscape-scale impacts for wildlife conservation, it is critical the Service engages in conservation with private landowners. Through the program, the Service and private landowners work collaboratively to implement local conservation strategies. In turn, the restored areas provide valuable benefits to the surrounding communities by supporting tourism and recreation, protecting infrastructure from flood damage, and supporting America’s agricultural production by conserving soil, controlling pests, and benefitting pollinators. PFW Program biologists promote, identify, and support approaches that use Nature-Based Solutions for conservation and restoration in an ecologically connected network of lands and waters. PFW biologists serve as habitat consultants who provide free technical and financial assistance to private landowners, managers, tribes, schools, corporations, and local interest groups and support partnership development, and implementation from granting agencies, such as USDA Farm Bill programs or NFWF. The PFW Program’s conservation actions are guided by a five-year national strategic plan that incorporates the goals and priorities of our partners and stakeholders.

The PFW program continues to be a leader in climate change adaptation and resilience, which focuses on providing cooperators tools to live with the effects of climate change. A great example is working with local communities on water conservation projects which allow them to be more resistant to increased periods of drought. Climate-proofing for the future, or resilience, is another strong point as public private partnerships will be key to addressing extreme weather events caused by climate change. Funds spent in support of restoration projects create jobs, generate tax revenues, and spur economic activity in local economies. A USFWS report titled “Restoration Returns: The Contribution of Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and Coastal Program Restoration Projects to Local U.S. Economies (2017 Supplement)” found that every dollar the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program invested in a project creates \$6.15 in local economic returns. An update of program economic impact data is underway, and results are expected in FY2024.

PFW projects provide an opportunity to put a new generation of Americans to work conserving and restoring public lands and waters, increasing reforestation, increasing carbon sequestration in the agricultural sector, protecting biodiversity, improving access to recreation, and addressing the changing climate. Additionally, habitats that PFW have restored have been found to increase property values, which greatly benefit the American people.

In FY 2022, the PFW program worked with private landowners and partners to complete 1,847 projects across the nation. Since inception, the program has restored more than 7 million acres of habitat while leveraging program funding with partner contributions at a ratio of greater than 4:1. In FY 2024, the PFW program will build on this success by assisting implementation of America the Beautiful, expanding work on species migration corridors and landscape connectivity, conserving pollinators, bolstering government-to-government relationships with sovereign Tribal nations, collaborating with private landowners, and implementing a variety of tools related to securing the future of species of greatest conservation concern. This includes using tools like Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances and Safe Harbor Agreements. PFW habitat restoration projects provide cost-effective solutions to combatting climate change in ways such as restoring healthier upland landscapes to retain water longer through droughts, restoring and expanding natural wetland systems to improve storm and flooding resiliency, applying prescribed fire to remove excess fuels for wildfires, increasing biodiversity and sustainability on agricultural operations, and sequestering carbon by restoring healthy soils. PFW delivers climate solutions at a landscape-scale in ways such as connecting cold, clean, and complex waterways, which support native fish reproduction to expanding overwintering habitat in migration corridors for species impacted by warming temperatures. The PFW program and its partners are key in achieving our nationwide and global climate goals.

**PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Taking to the Sky to Defend the Sage: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Funding at Work in Moffat County, Colorado**



*Greater sage-grouse foraging*  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Photos.



*Aerial spraying of herbicide to control invasives*

Funding from the BIL has created unique opportunities to implement landscape-scale work across the West. PFW is working with landowners in Moffat County, CO to quickly invest new conservation dollars on the ground in a way that complements ongoing efforts to sustain the valuable sagebrush landscape. For those living and working in northwestern Colorado, these dollars have already turned into tangible benefits for the human and wildlife communities that rely on the sagebrush ecosystem.

One of the fastest growing threats to sagebrush habitat in Moffat County is the spread of cheatgrass and other invasive annual grasses. These non-native grasses choke out native plant species, reduce habitat quality, and increase wildfire risk. Understanding the importance of keeping cheatgrass at bay, PFW coordinated a project

utilizing BIL funding for Sage-Steppe ecosystems for an aerial application of the herbicide Rejuvra on 3,700 acres of sagebrush habitat to address new cheatgrass growth. A local landowner applied herbicide in summer 2022, with rains following soon after which increased the success rate.

PFW program work in this region has spanned decades and includes project implementation across ownership boundaries, keeping landscape-level conservation at the forefront. When BIL funding for strategic, landscape-scale sagebrush conservation projects became available, the PFW Program was well-positioned to quickly apply this incredible opportunity.

**PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Combatting Climate Change Through Wetland Restoration in Illinois**



*Wetland restoration using heavy machinery.  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Photos.*



*Aerial view of completed wetland restoration project.*

This project represents a partnership between the PFW program, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, The Wetland Initiative, and Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The team restored 2.4 acres of wetland habitat in Livingston County, Illinois. The property historically had wetland habitat; however, the wetlands were drained decades ago. This project involves the installation of a small earthen berm, installing a water control structure, and excavating a shallow wetland scrape to create seasonal wetland habitat during shorebird and waterfowl migration. A major benefit to this project is the carbon sequestration abilities of the wetlands to combat climate change.

Wetland ecosystems have been severely degraded or effectively removed from the Illinois landscape since European settlement. Today, less than 10 percent of Illinois wetlands remain and those that do are often degraded from agricultural practices and altered hydrology. The reduction of wetland habitat has led to declines in wetland dependent species such as northern pintail, king rail, and black rail. This project will benefit those species along with many others including most species of migratory waterfowl and shorebirds in the area. This project is on the migration corridor for rare and endangered species such as whooping cranes and golden plovers.

The PFW program participated in topography surveys, design, and planning, coordinating the contractor, and construction management. The landowner and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners provided financial match for the construction and supplies. This partnership with the Wetlands Initiative also uses "Smart Wetland" technology and design techniques to enhance the ability of restored wetlands to improve water quality and nutrient reduction while also benefiting priority species.

## 2024 Program Activities

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- In FY 2024, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program will engage in voluntary conservation efforts with willing landowners to assist in execution of the America the Beautiful initiative, enhance biodiversity and help to conserve pollinators, work with Tribes and other underserved communities and combat global climate change and work with private landowners on finding natural solutions for carbon sequestration.
- At the requested FY 2024 funding level, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program will restore and enhance 50,500 wetland acres, 310,000 upland acres, 900 riparian miles, and 168 fish passage structures.

## Proposed Program Changes

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The 2024 budget request for Partners for Fish and Wildlife is \$79,717,000 and 271 FTE, a program change of +\$17,643,000 and +39 FTE from the FY 2023 Enacted.

**Partners for Fish and Wildlife Activities (+\$19,093,000/39 FTE)** –At the requested funding level, the Service will increase its ability to conduct collaborative conservation and utilize nature-based solutions to restore and enhance private lands habitat, protect biodiversity, and support ecosystem and community resilience. The proposed funding increase will result in an additional 12,000 wetland acres, 75,000 upland acres, 200 river miles, and 40 fish passage structures.

At least two million dollars of the increase will be dedicated to support ongoing big-game migration corridors work in 11 Western states. The program will continue supporting a \$500k cooperative agreement with NFWF and will retain the remainder of the funds to be distributed through an internal project identification proposal process. These accomplishments will advance voluntary conservation on private lands and support high priority DOI and Service efforts. These accomplishments will further the Administration’s America the Beautiful initiative and the goal of conserving 30 percent of the Nation’s lands and waters by 2030. The public-private partnerships forged through these agreements will enhance relationships and build trust with local communities.

A portion of this increase to the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program will be used to support conservation of culturally significant species and habitats. This focus will further enhance the participatory process with landowners, communities, and stakeholders that is the hallmark of the PFW program, focusing on where local people are highly dependent upon species and habitat with prominent functional roles in diet, materials, cultural identity, spiritual value, or recreational pursuits. As with the big-game migration corridors work, by focusing on these culturally significant species and habitats has a broader beneficial impact for the other species sharing the landscape.

**Nutria Eradication (-\$1,450,000/-0 FTE)** A reduction of funding will eliminate nutria eradication, control, and restoration efforts on private lands through the PFW program in California and the select Gulf Coast states. Strategic and targeted investments are being made with FY 2023 funds to combat the negative impacts nutria are having in those landscapes.

**Activity: Habitat Conservation**  
**Subactivity: Coastal Program**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change From 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Coastal Program	(\$000)	13,616	13,957	+446	0	+6,019	20,422	+6,465
	FTE	43	43	0	0	+6	49	+6

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for the Coastal Program**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Coastal Program Activities	+6,019	+6
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+6,019</b>	<b>+6</b>

**Program Overview**

The Coastal Program is a voluntary, collaborative, partnership-based program that provides technical and financial assistance for habitat conservation in coastal watersheds. The locally based field staff promote, identify, and support approaches that utilize nature-based solutions for conservation and restoration in an ecologically connected network of lands and waters. Coastal Program biologists assist project management and design, partnership development, grant writing, and implementing projects/programs including those from other granting agencies such as NFWF. Biologists work with diverse partners, including Federal, State and Tribal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private landowners, to improve and protect habitat on public and private lands. The Coastal Program uses a landscape approach to the conservation of Federal trust species. The Coastal Program conservation actions are guided by a five-year national strategic plan that incorporates the goals and priorities of our partners and stakeholders, which was updated in 2022 and covers fiscal years 2022-2026.

Coastal watersheds and estuaries are dynamic, diverse, and complex areas that support 45 percent of threatened and endangered species, 85 percent of waterfowl, and 68 percent of commercial fish. They are home to 40 percent of the U.S. population and produce 50 percent of the Nation’s economic output, resulting in intense development pressure. In addition to providing valuable fish and wildlife habitat, coastal ecosystems supply clean drinking water, mitigate the impact of severe storms, attenuate floods, and provide recreational opportunities to coastal communities.

The Coastal Program supports planning and conservation actions to respond to climate change stressors and implement projects that increase coastal ecosystem resilience, incorporate adaptation strategies, promote habitat connectivity, and conserve species of greatest conservation concern. Through its technical and financial assistance, the Coastal Program works with partners, including indigenous and underserved communities to deliver habitat conservation, in support of the America the Beautiful initiative. By focusing resources on addressing the impacts of climate change to marginalized coastal communities, the Coastal Program is supporting the environmental justice goal of America the Beautiful. This includes by co-administering the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program that helps States and U.S. territories protect and restore coastal wetlands also contributing to the initiative to conserve 30 percent of the Nation’s lands and waters by 2030.

The Coastal Program provides value to the American public by leveraging partners’ resources at a ratio of

5:1, multiplying the Service’s conservation impact. A USFWS report titled “Restoration Returns: The Contribution of Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and Coastal Program Restoration Projects to Local U.S. Economies (2017 Supplement)” found that every dollar the Coastal Program invested in a project creates \$10.33 in local economic returns. Coastal Program projects support the Administration’s goal of supporting local economies, with approximately 1,023 local jobs created from our projects.

This investment stimulates local economies by supporting jobs necessary to deliver habitat conservation, including environmental consultants, engineers, construction workers, and landscapers. These jobs also generate indirect economic activities that benefit local businesses.

### **PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Preserving Tribal Heritage and Salmon in Oregon**



*Young Chinook salmon gathering in a slough of the Rogue River, Oregon, a designated National Wild and Scenic River and identified as a high-priority region for habitat conservation by the Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast Salmon Recovery Plan. Photo credit: Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife; Photo file: Tribal heritage and salmon conservation - Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife*

Coastal Program staff worked with the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, the Bureau of Land Management, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Lower Rogue Watershed Council, and others to restore nearly five acres of estuarine habitat along the Lower Rogue River in southern Oregon.

This project supports important cultural traditions, quality of life, and economic well-being of the Siletz Indians as well as improves year-round habitat for the federally threatened coho and other Pacific salmon. The partners improved salmon habitat by adding large woody debris and native trees along sloughs and other areas of slow-moving water — perfect places for young salmon to grow. This habitat is also important to other wildlife, including peregrine falcons, river otters, black bears, and Northern red-legged frogs. More than a half million visitors a year come to the Rogue River for outdoor recreation, including white water rafting, camping, hiking, fishing, and wildlife viewing.

**PROJECT HIGHLIGHT:****Building Coastal Resiliency and Enhancing Recreational Opportunities in Texas**

The Coastal Program works with diverse communities to build resilient coasts that benefit people and wildlife. For example, staff worked with the Galveston Bay Foundation and The Nature Conservancy's Texas City Prairie Preserve to restore 110 acres of wetlands along Dollar Bay, in Galveston, Texas. Located in an identified disadvantaged community, the project adds to a network of protected natural spaces and restores intertidal marshes. The project increased coastal resiliency, improves water quality, and attenuates coastal erosion and flooding. The restored habitats also benefit a suite of Federal trust species, including interjurisdictional fish and migratory birds. The success of this project led a private landowner to sell 100 acres to the Galveston Bay Foundation to permanently protect wetlands adjacent to the restoration and the protected lands were later transferred to Texas City.



*Volunteers planting emergent vegetation in the intertidal marsh.*



*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Photo*

**2024 Program Activities**

- In FY 2024, the Coastal Program will continue to focus on implementing DOI priorities in collaboration with State, Tribal, coastal communities, and private landowners, building on program success by improving the resiliency of coastal communities to the impacts of climate change, enhancing coastal habitat connectivity, enhancing ecosystem resiliency, conserving Federal trust species and pollinators, protecting biodiversity, and supporting the America the Beautiful Initiative by investing in underserved communities and supporting nature-based infrastructure.
- The Coastal Program will follow its five-year national strategic plan. Under this investment plan, the 2024 increase will build capacity of the regional programs, which will include additional benefits to underserved and indigenous communities. This funding will enable the regions to deliver a level of service necessary to address the highest conservation priorities and accomplish the goals identified in their strategic implementation plans.
- At the requested FY 2024 funding level, the Coastal Program will restore or protect approximately 49 miles of stream/shoreline, 14,300 wetland acres, 24,700 upland acres, and remove 36 fish passage barriers.

**Proposed Program Changes**

The 2024 budget request for the Coastal Program is \$20,422,000 and 54 FTE, a program change of +\$6,019,000 and + 6 FTE from the FY 2023 Enacted.

**Coastal Program Activities (+\$6,019,000/+6 FTE)** –The request provides additional capacity to complete conservation projects and improve ecosystem health, biodiversity and resilience to climate change impacts and benefit communities of fish, wildlife, plants, and people. For example, restoring coastal wetlands and watersheds improves ecosystem health for coastal dependent birds and fish and reduces the risk of floods in at-risk coastal communities; and installing living shorelines reduces coastal erosion and builds oyster reefs and salt marsh, which support culturally significant species, sustainable aquaculture, recreation, and commercial fisheries. These projects contribute to the Administration’s America the Beautiful initiative. At the requested funding level, the Service will engage more historically underserved communities and implement projects that provide socio-economic benefits as well as environmental benefits. The increase will restore and enhance an additional 4,500 wetland acres, 7,800 upland acres, 15 riparian miles, and 11 fish passage structures benefitting fish, wildlife, their habitats, and the people that depend on them.

# National Wildlife Refuge System



# National Wildlife Refuge System

## Activity: National Wildlife Refuge System

Request Component	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change From 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Wildlife and Habitat Management	(\$000) 249,517 FTE 1,201	260,529 1,272	+10,149 0	-2,835 -11	+23,145 +38	290,988 +1,299	+30,459 +27
Refuge Visitor Services	(\$000) 77,237 FTE 480	80,859 506	+3,584 0	0 0	+16,668 +65	101,111 +571	+20,252 +65
Refuge Law Enforcement	(\$000) 41,915 FTE 214	46,272 240	+2,127 0	0 0	+4,000 +6	52,399 +246	+6,127 +6
Conservation Planning	(\$000) 2,594 FTE 16	3,684 21	+137 0	0 0	+6,000 +15	9,821 +36	+6,137 +15
<b>Refuge Operations</b>	(\$000) <b>371,263</b> FTE <b>1,911</b>	<b>391,344</b> <b>2,039</b>	<b>+16,088</b> <b>+0</b>	<b>0</b> <b>0</b>	<b>+63,066</b> <b>+113</b>	<b>454,410</b> <b>+2,152</b>	<b>+63,066</b> <b>+113</b>
Refuge Maintenance	(\$000) 147,498 FTE 523	150,211 527	+3,288 0	0 0	+17,049 +55	170,548 +582	+20,337 +55
<b>Total, National Wildlife Refuge System</b>	(\$000) <b>518,761</b> FTE <b>2,434</b>	<b>541,555</b> <b>2,566</b>	<b>+19,285</b> <b>0</b>	<b>-2,835</b> <b>-11</b>	<b>+66,862</b> <b>+184</b>	<b>624,867</b> <b>+2,734</b>	<b>+83,312</b> <b>+173</b>

### Summary of 2024 Program Changes and Internal Transfers for National Wildlife Refuge System

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Wildlife and Habitat Management Activities	+24,870	+73
Refuge Visitor Services Activities	+11,668	+50
Maintenance Support	+10,442	+55
Annual Maintenance	+7,895	+0
Refuge Planning	+6,137	+15
Refuge Law Enforcement Activities	+6,127	+6
Urban Wildlife Conservation Programs	+5,500	+15
Tribal Co-stewardship	+1,500	+3
Deferred Maintenance	+2,000	+0
Inventory and Monitoring	+1,000	+3
FWS Subsistence In-Season Management	+525	+3
FWS Subsistence RIT Program	+500	+3
Nutria Eradication	-1,250	-12
Invasive Species	-3,500	-35
Refuge Water Efficiency (Quivira)	-500	+0
Youth & Careers in Nature	-500	+0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+66,862</b>	<b>+184</b>
Internal Transfer to Operation of Indian Programs – Office of Subsistence Management Activities	-2,835	-11
<b>Total Changes</b>	<b>+64,027</b>	<b>+173</b>

## **Program Mission**

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The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and restoration of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

## **Program Elements**

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The National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System) embodies our Nation's commitment to conserving wildlife populations and biodiversity for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans. The Refuge System spans more than 850 million acres of lands and waters and includes 568 national wildlife refuges, 38 wetland management districts, 49 coordination areas, seven National Monuments, and 760 million acres in Marine National Monuments.

The Refuge System protects forests, prairies, desert, coral reefs, tundra, and wetlands in all 50 States and five U.S. territories as well as providing important habitat for a range of wildlife both rare and abundant. Amid unprecedented human demands on the environment and other stressors such as drought, disease, and climate change, the Refuge System manages to ensure the integrity and health of the Nation's fish and wildlife. Through careful long-term planning with public involvement, managers deploy a variety of wildlife conservation tools, including habitat restoration, land acquisition, infrastructure maintenance, prescribed fire, visitor services and outreach, emergency management, wilderness preservation, and law enforcement.

With refuge units in every ecosystem and paired with robust partnership programs, the Refuge System has the potential to facilitate conservation in all 50 States, including vast expanses of coastal and marine resources. These characteristics make the Refuge System critical to the America the Beautiful initiative and achieving the Administration's goal of conserving at least 30 percent of the Nation's lands and waters by 2030.

The Refuge System delivers outdoor recreational, ecological, and economic benefits to local communities of all sizes, while striving to address racial inequality in wildlife conservation and outdoor recreation. In FY 2022, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Refuge System hosted a record breaking 67 million visits to national wildlife refuges, an increase of 46.6% since FY 2011. According to the Banking on Nature 2017 report, the economic impact on local communities from recreation visits totaled \$3.2 billion. The Refuge System also generates \$1.1 billion in job income and over 41,000 jobs nationally. Through the Refuge System groundbreaking Urban Wildlife Conservation Program, the Refuge System is targeting investments to underserved communities and addressing racial inequalities in recreational access and conservation participation.

The Refuge System is responding to the President's Executive Order 14008, "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad," by conserving migratory birds, protecting endangered species, restoring and managing habitats, combatting invasive species, and preparing for and responding to natural and human-caused emergencies. The Refuge System contributes to the improvement of air and water quality, the reduction of soil erosion, improvement of soil health and ground water retention. Additionally, refuges reduce impacts from hurricanes on coastal communities, sequester carbon, and store excess water during storms and spring snow melts.

Numerous laws, treaties, and policies recognize the role that the Refuge System has in honoring our Trust Responsibilities to Tribal Nations. Most recently, the Biden Administration reaffirmed this commitment in a joint Secretarial Order (SO 3403) entitled Fulfilling the Trust Responsibility to Indian Tribes in the Stewardship of Federal Lands and Waters. SO 3403 directs agencies to manage Federal lands and waters in a manner that seeks to protect the treaty, religious, subsistence, and cultural interests of federally recognized Tribes (Tribes), including the Native Hawaiian Community and where authorizations include non-federally recognized Tribes, consistent with the nation-to-nation relationships that exist between the United States and Federally recognized Tribes. The Service Director's Order 227 (DO 227) steps down the requirements of SO 3403 to guide our organization as it relates to the Service's long-standing Trust Responsibilities to Tribes. To honor our obligations

to Tribal Nations, Refuge System leadership is committed to moving beyond the compliance/regulatory relationship and moving toward proactive co-stewardship and incorporating tribal priorities into the Refuge System. By acknowledging the sovereign rights and responsibilities of Tribes, and working together, government-to-government, the Refuge System is committed to an effort to redefine the Refuge System's approach to proactive and strategic collaboration with Tribes rooted in cultural awareness and respect. These relationships will lead to better conservation, management, and restoration of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations.

### **Emergency Management & Physical Security**

The Service's Office of Emergency Management and Physical Security program (OEMPS) provides expertise and leadership for the Service's emergency management and physical security responsibilities nationwide. The Emergency Management program coordinates the Service's response to natural and human-caused emergencies such as hurricanes, wildlife disease outbreaks, unusual mortality events, pandemics, and hazardous chemical spills. The Physical Security program averts unauthorized access to the Service's employees, property, and facilities.

The OEMPS plays a key role in integrating and synchronizing efforts to address preparedness and security for the Service. The Refuge System provide oversight, guidance, expertise, and leadership through the integration of our programs and participate in activities as described in the National Response Framework. Through this effort, the Service takes measures to prevent, protect against, prepare for, mitigate the effects of, respond to, and recover from all hazards that may affect any part of the Service, the species, and habitats managed, and the people and communities served.

### **Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders**

The National Wildlife Refuge System is implemented under the following authorities:

- *Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA)* (P.L. 117-169). This law represents the largest investment in addressing climate change through large national investments in environmental programs along with other social and infrastructural programs. It included funding for recovery planning and implementation along with environmental review funding for DOI agencies.
- *The Fish and Wildlife Act* (16 U.S.C. 742a-742j) establishes a comprehensive national fish and wildlife policy and authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to take steps required for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fisheries resources and wildlife resources through research, acquisition of refuge lands, development of existing facilities, and other means.
- *The Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act* (16 U.S.C. 661-666e) directs the Service to investigate and report on proposed Federal actions that affect any stream or other body of water, and to provide recommendations to minimize impacts on fish and wildlife resources.
- *The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act* (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee) provides authority, guidelines, and directives for the Service in administering the lands and waters of the National Wildlife Refuge System, including establishing six wildlife-dependent recreation activities as priority uses.
- *The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act* (P.L. 105-57) spells out wildlife conservation as the fundamental mission of the Refuge System, requires comprehensive conservation planning to guide management of the Refuge System, directs involvement of private citizens in land management decisions, and provides that compatible wildlife-dependent recreation is a legitimate and appropriate use that should receive priority in refuge planning and management.
- *The National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer Improvement Act* (P.L. 111-357) authorizes cooperative agreements with nonprofit partner organizations, academic institutions, or State and local governments to construct, operate, maintain, or improve refuge facilities and services, and promotes volunteer, outreach, and education programs.

- *The Refuge Recreation Act* (16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4) authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to administer refuges, hatcheries, and other conservation areas for recreational use, when such uses do not interfere with the area's primary purposes.
- *The National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act* (P.L. 106-408) reinforces National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act provisions to raise public understanding and appreciation for the Refuge System.
- *The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 410hh-3233, 43 U.S.C. 1602-1784) provides for the designation and conservation of certain public lands in Alaska, including units of the Refuge System, and for the continuing subsistence needs of Alaska Natives.
- *The Migratory Bird Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 715-715d, 715e, 715f-715r) authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to conduct investigations and publish documents related to North American birds and establishes a Migratory Bird Conservation Commission to approve areas recommended by the Secretary for acquisition.
- *The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act* (16 U.S.C. 718a-718k) requires waterfowl hunters 16 years of age or older to possess a valid Federal Duck Stamp.
- *The Migratory Bird Treaty Act* (16 U.S.C. 703-712) establishes Federal responsibility for protecting and managing migratory birds.
- *The Wilderness Act* (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136) establishes a National Wilderness Preservation System for the permanent good of the whole people.
- *The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006* (P.L. 109-295, title VI) mandates the development of both the National Preparedness Goal and National Preparedness System.
- *The Pandemic and All Hazards Preparedness Act of 2006* (P.L. 109 - 417) improves the Nation's public health and medical preparedness and response capabilities for emergencies, whether deliberate, accidental, or natural.
- *The Homeland Security Act of 2002* (P.L. 107-296, title V) created the Department of Homeland Security. Title V addresses the response time and preparedness of responders, for terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies. In addition, it establishes standards, joint exercises, and trainings.
- *The Presidential Policy Directive-40* (PPD-40) (July 15, 2016), National Continuity Policy, prescribes continuity requirements for all Federal Executive Branch Departments and Agencies to ensure a comprehensive and integrated national continuity program that will enhance the credibility of our national security posture and enable a more rapid and effective response to and recovery from a national emergency.
- *The Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5* (Feb. 28, 2003) enhances the Nation's ability to manage domestic incidents by establishing a single, comprehensive National Incident Management System.
- *The Department of the Interior Departmental Manual Part 900 - Emergency Management Program* outlines policy, functions, and responsibilities for emergency management and homeland and national security for all bureaus and offices within the Department.
- *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service policies* (090 FW 1, 090 FW 2, 32 FW 1) establish responsibilities for continuity of operations, emergency management, and physical security within the Service.

**Activity: National Wildlife Refuge System**  
**Subactivity: Wildlife and Habitat Management**

Program Element	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change From 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Wildlife and Habitat Management (\$000)	249,517	260,529	+10,149	-2,835	+23,145	290,988	+30,459
FTE	1,201	1,272	0	-11	+38	1,299	+27

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes and Internal Transfers for Wildlife and Habitat Management**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Wildlife and Habitat Management	+24,870	+73
Tribal Co-stewardship	+1,500	+3
Inventory and Monitoring	+1,000	+3
FWS Subsistence In-Season Management	+525	+3
FWS Subsistence RIT Program	+500	+3
Refuge Water Efficiency (Quivira)	-500	+0
Nutria Eradication	-1,250	-12
Invasive Species	-3,500	-35
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+23,145</b>	<b>+38</b>
Internal Transfer to Operation of Indian Programs – Office of Subsistence Management Activities	-2,835	-11
<b>Total Changes</b>	<b>+20,310</b>	<b>+27</b>

**Program Overview**

Through its wide-ranging wildlife and habitat management and partnership activities, the Refuge System facilitates conservation on millions of acres across the United States and its territories. Wildlife and Habitat Management includes a host of scientifically sound management tools, including water management, habitat management and restoration, wilderness character monitoring, and invasive species prevention, control, and eradication. These tools, used often in collaboration with stakeholders, are all aimed at ensuring a balanced conservation approach to benefit both wildlife and people for a climate resilient American future.

**General Wildlife and Habitat Management**

The Wildlife and Habitat Management subactivity funds refuge operations, including monitoring plant and animal populations; restoring wetland, forest, grassland and marine habitats; managing habitats through manipulation of water levels, prescribed burning, haying, grazing, timber harvest, and planting vegetation; controlling invasive species; monitoring air quality; investigating and cleaning up contaminants; controlling wildlife disease outbreaks; assessing water quality and quantity; and addressing the human dimensions of wildlife management. These activities are vital for the Refuge System to achieve its mission at local, landscape and national levels.

**Inventory and Monitoring**

To successfully deliver durable and effective conservation outcomes in a changing environment, it is imperative that the Refuge System understand how, and at what rate, the geophysical, biological, and human environments are changing. It is equally critical that the Refuge System monitors the effects of management interventions to inform adjustments to our strategies and to maximize the efficiency of appropriated resources. The Refuge System accomplishes this through an iterative process of adaptive management. Inventory and monitoring activities of wildlife populations and both the natural and human environments inform conservation planning activities that identify and prioritize our Service management interventions. Monitoring and evaluation provide transparent results of those interventions which subsequently inform planning activities in an iterative cycle. Thus, the Service maximizes efficiency in achieving conservation outcomes for priority resources. This approach is transparent and science-driven, it is also labor intensive, specifically for the planning and monitoring

responsibilities. It relies on an inter-disciplinary team who conduct inventory and monitoring activities of our nation's biological resources, ecological processes, physical environment, and human preferences, behaviors, and tolerances. These factors combine to influence conservation approaches and management outcomes throughout the Refuge System. The inventory and monitoring team is coordinated by the Natural Resource Program Center to ensure that collected data are consistent and relevant at multiple scales, leverage the activities of the Refuge System partners, and that data analysis and storage achieve the highest scientific standards.

In addition to leading collection of relevant data in accordance with the highest scientific standards, the Inventory and Monitoring program of the National Wildlife Refuge System also provides for data curation services and systems to ensure preservation of collected data. Integrated systems ensure both preservation and access to information for Service employees, partners, academia, and the public.

### **Wildlife Health**

Increased recognition that wildlife health, environmental health and human health are inextricably linked has evolved into a concept called One Health. The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic brought increased awareness and attention to disease detection and containment. The same principals of successful disease management apply equally to human disease, wildlife disease and domestic animal disease: early detection and rapid response to limit exposure and prevent geographic spread. To be successful with this strategy, systematic monitoring, especially in free-ranging wildlife, is critical for detecting emerging pathogens and implementing a reasonable response. The Refuge System's Wildlife Health office provides national leadership within the Service, across DOI and beyond for coordinated disease monitoring, detection, and response. The Refuge System directed the strategic investment of the one-time funding from the America's Rescue Plan Act (\$10 million in FY 2021) to implement the Wildlife Health Initiative that was developed through the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) with Federal, State, and Tribal partners. Funding was provided to the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society and the AFWA Regional Associations to coordinate cross-jurisdictional monitoring, detection, and response to wildlife disease, including those that may threaten livestock, pets, and humans.

The Wildlife Health office also monitors wild bison health on five National Wildlife Refuges that provide healthy, wild bison for the conservation of the species and for Tribal ecological and cultural restoration of bison. In 2022, the Refuge system provided 253 healthy, wild bison to seven different Tribes contributing to ecological and cultural restoration, including food security.

### **Invasive Species Management**

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, invasive species and habitat loss are the two greatest threats to the federally listed threatened and endangered species in the Refuge System and overall biodiversity throughout the United States. Invasive species negatively impact native species through habitat modification, competition, predation, herbivory, pathogenic vectors, and by hybridizing with natives. They are one of the most serious threats to native plants, fish, and wildlife populations. Management activities are critical to preventing the introduction, establishment and spread of invasive species, and controlling or eradicating invasive species where they are present. Funds are used to inventory, monitor, and treat invasive species on refuge lands to protect and restore native ecosystems. Treatment methods can include mechanical removal, pesticide applications, prescribed burns, flooding, or biological controls.

The Refuge System works with partners to implement invasive species mitigation and restoration projects by using invasives strike teams for early detection and rapid response (EDRR). EDRR aims to limit the establishment or range of invasive species and prevent the need for more costly ongoing treatments often required once invasive species populations are established. The Refuge System has 19 strike teams, with at least one team in each Service Region.

The Refuge System allocates \$1 million of Refuge System invasive species funding competitively to one refuge each year to fund complete eradication or 99% maximum control of one or more invasive species. Since its inception, the Large Invasive Species Allocation has funded successful projects that include rat eradication at

Palmyra Atoll and Desecheo NWR; Spartina eradication and control at Humboldt Bay NWR and San Francisco Bay NWR; and yellow crazy ant eradication on Johnson Atoll. Native biodiversity is now thriving at these sites. The success of this program has become a model for potential project funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.



*Hundreds of frigate birds and boobies fly over a Crazy Ant Strike Team crew of volunteers at Johnston Atoll NWR. Image USFWS*

The arrival and rapid spread of yellow crazy ants on Johnston Island prior to their discovery in 2010 effectively precluded all Red-tailed Tropicbird nesting in the 70-acre infestation area. Yellow crazy ants were affecting seabird species in multiple ways, including by spraying formic acid on chicks and adults causing blindness, injury, and death. After combating yellow crazy ants for nearly a decade, a Service Strike Team has successfully eradicated the notorious invaders at Johnston Atoll NWR.

### **Marine National Monuments**

The Service's Refuge System protects and manages more marine area than any other agency in the world with five Marine National Monuments which encompass nearly 760 million acres of marine area, comprising 89% of the total land and water under Service jurisdiction. By comparison, all other federal terrestrial lands are approximately 650 million acres. The Service also has 182 coastal National Wildlife Refuges, including the Great Lakes, with 153 having jurisdiction in the marine environment. These refuges and monuments protect nearly every type of coastal and marine ecosystem including salt marshes, mangroves, corals, rocky shores, deep sea, Arctic, hydrothermal vents, and more.

Marine National Monuments are among the most unspoiled ecosystems under U.S. purview and are some of our Nation's last frontiers for wildlife conservation and scientific exploration. Spanning an area larger than the Continental United States, the Marine National Monuments represent the greatest opportunity for the Service to sustain marine biodiversity and environmental health by providing vital habitat for sea turtles, sharks, and coral reefs, along with many other threatened, endangered, and unknown species. The Monuments are integral to the America the Beautiful initiative, protecting 72 percent of the nation's coral reefs and comprising approximately 25 percent of the total U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone.

Funds appropriated for Marine National Monuments provide for basic regional stewardship of these tremendous marine resources, but the Service is unable to fully meet the challenges and opportunities facing marine ecosystems today. These ecosystems are subject to significant threats including climate change, ocean

acidification, marine debris, coral bleaching, harmful algal blooms, and diminishing fish stocks that people and communities depend on. These threats will continue to become more severe and require an increased response from the Service.

The Service's Marine Program can serve as a catalyst to engage internal and external partners to coordinate conservation planning and delivery for the benefit of marine resources, including Marine National Monuments, and advance mutual goals for climate, environmental justice, and a sustainable ocean economy.

The Service can fulfill a vision to be a leader that engages partners, stakeholders, and indigenous communities - harnessing the collective to advise and leverage significant resources for enhancing Marine conservation. The Service can use our place-based programs to educate and inspire visitors to become champions and stewards of the marine environment. The Service is a world-class leader in conservation management, science, and stewardship, and expanding our marine resource management and science efforts will ensure these marine resources remain intact and healthy for generations to come.



*The Marine National Monuments protect vast coral reefs that provide ecosystem services and benefits for the entire world.  
Image USFWS/Ian Shive*

### **Alaska Subsistence Management Program**

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Subsistence in Alaska 2017 Update<sup>1</sup> estimated that 123,000 people in 264 communities in rural Alaska are entitled to subsistence fishing, hunting, and trapping on Federal lands. The average subsistence harvest in Alaska is approximately 276 pounds of food per person, or 34 million pounds of food per year. The Alaska Fisheries Subsistence Management Program manages fish and wildlife for subsistence uses on Federal public lands and waters in Alaska. The program provides a direct benefit to rural subsistence users on more than 237 million acres of Federal lands encompassing 66 percent of Alaska's land area and 52 percent of Alaska's rivers and lakes.

The budget proposes to transfer management of the Office of Subsistence Management to the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in response to feedback received through a series of Departmental Tribal consultations and listening sessions focused on the Federal subsistence management program. Since 1999, the Office of Subsistence Management, funded through FWS, has implemented an annual regulatory program and a fishery monitoring program, supported 10 regional advisory councils, and has provided administrative and technical support to five Federal agencies and the Federal Subsistence Board.

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<sup>1</sup> [subsistence\\_update\\_2017.pdf \(alaska.gov\)](#)

The FWS subsistence management program has operated and will continue to operate with strong stakeholder participation by rural residents and the State of Alaska. In addition to transferring the function of the Office of Subsistence Management, the budget also supports additional funding within the Service to strengthen in-season resource management capacity in on-going Refuges programs, which remain core Service responsibilities once a proposed transfer is completed. This includes ongoing resource management work on the Yukon River, Cook Inlet and SW Bristol Bay, Chignik, Alaska Peninsula, and Aleutian Islands, and the Kuskokwim River, Kodiak, and other Refuges. The need to strengthen capacity in these areas to serve the rural subsistence users is compounded by new and emerging conservation and management concerns, as well as dramatic changes in the productivity of salmon ecosystems throughout Alaska. This includes implementation of legislated subsistence fish and wildlife management responsibilities in coordination and communication with Tribes, subsistence users, State of Alaska, and other agencies.

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### 2024 Program Activities

The 2024 funding level will:

- Enable the Refuge System to recruit and retain a talented workforce that is reflective of the diverse communities we serve with emphasis on racial equity and underserved communities. We will offer development and training opportunities to help sustain local economies through employment and partnership. We will protect our workforce and our volunteers through appropriate health and safety programs that promote safe working conditions. We will embrace fully climate change adaptation and resilience goals to manage public lands for resilient landscapes while sequestering carbon and reducing greenhouse gas emissions through clean energy and green infrastructure.
- Enable the Service to focus on wildlife and habitat management activities in support of Secretarial priorities, including conservation stewardship, utilizing natural resources, expanding access for outdoor recreation, and using science to identify best practices to manage land and water resources. This includes using traditional approaches, such as water level manipulation, prescriptive grazing, and selective timber harvesting, to achieve desired habitat conditions for fish and wildlife. Healthy habitats are vital to ensure sustainable wildlife populations, whether they are imperiled or game species. The Service expects to actively manage more than 3 million acres of habitat.

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### Proposed Program Changes and Internal Transfers

The 2024 budget request for Wildlife and Habitat Management is \$290,988,000 and 1,299 FTEs, a net change of program changes and internal transfers of +\$20,310,000 and +27 FTEs from the 2023 Enacted.

**Wildlife and Habitat Management Activities (+\$24,870,000/ +73 FTE)**— The request will support implementation of the America the Beautiful initiative by mobilizing diverse American scientific and professional talent in Wildlife and Habitat Management with the addition of 73 FTEs that will deliver the Refuge System mission. The mission of the Refuge System can only be met when the capacity exists to manage habitat for wildlife and fish, invite and engage visitors, and build conservation partnerships. Providing an effective level of staffing is integral to the success of the Service, the Refuge System, and the conservation of America's lands and waters. Over the past ten years, the National Wildlife Refuge System full-time-equivalent staffing has decreased by nearly 25 percent. These reductions have occurred as the number of units in the Refuge System grew, the Refuge System was entrusted to manage more than 759 million acres of submerged lands and waters across five Marine National Monuments and over 6 million acres opened or expanded for hunting and fishing. The Refuge System will support E.O. 14005, Ensuring the Future is Made in All of America by All of America's Workers and E.O. 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, by responding to the climate crisis by managing crucial habitat using landscape conservation approaches.

The mission of the Refuge System is fulfilled, in part, by building resiliency for species and the habitats they depend upon. The greatest challenge the Refuge System currently has is to do this in the face of a rapidly changing climate. Wildlife Refuges are managed in a continuous iterative adaptive management cycle (planning, design, implementation of actions, and monitoring the effectiveness of those actions) to achieve specific outcomes that improve resiliency and sustainability. The Refuge System priority is to ensure that our

conservation strategies complement and build on those of our partners while fulfilling the Service's stewardship responsibilities. However, this science-driven work requires significant investment in our capacity to carry out planning, design, and monitoring. Additional funds will be used to increase staff with expertise in spatial ecology, biology, botany, and hydrology throughout the organization to help integrate Service lands into large landscape conservation priorities.

America the Beautiful - The Refuge System will fill critical vacancies in Wildlife and Habitat Management that support scientific studies, habitat restoration and management, landscape conservation, and climate resiliency. Recruitment will focus on entry level positions to attract the next generation workforce to career opportunities in conservation and civil service. The Refuge System is dedicated to recruiting a workforce that reflects the communities the Refuge System serve through strong relationships with youth and veteran organizations and a goal to rebuild our capacity with team members of racial, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity.

Wildlife Disease Prevention - The Service has limited capacity to proactively manage wildlife disease risks that pose threats to not only wildlife but domestic animals and humans as well. Additional funding will be used to conduct surveillance and monitoring activities on and around wildlife refuges, as well as leverage those of other Federal agencies, States, Tribes, and non-governmental organizations. These activities are a vital part of creating a national, cross jurisdictional network that will enhance timely detection and diagnosis of, as well as effective response to, disease outbreaks. In addition to detection, diagnosis, and response, preparation and planning must be collaborative across the broader wildlife health partnership. This funding will allow staff to complete disease contingency planning to ensure that Refuge System efforts are done in coordination with and contribute to a broader landscape-level strategy. Implementing a coordinated response will maximize the chances of containing a disease outbreak and limiting impacts on both the wildlife and human populations.

The Service co-chairs the Department of the Interior's One Health Group that works toward a more proactive approach on wildlife, human and environmental health issues. One Health is multi-disciplinary approach that operates on the idea that the health of wildlife, domestic animals, and human health are inextricably linked and confronting all will help us overcome some of the greatest infectious disease challenges of our generation. Most international, Federal, and State animal and human health agencies recognize the importance of One Health and have designated resources and personnel towards this comprehensive approach to health and environmental problems improving the country's ability to prevent the next global pandemic. To implement a proactive One Health approach, the Refuge System will invest in more disease prevention and inter-agency coordination. Additional funds will be used to hire wildlife veterinarians, wildlife health experts, biologists, technicians, and conservation social scientists necessary to move the program towards a more proactive approach. Increased capacity will support intra-agency coordination to ensure the Service is addressing emergent infectious diseases collaboratively.

Pollinator Conservation - North America faces a pollinator crisis that impacts our natural ecosystems, our agricultural security, and the Nation's economy. Habitat loss and degradation, expansive pesticide use, and climate-driven impacts are causing increasing vulnerabilities and declining resiliency. Iconic species, like monarch butterfly and American bumblebee, have captured the public's attention. The list of at-risk pollinator species continues to grow. By mobilizing capacity, expertise, and partnerships, the Service will prioritize pollinator conservation to stabilize populations and ensure the sustained ecosystem and economic services that they provide. Results will benefit a broad array of trust resources, most notably declining migratory birds, provide benefits to a variety of sectors of society (including underrepresented communities), and contribute to climate change resiliency. The Refuge System will work in concert with partners and across Service programs to advance conservation of pollinators by: (1) advancing pollinator science including species range and distribution, population status and trends, and threats assessments, (2) nurturing strategic partnerships including expanding collaboration with States and Tribes,

(3) conducting outreach and engagement that targets conservation agencies, private industry, and the public and (4) supporting the Service's Pollinator Center in implementing the Federal Pollinator Strategy.

**Tribal Co-stewardship (+\$1,500,000/ +3 FTE)**—The Service has a unique role and obligation to manage lands within the NWRS to achieve mission-related wildlife conservation while protecting the treaty, religious, subsistence, and cultural interests of Tribes. Funding will be used to improve relationships that respect the sovereignty of the Tribes and more deeply commit to engagement processes that make space for the priorities of both the Tribes and the mission of the Service through enhanced co-stewardship activities. Funding will be used to support coordinated planning and engagement across the NWRS, including the establishment of a National Coordinator position dedicated to this purpose. Additional funding will also support opportunities to strengthen existing co-stewardship agreements and establish new partnerships with Tribes and model future efforts.

**FWS Subsistence In-Season Management (+\$525,000/ +3FTE)**— Additional resources will support implementation of legislated subsistence fish and wildlife management responsibilities in coordination and communication with Tribes, subsistence users, State of Alaska, and other agencies.

**Alaska Subsistence - Refuge Information Technician (RIT) Program (+\$500,000/ +3 FTE)**—Additional resources will be used to support the more RIT positions. These positions are the FWS Alaska Region's on-the-ground Alaska Native liaisons who live and work in their home communities and support Tribal engagement and relationships in villages across the State, including supporting outreach for the Office of Subsistence Management. These RITs are a link between the people of the villages, Refuge and other Service managers within the FWS, and other governmental agencies, and increase the trust, improve the communication, and promote a productive relationship between the Service and its Alaska Native village stakeholders.

**Nutria Eradication (-\$1,250,000/ -12 FTE)**— This reduction funds nutria eradication at \$1.75 million in FY 2024. This funding level is appropriate and balances other management priorities across the Refuge system with nutria management goals and managing the impacts of nutria on native biodiversity, including threatened and endangered species. In 2024, the Service has determined to treat targeted populations in Louisiana and California while continuing monitoring in the Chesapeake Bay.

**Invasive Species (-\$3,500,000/ -35 FTE)**— The funding level requested will support 19 invasive species strike teams, with at least one in each FWS region. This level will continue to support invasive species management goals through prevention, early detection, and rapid response (EDRR). These EDRR actions are the most cost-effective means to prevent invasive species from reaching our refuge lands and waters and impact native biodiversity, including threatened and endangered species.

**Inventory and Monitoring (+\$1,000,000/ +3 FTE)**— Additional investments in monitoring of priority resources on Refuge lands are needed to inform planning efforts and evaluate the effectiveness of management interventions, especially in a rapidly changing human and climactic environment. A robust Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) program provides a scientifically defensible and transparent rationale for the expenditure of public funds through management activities. By monitoring the impacts of resource management actions, the Refuge System can better target management activities for desired outcomes and inform effective strategies on changing landscapes.

Climate change poses an existential threat to the world. Impacts are seen from rural areas to urban centers. In addition, because of climate change, threats to national security and major weather changes are increasing daily. An emerging framework for natural resource management referred to as RAD (Resist, Accept, or Direct) calls on land managers to make conscious decisions about whether management interventions should attempt to resist, accept, or direct the impacts of climate change. The intent is to make informed and transparent decisions to maximize the effectiveness and the durability of conservation investments.

Additional funding will be used to build capacity and provide resources to develop predictive models and decision support tools to inform climate adaptation strategies across the landscape. Establishing this expertise will ensure that conservation investments are made using the best available science and that those investments will both accomplish what they are intended to accomplish and persist on the landscape for a period that would provide a wise return on investment of public resources.

**Refuge Water Efficiency (Quivira) (-\$500,000/ 0 FTE)** – The budget does not request funding for this program in FY 2024. Funding will be invested in other priorities for the Refuge System.

**Transfer of the Office of Subsistence Management to the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs (-\$2,835,000/ -11 FTE)** – The Department is proposing to transfer management of the Office of Subsistence Management to the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in response to feedback received from Alaska Native communities and people through a series of Departmental Tribal consultations and listening sessions focused on the Federal subsistence management program.

**Activity: National Wildlife Refuge System**

**Subactivity: Refuge Visitor Services**

Program Element	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change From 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Refuge Visitor Services (\$000)	77,237	80,859	+3,584	0	+16,668	101,111	+20,252
FTE	480	506	0	0	+65	+571	+65

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Refuge Visitor Services**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Refuge Visitor Services Activities	+11,668	+50
Youth and Careers in Nature	-500	0
Urban Wildlife Conservation Programs	+5,500	+15
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+20,252</b>	<b>+65</b>

**Program Overview**

Wildlife refuges drew a record-breaking 67 million visits to national wildlife refuges in FY 2022. Now that the American public has discovered these nearby publiclands during the COVID-19 pandemic, visitation continues to grow. The Service has responded by seeking for ways to ensure resilient recreation opportunities while balancing the needs of providing habitat for fish and wildlife.

While some visitors take part in recreation such as hunting and fishing, many more enjoy walking, paddling, wildlife viewing or nature photography. In support of the Administration’s priorities and to advance racial equity, the Refuge System is investing in improving the visitor experience by modernizing public use infrastructure, improving equitable access, increasing recreational opportunities, and offering education, training and outdoor experiences that foster long-term connections with new audiences. These activities offer visitors a chance to unplug from the stresses of modern life and reconnect with their natural surroundings. The Refuge System is committed to enhancing access to recreation by removing economic, physical, and programmatic barriers.



*A kayaker moves through the water at Havasu National Wildlife Refuge near Needles, CA. Image USFWS/Ian Shive*

As a designated High Impact Service Provider by the Office of Management and Budget, the Service’s Refuge System is responsible for maintaining a high level of customer satisfaction and community engagement in its delivery of services to socially and racially diverse communities across the country. To accomplish this, and support of the President’s Management Agenda to deliver excellent, equitable and secure Federal services and customer experience, the Service welcomes, and orients visitors through in-person and on-line trip planning tools, manages a variety of recreation opportunities, protects cultural resources, and creates and delivers engaging interpretive and education programming in-person and virtually to people of all ages and backgrounds.



*Refuge Manager Lamar Gore interacts with a visitor at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, Philadelphia, PA. Image USFWS/Ian Shive.*

The Refuge System also supports many Service-wide community engagement programs including a robust volunteer program, youth and veterans’ programs, Friends groups, and the Urban Wildlife Conservation

Program (UWCP). Through these programs, the Refuge System strives to ensure safe, welcoming experiences for everyone and create lasting relationships to meet community needs.

### **Youth and Careers in Nature**

The Refuge System youth programs are vital to supporting the Administration's goals of building an outdoor economy by developing youth corps programs that introduce a new generation of Americans to conservation and climate resiliency work and careers in nature and science. From high school aged Youth Conservation Corps summer work programs to temporary student employment (Pathways) positions, youth gain critical real-world job experiences, mentorship, and mobility across the Refuge System.

The Service builds upon existing, proven programs with new and creative approaches to offer public service opportunities, support education and outdoor learning laboratories, and engage young Americans in conservation work and provide recreational access to public lands. Each year, the Service relies on thousands of eager, qualified youth interns and volunteers to engage in important functions of refuge operations including trails maintenance, invasive species response, habitat restoration, greet visitors and perform other necessary tasks. Through these efforts, the Service has developed more than 50 partnerships with non-profit youth serving organizations to recruit and employ youth in entry level internships and temporary employment.



*Students from Fillmore Unified STEM Summer School spend the day learning at Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge in Fillmore, CA. Image USFWS/Ian Shive.*

### **Urban Wildlife Conservation Program**

The UWCP is one of the Service's primary focal points for supporting the Administration's Justice 40 initiative to advance racial equity in conservation and recreational access. The program includes 101 urban national wildlife refuges, including seven flagship urban national wildlife refuges that innovate scalable solutions for the broader conservation community, 32 designated Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership cities, and 30 Urban Bird Treaty cities.

The UWCP creates opportunities for the 80% of Americans who live in urban areas to benefit from time spent in nature. More than 100 national wildlife refuges are within 25 miles of a population of more than 250,000 people. The UWCP creates long-term, meaningful partnerships with disadvantaged communities to make conservation and recreation experiences relevant and positive.

This Service-wide program builds on the idea that long-term, meaningful relationships with diverse communities are how the Refuge System will best achieve equitable conservation outcomes. This requires a new way of doing business—including innovative approaches, skill-building, and a workforce that better mirrors the diversity of America. The UWCP is well positioned to help formulate community-centered foundations, and to deliver the eight measurable indicators of success that are also a commitment to racial equity, social and environmental justice, and natural resources conservation in the communities we serve.



*The SoCal Urban Wildlife Refuge Project provides opportunities to urban youth to help revitalize the Los Angeles River, CA. Image USFWS/Ian Shive.*

### **Cultural Resources**

The Service's Cultural Resources program began in the mid-late 1970s in response to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) and its implementing regulations, 36 CFR 800. Today, the Service-wide cultural resources program is a primary means of engagement with Native American Tribes and other descendant communities via consultation with these groups over Trust resources. The Program supports the Department's priorities to conserve, manage, protect, and restore cultural resources, and promote Tribal well-being, equity, and justice.

The cultural resources program monitors and protects thousands of cultural and historic sites, including sites sacred to Native Americans, ancient burial mounds, Tribal and settler cemeteries, homesteads, lighthouses, fish hatcheries and battlegrounds along with more than 6 million museum property items that have come to the agency via laws like the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and for which the Service is now a steward. Continued successes will require investment in and innovative additions to our workforce that will result in better management of these non-renewable resources and better consultation and engagement with those communities whose cultural patrimony we are entrusted with protecting.

### **2024 Program Activities**

The 2024 Budget will:

- In support of E.O. 13985 *Advancing Racial Equity in Support of Underserved Communities through the Federal Government* the Refuge System will introduce new users to recreational and other outdoor

activities and improve our digital infrastructure and ability to offer new technologies. The Service will continue to strategically balance the expected increases in public demand for services while sustaining high rates of visitor satisfaction ( $\geq 90$  percent), and ensuring the continued conservation of plants, animals, and habitat.

- Expand on our service to urban communities, furthering the Department's priorities of restoring and building on a tradition of trust through community-centered conservation efforts. The Urban Wildlife Conservation Program delivers targeted community-driven conservation and recreation that addresses racial inequality in wildlife conservation and access to nature. We will increase the number of employees to engage with local communities, increase opportunities, through grants to educational organizations, creating living wage jobs that hire employee's representative of local communities and create nature play areas and outdoor skills centers that cater to the local community. We will also work to increase access for urban communities through transportation incentives and enhancement of trails networks.
- Support the Department's commitments to conserve, protect, manage, and restore natural and cultural resources. The Refuge System is expanding its efforts to better meet Tribal consultation and Section 106 review requirements, improving education, monitoring, and protection of cultural resource sites, and improving the Service's Museum property management.

### **Proposed Program Changes**

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The 2024 budget request for Visitor Services is \$101,111,000 and 571 FTE, a program change of +\$16,668,000 and +65 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Refuge Visitor Services Activities (+\$11,668,000/ +50 FTE)**— The requested increase will provide additional refuge capacity to execute habitat management, visitor engagement, and partnership building. Providing the appropriate level of staffing is integral to the success of the Service, the Refuge System, and all the lands and waters we manage. Over the past ten years, the Refuge System full-time-equivalent staffing has decreased by nearly 25 percent. These reductions have occurred as the number of visits to Wildlife Refuges continue to increase an average of 3.8 percent a year, from 45.7 million in FY 2011 to more than 67 million in FY 2022. As we rebuild capacity, we will focus on increasing the diversity of our visitor services workforce by focusing on entry-level positions and recruiting candidates from historically marginalized communities. The increase in capacity will provide an FTE to focus on improving visitor monitoring, developing more accurate visitor estimation to better understand visitor experiences, and quantify expenditures made by visitors in local economies. The additional funding will also enhance the Service's capacity to meet its trust resource obligations by creating a National Curator position that will the Service's vast museum collections, which contain items of significance to Native Americans and other descendant communities. This funding will contribute to rebuilding the visitor services workforce, focusing on entry-level positions that will greet visitors, teach students, engage communities, and coordinate volunteer programs. These positions are critical to providing safe and welcoming access to visitors. The structure of these positions will also provide career opportunities for diverse applicants.

Of this funding \$8 million is to further youth corps programs that introduce a new generation of Americans to conservation and resiliency work and careers in nature and science. From high school aged Youth Conservation Corps summer work programs to temporary student employment (Pathways) positions, youth gain critical real-world job experiences, mentorship, and mobility across the Refuge System. The Service builds upon existing, proven programs with new and creative approaches to offer public service opportunities, support education and outdoor learning laboratories, and engage young Americans in conservation work and provide recreational access to public lands. The Service is well-positioned to help establish youth corps programs tackle the issues

of the 21st Century and work towards the goals set out by the President: 1) conserving and restoring public lands and waters, 2) bolstering community resilience, 3) increasing reforestation, 4) increasing carbon sequestration in the agricultural sector, 5) protecting biodiversity, 6) improving access to recreation, and 7) addressing the changing climate.

**Youth and Careers in Nature (-\$500,000/ -0FTE)** - The Service will continue to mobilize the next generation of conservation and resilience workers and maximize training opportunities and good jobs. Base funding will support youth corps programs. The funding will not include additional support for the Arctic Youth Ambassadors program in FY 2024.

**Urban Wildlife Conservation Programs (+\$5,500,000/ +15 FTE)** – The requested funds will allow the Service to expand the Service’s UWCP, which has demonstrated local successes in the locations that have been provided funding. Funding will ensure long-term resources, including additional field staff, at more urban refuges and engagement in more community partnerships; it will enable the Service to create a culturally relevant and welcoming environment for visitors; expand youth and local hiring opportunities; and improve access for disadvantaged communities through public transportation and trails projects.

This increase will provide \$1 million above the typical individual unit allocation to five additional urban refuges. The funds will be used to expand and improve citizen science, conservation education, recreation, and habitat restoration programs, with the overarching goal of increasing the quality and quantity of urban wildlife habitat. To increase access for systematically excluded communities, the Service will expand transportation and facilities projects, and decrease barriers by developing better signage, interpretive and educational materials. The UWCP will expand grant opportunities and provide support for training and community engagement.

Additional funding will help expand the Service’s opportunities to connect in areas without national wildlife refuges. UWCP partnerships provide funding for local non-profit organizations working with refuges, ecological services offices, fish hatcheries or other offices to engage local communities in conservation, such as removing invasive plants or cleaning waterways. By increasing funds for urban refuges, the Service can increase the number of innovative community- based conservation projects.

**Activity: National Wildlife Refuge System**

**Subactivity: National Wildlife Refuge System Law Enforcement**

Program Element	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change From 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Refuge Law Enforcement (\$000)	41,915	46,272	+2,127	0	+4,000	52,399	+6,127
FTE	214	240	0	0	+6	246	+6

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for National Wildlife Refuge System Law Enforcement**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Refuge Law Enforcement Activities	+4,000	+6
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+4,000</b>	<b>+6</b>

**Program Overview**

The National Wildlife Refuge System Law Enforcement (NWRS LE) program supports the Department of the Interior priority of safeguarding the integrity of a vast and abundant public lands network while serving and protecting those who enjoyed a record 67 million wildlife-dependent recreational visits in FY 2022. The Refuge System’s cadre of Federal wildlife officers support protection of endangered species, habitat conservation and a broad spectrum of Service programs, ensuring public safety and education, resource protection, and protecting Native American resources and Alaska Native subsistence rights.

As leaders in the law enforcement community in building trust with local communities, the Refuge System actively recruits and hires Federal wildlife officers from diverse and underrepresented communities. The program has increased the diversity of its workforce while creating a community of practice where law enforcement professionals are not only good stewards of public lands; they are also good neighbors.

Federal wildlife officers serve as ambassadors for the Refuge System and the Service. They support the public as hunter safety instructors; coordinate with veterans and disabled sportsperson’s groups to create outdoor opportunities; and lead youth shooting, hunting, and fishing events on refuges. They are routinely involved with local and other Federal law enforcement agencies in cooperative efforts in supporting nationwide disaster recovery efforts.

The NWRS LE has integrated community outreach and de-escalation techniques into both its initial and follow-on training. With a focus on human and civil rights, the program has taken a bold step forward to establish cross-cultural communications with local and indigenous communities. The program works with non-profit groups that focus on creating access to the outdoors for urban communities to build trust between National Wildlife Refuge System Law Enforcement Officers and communities of color and create opportunities for internal reflection and training on relationship building and intervention.

**2024 Program Activities**

The 2024 budget will:

- Embrace the principles of Executive Order 14074, strengthen trust within our communities, evolve our training, such as hiring practices to specifically address intervention and bias, incorporating organizational values and ethics into all aspects of law enforcement.
- Establish Archeological Resource Protection Act (ARPA) and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) investigative training to 100% of the commissioned law enforcement of the NWRS to enhance monitoring and the protection of cultural resources and to prioritize resource crimes against the Native American community.

- Support work to implement Executive Order 13985- Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal government and the Secretary’s priority to promote equity and environmental justice by continuing to provide effective public safety and resource protection by building a law enforcement workforce that represents the American people. National Wildlife Refuge System Law Enforcement will enhance regulations to ensure equality in the protection of individuals and cultures.
- Continue to support the Secretary’s priority to strengthen the government-to-government relationship with sovereign Tribal nations and restoring transparency and integrity, to the decision-making process by supporting the enhancing Archeological Resource Protection Act (ARPA) and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGRPA).
- Emphasize Diversity and Inclusion in the Workforce –Exploring nontraditional avenues of recruiting, NWRS LE will continue to recruit, hire, and train new Federal wildlife officers utilizing hiring practices that have demonstrated significant increases in women and underrepresented populations in the workforce. With the Service’s National Hiring Program for law enforcement, we will continue to expand on our current 20% women/diverse hiring rates and provide more opportunities for promotion and advancement into mid-level and senior leadership positions for women and people of color. We will also develop a Pathways internship/recent graduate program that would provide tangible recruitment and diversity benefits in NWRS LE.
- Pursue Equity – NWRS LE will expand training of Federal wildlife officers in connecting and creating meaningful partnerships with the communities we serve and promote equity in the delivery of public safety services. Refuge System officers will continue to expand engagement with Native Alaskan and Native American communities and will nationalize the inventory and monitoring of sacred cultural resources sites. NWRS LE will establish a board of advisors with members comprised of diverse backgrounds across the Service to review our policies and practices and seek ways to improve for the people we serve.



*The Natural Resources Conservation Management Enforcement Award. Photo taken by FWS employee.*

Body-worn cameras have been in use by the National Wildlife Refuge System Law Enforcement (NWRS LE) for approximately eight years. In 2019, NWRS LE published its body-worn camera policy in accordance with the

Department of the Interior's interim policy. Since then, NWRS LE been using body-worn cameras as evidentiary purposes and to increase transparency of our actions within our communities.

In September 2022, the Office of Inspector General issued a report regarding the Department of the Interior's bureaus and their body-worn camera policy status. The OIG found the NWRS LE was the only land management law enforcement entity that met the Department of Interior's interim policy and was not individually addressed for any missing components.

NWRS LE continues to strive to be a leader with body-worn cameras and is currently working on an updated policy to meet Executive Order 14074 and a national contract to have all officers outfitted with the same equipment. This will allow for consistency, transparency, and effective use of BWCs.



*Federal Wildlife Officer Travis in standard, Federal wildlife officer field uniform which has included a body worn camera (center chest area) since the mid-2010's. Photo taken by FWS employee.*

### **Proposed Program Changes**

The 2024 budget request for National Wildlife Refuge System Law Enforcement is \$52,399,000 and 244 FTE, a program change of +\$4,000,000 and +6 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**National Wildlife Refuge System Law Enforcement Activities (+\$4,000,000/ +6FTE)** – This funding increase will support the retention of workforce gains realized in FY 2023 and the addition of 6 Federal Wildlife Officers to increase the workforce to 244 FTEs and support a no-net-loss of law enforcement and protection activities. In addition, this increase will support Refuge Law Enforcement vehicle replacement and radio up-grades.

With this funding increase, Federal Wildlife Officers will continue to be hired and supported to allow them to be embedded in the local community, with a focus on equity, inclusion, and community engagement. Through retention and support efforts, officers will continue to represent a broad range of diversity, including race, gender, language, life experience, age, and cultural background, to improve the understanding and effectiveness in working with all communities. This increase will allow the hiring of six new Federal Wildlife Officers (FWOs), to move closer to the International Associations of Chiefs of Police (IACP) recommended minimum number of officers and allow the NWRS LE to continue to be a leader in the 21st Century policing. While the IACP has indicated that NWRS LE has less than a third of the recommended number of FWOs, this nimble workforce is a national leader in law enforcement and provides visitor safety to over 65 million visitations annually to the

National Wildlife Refuges and the communities they serve. NWRS LE will also purchase computers for each new officer and allow for replacement of 10% of the current officers' laptops.

Building Trust – The Service will continue leading by example in the use of body worn cameras by modernizing the body worn camera program that was established in 2014. As the first DOI law enforcement program to standardize the use of body worn cameras for all field law enforcement activities, NWRS LE will continue to invest in the body worn camera program. The Service will modernize the camera inventory, improve the data management and storage capacity, increase training for Federal wildlife officers and managers, and develop standard practices in transparent reporting of law enforcement activities to the public. The 2024 budget will:

- Fund the National Wildlife Refuge System-wide deployment of replacement body worn cameras, improved data management, and conducted electrical weapon systems (commonly called “Taser”). These integrated systems would increase transparency by more reliably capturing interactions with the public and provide seamless data storage, retrieval, and transcription capability.

**Activity: National Wildlife Refuge System**

**Subactivity: Conservation Planning**

	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change From 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Conservation Planning (\$000)	2,594	3,684	+137	0	+6,000	9,821	+6,137
FTE	16	21	0	0	+15	+36	+15

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Conservation Planning**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Refuge Planning	+6,000	+15
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+6,000</b>	<b>+15</b>

**Program Overview**

The Refuge System’s ability to conserve fish, wildlife, and their habitats for future generations of Americans begins with our commitment to conservation planning. The planning process guides on-the-ground stewardship of threatened and endangered species, migratory birds, inter-jurisdictional fish, and other species of special concern entrusted to us by the American people. We develop our plans using an interdisciplinary approach, to ensure management activities address diverse biological and socioeconomic issues. Planning is also the primary opportunity for collaboration with tribes, states, and other key partners.

Consistent with *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation*<sup>2</sup>, the Service is preparing the Refuge System to confront challenges posed by climate change, invasive species, habitat fragmentation and urbanization. To be successful, these issues must be addressed collaboratively. Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs) and step-down management plans drive on-the-ground management on wildlife refuges across the country. CCPs are based on Landscape Conservation Designs (LCD), often developed with the assistance of our Science Applications program, which create a framework by linking refuge planning and management actions to create functional landscapes and ensure that refuge-level actions contribute to a landscape-level vision. In collaboration with communities, design development looks at current and future conditions and determines where on the landscape to focus program delivery. On many national wildlife refuges, targeted restoration is necessary to bring altered landscapes back into balance. These restoration efforts create landscape-level habitats capable of supporting viable populations of target species; be resilient to climate fluctuations; restore ecosystem processes; integrate partnerships; and integrate with future acquisition efforts.

CCPs provide the primary guidance for refuge management and are essential in achieving refuge purposes and ensuring contribution to the National Wildlife Refuge System mission. The 1997 National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act mandates that the Service complete a CCP for every unit of the Refuge System and revise it every 15 years. The backlog of CCP revisions and new CCPs required is significant and growing. More than 200 CCPs need revision and more than seventy refuges have yet to develop a CCP.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fws.gov/refuges/pdfs/FinalDocumentConservingTheFuture.pdf>

These efforts also provide opportunities to involve stakeholders such as Tribes and States to participate in refuge planning. Additionally, these long-term management plans, as well as step-down management plans, rely on public participation during development and give communities a stake in their local refuge. Public participation provides refuges a powerful alliance with local communities and encourages improved quality of life beyond refuge boundaries. The next generation of plans will broaden consideration of factors in surrounding landscapes that can impact refuge resources, incorporate the best available science, encourage collaboration with partners, and inspire action to align with the America the Beautiful goals. Conservation planning ensures that refuge management and land protection efforts are based on priorities that support the mission of the Refuge System and conservation objectives in cooperation with State fish and wildlife agencies.

### **Proposed Program Changes**

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The 2024 budget request for Conservation Planning is \$9,821,000 and 36 FTE, a program change of +\$6,000,000 and +15 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Refuge Planning Activities (+\$6,000,000/ +15 FTE)** – The additional funding will increase and continue to build the capacity to help achieve the Service’s obligation to conduct inclusive comprehensive planning for units of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The addition of 15 FTEs will provide capacity to model Comprehensive Conservation Planning efforts with recently updated planning policies. Revised plans will better incorporate climate science, landscape level conservation design, and ensure partners are involved. These activities will provide engagement opportunities for tribes and states, as well as the public, as planning activities are conducted.

Within this request, \$4 million is part of the broader initiative of increasing representation on public lands. The funding will support new and recently designated units that preserve and tell the stories of those people who have been historically underrepresented, and used to increase representation at other Refuge units where such people remain underserved.

**Activity: National Wildlife Refuge System**  
**Subactivity: Refuge Maintenance**

Request Component	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change From 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Refuge Maintenance (\$000)	147,498	171,253	+3,288	0	17,049	170,548	+20,337
FTE	523	527	0	0	+55	582	+55

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Refuge Maintenance**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Deferred Maintenance	+2,000	+0
Maintenance Support	+7,154	+55
Annual Maintenance	+7,895	+0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+17,049</b>	<b>+55</b>

**Program Overview**

The Refuge Maintenance subactivity underpins every aspect of the Refuge System operation. Infrastructure investments create jobs and support local, state, and national economies, directly supporting the Administration’s jobs and economic recovery goals to Build Back Better. Investments also modernize facilities and fleets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and support climate change resiliency. This subactivity includes visitor and administrative facilities maintenance; fleet and heavy equipment; and infrastructure for wildlife and habitat management, fire management, law enforcement, and public access and outdoor recreation. Refuge Maintenance is one of several Refuge System program areas where the next generation of conservation workers can find employment opportunities through the Refuge System’s Recruit-train-Retain (RtR) program.

The Refuge Maintenance budget consists of four program elements:

- **Maintenance Support:** Refuge Maintenance Support includes supplies, materials, and salaries to maintain and manage facilities and equipment. Maintenance employees, including youth hired through the RtR and Youth and Careers in Nature (YCN) programs, are critical in proactively maintaining facility and equipment assets. This results in significant cost savings, compared to waiting for repairs to become deferred. Maintenance employees spend about half their time maintaining infrastructure and equipment and the other half maintaining habitat and supporting public recreational activities.
- **Annual Maintenance:** Annual Maintenance encompasses all non-staff expenditures for preventative maintenance needed to keep the Service’s infrastructure and mobile equipment fleet functioning. Annual maintenance includes repair of system failures before they are deferred; and preventive maintenance—including scheduled servicing, repairs, and parts replacement—required to achieve the expected life of facilities and equipment. Proactively maintaining facilities through Maintenance Support and Annual Maintenance is 40 percent more cost effective on average than waiting until maintenance is deferred. These funds are critical in providing the American taxpayers the maximum return on investment but are inadequate to support a full life cycle infrastructure management approach that enables elimination of deferred maintenance and long-term

management of the portfolio.

- **Deferred Maintenance:** Deferred Maintenance projects repair, rehabilitate, dispose of, or replace constructed real property assets. Funds are directed to the highest priority, mission-critical projects based on facility condition, asset priority, consequences of failure to act, and return on investment in accordance with Departmental guidance and stepped down FWS guidance that support our wildlife and public use mission and the Administration's priorities and objectives. Projects are prioritized by the field station managers, maintenance professionals and facilities managers that know firsthand the field-based mission impacts, return on investment, and outside funding opportunities available. Projects are annually reported to DOI and OMB in the five-year plans. The Service uses a strategic, portfolio-based approach to manage assets in a manner that informs decision-making and maximizes efficient and effective mission delivery with an emphasis on mission critical assets. The Refuge System has worked to reduce the deferred maintenance backlog using Maintenance Action Teams, proactive investments, improved policies, improved data quality and increased focus on preventative and routine maintenance investments. These improvements enabled the Service to reduce the DM backlog by fifty percent, but the lack of adequate life-cycle management investments have resulted in increasing backlog. Funding from the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA), National Parks and Public Lands Legacy Fund, will help to slow the rate of the deferred maintenance backlog growth but is only one component of a fully supported life cycle infrastructure management program that will provide a 2:1 return on investment adequately supported.
- **Equipment and Vehicle Management:** The Refuge System requires an extensive fleet of vehicles and equipment to successfully carry out the conservation mission and provide safe and reliable public recreation and education opportunities. The Refuge System employs rental and leasing options to provide a cost-effective, efficient program. Equipment and Vehicle Management funds optimize the management of fleets to meet mission needs and serve as an example for the efficient use of public assets. The Refuge System is actively focusing on modernizing our equipment and vehicles by implementing utilization and age standards and investing in an agile fleet including zero emission vehicles.

Service facilities and equipment are in a constant state of degradation, while identified deficiencies are being corrected other deficiencies develop. Industry standards indicate between two and four percent of the current replacement value (CRV) of constructed assets should be invested in maintenance each year to maintain assets in good condition. However, using a data-driven prioritization approach to life-cycle investment strategies, employing Maintenance Action Teams, and the disposing of unneeded assets, the Service will optimize maintenance, sustaining Refuge assets in acceptable condition. Migrating focus to this type of proactive life cycle management would save the American taxpayers approximately 40% by repairing and replacing infrastructure before repairs are deferred and cause additional damage requiring expensive emergency repairs. The additional funding proposed for maintenance combined with permanent authorization and increased funding under the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) will assist the Service in shifting towards an appropriate life-cycle management approach.

Specifically, the Service receives up to \$95 million annually from GAOA to address deferred maintenance requirements, such as repair and rehabilitation of dilapidated bunkhouses, repair and replacement of accessible boardwalks and trails, and repair of high hazard dams to preserve restored habitat and protect neighboring communities. GAOA supports addressing deferred maintenance and repairs but is inadequate to fully support proactive life cycle investment requirements, like scheduled roof and window replacements before the work becomes deferred and causes further damage that drives up the cost of restoring the asset to good condition. Without adequately supported life-cycle management capacity costly deferred repairs and system failures accumulate, which result in inadequate public recreation opportunities, continued barriers to equitable access to public lands, limited ability to reduce carbon emissions and inadequate resiliency to climate change. The requested maintenance funding is vital to support all types of Service maintenance needs, which enables the best

use of funds by transitioning to life-cycle maintenance and ensuring safe a reliable public recreational and educational opportunities and resilient wildlife habitat.

### **Federal Lands Transportation Program**

Transportation touches every aspect of the Service. The visiting public relies on safe roads, trails, and parking areas. Land managers rely on safe access to natural resources so they can conserve lands and waters. To access these lands, efficient and safe transportation corridors must be in place. In support of the Service's primary conservation mission, we develop environment context-sensitive transportation assets and road treatments, improve, and build alternative transportation systems and connectivity to other public systems, and repair hydrologic flows with improved culverts and bridges to prevent flooding and damages to public lands and neighboring communities.

The Service's transportation program is also integral in breaking down racial inequities to improve safe, reliable access to public lands for all Americans. We are analyzing different ways to help visitors and local communities know about their lands, how to reach them, and be safe while doing so. We work closely with neighboring communities and cities to identify opportunities for improvement, including installing signs on State or local roads, installing off-road multi-modal trails, connecting with local transit and trail systems, and frequently provide the needed match funding for Federal Land Access (FLAP) awards provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation. These awards are specifically intended to improve the safety and access to Federal lands. The Service has worked with communities surrounding refuges to add turning lanes, new bike and pedestrian trails, new or improved access points, pedestrian safety enhancements, and other projects to better welcome visitors.

The Service has been part of the surface highway bill since 1998 and receives \$36 million per year through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This important funding source provides about one-third of the projected requirement to maintain the transportation portfolio in good condition through proactive life cycle management. Demand for outdoor recreation has increased significantly since FY 2020 and this highlights the need for transportation improvements, to ensure all Americans feel welcome and can access public lands.

The Service's network has over 5,400 miles of public use roads, 5,000 public use parking lots, over 300 public bridges, 23 on-refuge transit systems, and 2,100 miles of terrestrial trails and boardwalks. The Service leverages a variety of funding sources to manage this extensive system, including the Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP), FLAP, and the Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO), all funded through the Highway Trust Fund, as well as Service appropriated and non-appropriated funding sources by completing projects through Maintenance Actions Teams with both FLTP, Deferred Maintenance, and GAOA funds. The Service effectively leverages funds from these, and other, sources to maximize improvements to its transportation infrastructure, enhance relationships with States and local jurisdictions, improve returns on investments, and increase safe and equitable access to public lands. These funds are often necessary to complete complex projects involving many partners. Since 2013, the Service has helped gateway communities and local partners successfully apply for 140 FLAP awards totaling over \$220 million, including providing almost \$21 million in FLTP matching funds. These investments, along with the successful leveraging of funds, support the Administration's jobs and economic recovery goals and provide equitable access to support Environmental Justice.

Funds from the Highway Trust Fund fuel long-range planning and maintenance of the Refuge System transportation assets to meet the needs of visitors, staff, and biological resources. Projects are prioritized based on six overarching goals: coordinated opportunities; asset management; safety; environmental sensitivity; equitable access, mobility, and connectivity; and visitor experience. The same priorities are used to develop five-year project plans. On average, proactive life cycle maintenance is 40 percent less expensive than waiting until assets fail or become deteriorated.

### **Constructing Ocelot Wildlife Crossings**

In FY 2023, the Service will invest \$2 million of FLTP funds to construct two wildlife crossings at Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge in south Texas, home to one of only two populations of ocelots in the country.

This project will provide safe passage underneath the roadway for the endangered ocelot to address both a major habitat fragmentation issue and prevent roadway mortality, the leading cause of known ocelot deaths. These two wildlife crossings will also add to the other ocelot wildlife crossings in the area to further the Service’s and partners’ efforts to save this endangered animal.



*This photo is of the first ocelot using a previously constructed crossing. This new project will add additional habitat connectivity and reduce roadway mortality for the endangered animal.*

**Proposed Program Changes**

The 2024 budget request for Refuge Maintenance is \$170,548,000 and 582 FTE, a program change of +\$17,049,000 and +55 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Deferred Maintenance (+\$2,000,000/ +0 FTE)** – The Service will use these funds to offset construction cost inflation of some projects that are planned for 2024.

**Maintenance Support (+\$7,154,000/ +55 FTE)**– This funding is an important step in helping the Service move towards restoration of an infrastructure workforce that is reflective of the communities we serve. The Refuge System requires over 1050 maintenance professional to provide adequate capacity to maintain Refuge System assets using a life-cycle investment model and prevent growth of the deferred maintenance backlog. The 55 FTEs will help the Service begin to implement our Recruit-train-Retain program, aimed at recruiting and retaining the

talented and diverse workforce required to maintain the Service's asset and habitat portfolio. The Refuge System maintains over 44,000 assets representing over \$44 billion in public investments, including 6,400 buildings, 17,500 roads, bridges, and trails, 8,700 water management and 11,400 other real property assets. A robust maintenance workforce is required to continue responsible rehabilitation, maintenance, and construction of Service infrastructure and further the goal to focus on resilient infrastructure and a diverse and talented workforce.

**Annual Maintenance (+\$7,895,000/ +0 FTE)** – Additional funding will be used to complete routine maintenance proactively to prevent maintenance from being deferred. The funding will be used, through a balanced approach, to purchase materials and supplies to complete proactive preventative maintenance with the maintenance workforce and through contracts with local and regional companies. Maintenance includes routine annual maintenance of furnaces, painting and upkeep of buildings and recreational infrastructure, grading trails, roads, and parking lots to supportsafe and reliable access, proactively maintaining boardwalks, piers, docks, and other recreational assets to extend the life of the components to ensure they don't become hazards to the visiting public; preservation of cultural and historic structures infrastructure; maintenance of water control structures, levees, fences, and other wildlife management infrastructure to provide and protect habitat; maintenance of roofing, siding and windows on educational centers, bunkhouses, and maintenance shops before they start leaking and create further damage; and routine maintenance to high hazard dams and flood protection levees to protect neighboring communities.

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# Migratory Bird Management



# Migratory Bird Management

**Activity: Conservation and Enforcement**  
**Program: Migratory Bird Management**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Change From 2023 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Conservation and Monitoring	(\$000)	29,921	30,935	+1,282	0	+13,358	45,575	+14,640
	FTE	122	122	0	0	+28	150	+28
Permits	(\$000)	3,513	5,513	+186	0	+7,612	13,311	+7,798
	FTE	26	30	0	0	+16	46	+16
Federal Duck Stamp	(\$000)	572	591	+30	0	+500	1,121	+530
	FTE	3	3	0	0	+1	4	+1
North American Waterfowl Management/ Joint Ventures	(\$000)	15,562	16,821	+402	0	+1,269	18,492	+1,671
	FTE	41	41	0	0	+0	41	+0
<b>Total, Migratory Bird Management</b>	(\$000)	<b>49,568</b>	<b>53,860</b>	<b>+1,900</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+22,739</b>	<b>78,499</b>	<b>+24,639</b>
	FTE	<b>192</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+45</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>+45</b>

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Migratory Bird Management**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Conservation, Capacity, and Regulatory Enhancements	+9,058	+18
Clean Energy	+3,400	+9
Urban Bird Treaties	+900	+1
Improving Permitting for the Future	+7,612	+16
Federal Duck Stamp Office	+500	+1
NAWMP/Joint Ventures	+1,269	+0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+22,739</b>	<b>+45</b>

**Note:** The Service is proposing to create a new Subactivity, ePermits, which will be managed under the Migratory Bird Program. For details, please see the ePermits chapter.

**Program Overview**

The Migratory Bird Program is the premier Federal leader in migratory bird conservation and manages birds in the U.S. and internationally through effective partnerships, applied science, and innovative strategies. Birds are enjoyed by millions of Americans for birding, hunting, and viewing around their homes and in their communities. Bird-related recreation generates billions of dollars of economic activity on trip and equipment-related expenses. Birds also provide important ecosystem services to people, including insect and rodent control, plant pollination, and seed dispersal, providing billions of dollars of economic benefits.

The Service is responsible for ensuring the continued existence of healthy migratory bird populations for the benefit of the American public. To address the precipitous decline of almost three billion birds in the

last half century, we prioritize conservation actions for at-risk birds of conservation concern, and develop strategic and collaborative approaches to bird conservation at landscape scales with Tribes, States, and many other partners. We manage ducks, geese, and other migratory game birds to provide for sustainable hunting opportunities for generations to come. We also protect and restore millions of acres of habitat with our partners.

### Program Elements

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Four elements comprise the Migratory Bird Management program:

- Conservation and Monitoring – Conducts monitoring and research activities concerning the status and health of migratory bird species of management and conservation concern. Sets and evaluates migratory bird hunting seasons, develops conservation plans, and coordinates continental-scale bird conservation partnerships. Works with partners to balance human-wildlife conflicts and seeks to reduce human-caused mortality of migratory birds.
- Permits – Authorizes activities that would otherwise be prohibited such as the take and possession of protected migratory bird species for scientific, religious, educational and other activities. Tracks the impact of authorized activities, and ensures that such activities are conducted in a manner that safeguards migratory bird populations and promotes conservation efforts. Develops regulations that ensure healthy and sustainable populations, while providing cultural, recreational, and economic opportunities.
- Federal Duck Stamp Office – Produces the Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (Duck Stamp), which is required for anyone 16 years of age and older to hunt waterfowl and is purchased by many others to support habitat protection. Proceeds from the sale of the stamp are deposited into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund and expended to conserve wetland habitats within the National Wildlife Refuge System. Coordinates the Junior Duck Stamp contest which educational opportunities through the arts.
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan and Migratory Bird Joint Venture Partnerships – Implements a continental agreement between the United States, Canada and Mexico through collaborative, voluntary partnerships that conserve waterfowl and other migratory bird habitat.

### Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders

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More than 25 laws, treaties, and conventions mandate that the Service sustain nearly 1,100 species of migratory birds and their habitats, including the following:

- The *Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act* (16 U.S.C. 668-668C) prohibits the import, export, or take of bald or golden eagles including their parts and products without permits, and prohibits the sale, purchase, or barter of their parts or products.
- The *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 2901-2911) directs the Secretary of the Interior to undertake research and conservation activities, in coordination with other Federal, State, international and private organizations, to fulfill responsibilities to conserve migratory nongame birds under existing authorities. The Secretary is required, for all species, subspecies, and migratory nongame birds, to monitor and assess population trends and status; to identify environmental change and human activities; and to identify species in need of additional conservation and identify conservation actions to ensure perpetuation of these species.
- The *Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act* (16 U.S.C. 718) requires waterfowl hunters to purchase and possess a valid Federal waterfowl hunting stamp before take of migratory waterfowl and directs proceeds to the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund to conserve wetland habitats within the National Wildlife Refuge System.

- The *Migratory Bird Treaty Act* (16 U.S.C. 703-712) establishes Federal responsibility for protecting and managing migratory birds and implements bilateral migratory bird conventions with Canada, Mexico, Japan, and Russia.

**Subactivity: Migratory Bird Management  
Program Element: Conservation and Monitoring**

	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change From 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Conservation and Monitoring (\$000)	29,921	30,935	+1,282	0	+13,358	45,575	+14,640
FTE	122	122	0	0	+28	150	+28

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Conservation and Monitoring**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Conservation, Capacity, and Regulatory Enhancements	+9,058	+18
Clean Energy	+3,400	+9
Urban Bird Treaties	+900	+1
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+13,358</b>	<b>+28</b>

**Program Description**

Most bird families across North America are declining, and many species are at risk of becoming threatened or endangered. North America has lost nearly three billion birds since 1970. Data reveal that many species of grassland birds, seabirds, forest birds, shorebirds, and aerial insectivores, declined precipitously over this time. The Service’s comprehensive migratory bird conservation and monitoring activities and commitment to working in partnership are helping to address this crisis and to stop further losses of migratory bird species.

**Conservation**

The health of populations of waterfowl, songbirds, shorebirds, seabirds, aerial insectivores, and other groups of birds is an indicator of the health of our environment. The Service works with partners—in the U.S. and internationally across migratory bird ranges—to understand how changes in habitat, climate change, pesticide use, collisions and other threats affects migratory bird populations, and to identify conservation and management actions that can bring birds back.

The Service’s Migratory Bird Program provides expertise in the conservation and management of over 1,000 species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Staff throughout the country provide technical assistance on bird conservation issues to other Service programs, other Federal and State agencies, Tribes, select industries, and private partners. Additionally, we work with partners to gather data to build scalable tools (site-level, regional level, and national level) and develop guidance such that energy and infrastructure projects have information to avoid and minimize impacts to migratory birds. Our staff provide outreach and training on bird conservation measures and policies regarding Federally protected birds.

### *Bringing Birds Back*

The 2019 publication in *Science* about the [Decline of North American Avifauna](#)\* was a wake-up call for the bird conservation community; it estimated that North America has lost nearly 3 billion breeding birds since 1970, roughly equivalent to losing one in four adult birds in 50 years. Many populations of common and at-risk species plummeted and are still disappearing every day.

Stabilizing bird populations in North America is a monumental task. By working together, with longstanding and new partners, we can strengthen our partnerships, efforts, creativity, and capacity to sustain and grow bird populations.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Migratory Bird Program has identified five groups of birds and one major threat drawn from the *Science* report where the Service can amplify ongoing actions to have an immediate impact. Working with partners, we aim to support and implement high-impact, common-sense conservation actions for birds now and into the future.

Learn more about what the Service is doing to address the dramatic loss of North American birds and how you can help:

<https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/shorebirds>  
<https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/aerial-insectivores>  
<https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/seabirds>  
<https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/grassland-birds>  
<https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/forest-birds>  
<https://www.fws.gov/story/threats-birds-collisions-buildings-glass>

\*<https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/bring-birds-back>



*Shorebird populations have exhibited one of the largest declines of any bird group. During migration, shorebirds face many challenges, including finding sufficient food sources to fuel their long-distance migrations, avoiding predators, competing for limited habitat, disturbance from human activities, adapting to a changing climate, and succumbing to sport and subsistence hunting.*

*Credit: Doris Rafaeli*

Another role of the Service's Migratory Bird staff is to provide leadership at all levels (e.g., regionally, nationally—and sometimes at the continental or hemispheric level) to organize groups focused on Birds of Conservation Concern<sup>1</sup>, suites of Birds of Conservation Concern, or ecosystems in which migratory birds serve as indicators of system health. We regularly work with diverse stakeholder groups to develop or tailor conservation strategies for Birds of Conservation Concern, lead focused working groups composed of topical experts and support international collaboratives to ensure conservation planning and delivery consider the full cycle of migratory birds. Through these efforts, we leverage the power of

partnerships, prioritize actions (research, monitoring, habitat conservation), avoid duplication of efforts, and catalyze investments of time, treasure, and talent from Federal and State agencies, Tribes, non-profit organizations, foundations, universities, and the private sector. Examples of such efforts range from the recently-formed [Pinyon Jay Working Group](#)<sup>2</sup> initially focused on identifying critical research needs and limiting factors for a very under-studied species, to very well-established groups delivering critical information that guide conservation investments over large scales (e.g., [Golden-winged Warbler Working Group](#)<sup>3</sup>, [Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative](#)<sup>4</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> The Birds of Conservation Concern list includes migratory and non-migratory bird species (beyond those already designated as federally threatened or endangered) that represent our highest conservation priorities. The list is based on an assessment of several factors, including population abundance and trends, threats on breeding and nonbreeding grounds and size of breeding and nonbreeding ranges.

<sup>2</sup> <https://partnersinflight.org/resources/pinyon-jay-working-group/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://gwwa.org/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://atlanticflywayshorebirds.org/>

### Reducing Impacts to Birds

The Service works with partners to reduce the incidental take (non-purposeful mortality) of migratory birds through both regulatory and non-regulatory means. The Service is leading the development of guidance, recommendations, and beneficial practices to empower the public, Federal agencies, conservation organizations, and industries with the tools to address direct and indirect impacts to migratory birds. Recent guidance includes revised recommendations for reducing bird collisions with building glass, educational materials for communication tower owners on how to retrofit lighting fixtures to be more efficient and safer for birds, and recommendations for improving building energy efficiency while using bird safe measures to do so. These resources are available to anyone seeking to reduce impacts to migratory birds by going online to the Service's Migratory Bird Program webpage.<sup>5</sup>

### Monitoring

The ability of the Service to deliver conservation benefits to birds, manage the myriad of threats facing birds, and provide recreational opportunities for the American public is critically dependent on the quality of our research and monitoring programs. Investigating and monitoring bird populations allows the Service to set and evaluate migratory bird hunting seasons, evaluate management actions, identify population shifts due to climate change and other factors, make informed conservation decisions, and identify priority habitats for conservation. The Migratory Bird Program conducts several continental-wide monitoring programs, including waterfowl banding, aerial population surveys, and hunter harvest surveys. In addition, our research and monitoring programs provide valuable information to assess potential landscape-level impacts of energy and other development activities, and to alleviate problems associated with some bird species (e.g., crop and livestock depredation, damage to buildings or equipment, human safety and health).



*Service biologists release banded ducks as part of the FWS cooperative waterfowl banding program.  
Credit: FWS*

Monitoring and assessment are the fundamental activities that contribute to the Service's key role in addressing treaty mandates for conserving migratory birds. The Service's six decade history of migratory bird monitoring data provides a unique perspective on shifting bird distributions and habitat conditions across the North American landscape over time. These rich datasets have been widely used in peer-reviewed studies and management plans to assess and mitigate climate change impacts on bird population dynamics, migration chronology, productivity, and habitat acquisition and restoration. The value of these programs is not just in their long duration but also in their continental coverage and consistent, rigorous methodology. Waterfowl population and harvest distributions from these surveys provide baseline data for diverse uses, including prioritizing land acquisitions across the National Wildlife Refuge System, establishing continental population goals for the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, modeling population responses to climate change providing projections to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and investigating human participation trends in hunting activity and harvest.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.fws.gov/program/migratory-birds>

Government and non-government resource managers, researchers and other conservation professionals depend on the Service's migratory bird surveys and assessment capabilities to provide accurate, comprehensive population status and trend information. The Service takes its data stewardship responsibilities seriously, and is committed to FAIR data standards (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) by sharing these data through a new, DOI-accessible migratory bird data portal, with public access to data and metadata at <https://ecos.fws.gov/ServCat/Reference/Profile/142315>.

### Supporting Recreational and Subsistence Harvest

Each year the Service conducts extensive migratory game bird surveys and bird banding programs across North America that provide valuable information about bird population, harvest, and habitat. Results from these surveys provide the foundation for the establishment of annual hunting seasons for migratory game birds.

Establishing annual migratory bird hunting seasons is a collaborative venture with the States (through the Flyway Councils), Tribes, and in some cases the Canadian Wildlife Service. The Service, in collaboration with its partners, use waterfowl and other migratory bird monitoring data in an



*View of northern Labrador from Kodiak aircraft crew (Service pilot biologist and observer) surveying northern Labrador as part of the continental Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey. Credit: FWS*

adaptive resource management framework to set and evaluate hunting seasons in the United States. This is an iterative process that uses the results of monitoring to inform a series of biological assessments that help establish optimal hunting regulations each year. The biological assessments and harvest strategies are based on agreed upon population models and harvest management objectives that guide the establishment of annual hunting regulations such as season lengths and bag limits. This process ensures migratory bird regulations are commensurate with population status while maximizing recreational hunting opportunities and ensuring long-term sustainable migratory bird populations.



*Service biologists build a swim-in trap to capture and band ducks on the Churchill River, northern Saskatchewan, as part of the FWS cooperative waterfowl banding program. Credit: FWS*

In addition to establishing recreational migratory bird hunting regulations in the United States, the Service is responsible for establishing the Alaska migratory bird subsistence seasons each year. The Service takes into consideration traditional harvest practices and migratory bird population status and protection of nesting birds to establish the spring-summer subsistence regulations. Around 90 species or subspecies of migratory birds are open to bird and egg harvest and include

waterfowl, waterbirds, shorebirds, seabirds, cranes, and owls. These annual regulations enable the continuation of customary and traditional uses of migratory birds by eligible Alaska Natives.

### The Urban Bird Treaty Cities

Millions of people throughout the Nation enjoy watching, feeding, and photographing birds. In urban areas, birds are people's most frequent contact with wildlife. Urban areas can provide important habitats for birds, especially those migrating that need safe, food-rich areas to rest and refuel. But cities also pose a host of threats to birds, from collision hazards such as building glass and lights to hazardous trash and pesticides, all of which can result in mortality. The Urban Bird Treaty initiative is a unique collaboration between the Service and participating U.S. cities and their partners.



The Service provides guidance and technical assistance to help partners carry out projects and become designated as Urban Bird Treaty cities. There currently are 22 cities across the U.S. with active urban bird partnerships. The program benefits the health and well-being of birds and people and is increasing its focus on serving under-resourced and underserved communities.

### 2024 Program Activities

The 2024 budget will:

- Support the development of infrastructure and energy projects through efficient permitting under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, including revision of regulations to improve permitting efficiencies.

- Work with various industry sectors to reduce the incidental take of migratory birds through the development and use of beneficial practices, including development of proposed regulations under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
- Conduct monitoring, provide technical assistance, facilitate partnerships, and promote bird-friendly practices to tackle the conservation issues facing birds of conservation concern within grassland birds, forest birds, shorebirds, seabirds and aerial insectivores.
- Monitor migratory game bird species abundance and harvest and establish and evaluate annual migratory bird hunting seasons.
- Work with stakeholders to reduce conflicts caused by species such as cormorants, common ravens and black vultures.

### **Proposed Program Changes**

The 2024 budget request for Conservation and Monitoring is \$45,575,000 and 150 FTE, a program change of +\$13,358,000 and +28 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Conservation, Capacity, and Regulatory Enhancements (+\$9,058,000/ +18 FTE)** – The Service’s request for Conservation and Monitoring reflects an approach of working on multiple fronts simultaneously to conserve migratory birds, and includes the following proposed program changes:

**Conservation and Capacity (+\$6,858,000/ +14 FTE)** – The U.S. is facing a staggering loss of populations of most groups of migratory birds, including many at-risk species. At the same time, the U.S. and the world face a growing climate crisis. The Service has an opportunity to take simultaneous action to conserve migratory birds and participate in the Government-wide effort to reduce climate pollution in every sector of the economy and increase resilience to the impacts of climate change. The Service is developing a range of actions to tackle the conservation issues facing grassland birds, forest birds, shorebirds, seabirds and aerial insectivores in addition to the threat of collisions. Targeted investments in partner engagement, monitoring, technical assistance, conservation planning, on-the-ground conservation delivery and promoting bird-friendly practices will greatly leverage the resources of other Service programs and other Federal, State, Tribal, and private conservation partners to dramatically increase the pace and scale of habitat conservation for birds of conservation concern. All of this work will directly contribute to the America the Beautiful initiative, by assisting in identifying important climate-resilient places on the landscape to conserve, and engaging with the Migratory Bird Program’s extensive partner network to expand conservation and restoration on the most important lands and waters for birds and other wildlife.

**Regulatory Enhancements (+\$2,200,000/ +4 FTE)** – The Service is also requesting funding to build efficiencies and improve the clarity of regulations and their implementation under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). The additional resources will be used to develop training and outreach materials and expand the Service’s capacity to provide technical assistance to the public to conserve migratory birds. The Service will develop step-down guidance and comprehensive training so that both internal and external audiences (Federal and State agencies, Tribes, and other and public partners) receive a consistent message about how to interpret Service regulations and policies.

**Clean Energy (+\$3,400,000/ +9 FTE)** – The Service plays a prominent role in supporting the Administration’s goal of transitioning the nation to carbon pollution free electricity by 2035 and a net-zero

emission economy by 2050. To support a surge in renewable energy development expected in FY 2023 and future years, the increase ensures Service project review functions expeditiously facilitate the environmental clearance process, while reducing project-related impacts on migratory birds. This request supports capacity for the Service to work with industry to incorporate proven, bird-friendly design elements into project proposals. The request also supports permit process reviews and improvements. By working upfront with the clean energy industry to improve project design and simultaneously improving permitting processes, the Service will streamline project permitting and maintain necessary protections for migratory birds. The Service will also explore collaborative research opportunities with other Federal agencies and partners to develop techniques that help minimize bird interactions and update conservation planning tools that incorporate realistic climate scenarios to improve conservation delivery for birds.

**Urban Bird Treaty (+\$900,000/ +1 FTE)** – At the 2024 request level, the Service will invest in partnerships and projects in existing and new Urban Bird Treaty cities across the U.S. In part, the funding will allow the Service to do more of what it already does well: provide access to nature, increase awareness of bird hazards, and offer communities a wide array of conservation, education, and outdoor recreation activities. Funding will strengthen the conservation capacity of partners in existing Urban Bird Treaty cities and allow additional cities to become part of the Urban Bird Treaty network. Additionally, the Service will identify and engage diverse, under-resourced audiences and encourage their participation in Urban Bird Treaty activities through intentional, inclusive, and collaborative actions. Through these activities, the Service will contribute to healthier environments for birds and people and lead to more equitable access to nature for all communities. This work will contribute to the goals of the America the Beautiful initiative and complement the proposed increase for the Junior Duck Stamp program described below in the Proposed Program Changes for the Federal Duck Stamp Office.

**Subactivity: Migratory Bird Management  
Program Element: Permits**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change From 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Permits	(\$000)	3,513	5,513	+186	0	+7,612	13,311	+7,798
	FTE	26	30	0	0	+16	46	+16

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Permits**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Improving Permitting for the Future	+7,612	+16
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+7,612</b>	<b>+16</b>

**Program Description**

The Migratory Bird Program uses permits and other authorizations as important tools in implementing the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (Eagle Protection Act). Service biologists use permits to promote long-term conservation of migratory birds and encourage joint stewardship with others through these laws.

Permits enable the public to engage in specific activities consistent with the MBTA and Eagle Protection Act while providing a means to balance use with conservation. Permits also allow the Service to build partnerships and monitor activities to determine their effects on migratory bird populations. The Migratory Bird Program implements more than 30 regulations and administers more than 40 permit types. The Migratory Bird Program is improving regulations, streamlining policies and developing common sense standards that protect migratory birds while providing regulatory certainty to industry under the MBTA and Eagle Protection Act. Regulatory changes are being designed to support economic recovery. This work also contributes to climate change initiatives by providing regulatory certainty to the energy industry. The Service seeks collaborative and innovative approaches that reduce regulatory costs and uncertainty for industry as well as to help build capacity to monitor and respond to the effects of climate change on bird populations.

Supporting Native American Tribes and honoring Tribal trust responsibility is also a key goal for the Migratory Bird Program. That’s why our Permit Specialists responded quickly and efficiently to develop procedures to implement the new policy authorizing federally recognized Native American Tribes to retain whole eagle remains. We are also working to pursue new opportunities in partnership with Native American Tribes.

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## 2024 Program Activities

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The 2024 budget will:

- Continue to issue permits efficiently for the take, possession and use of birds protected under the MBTA and Eagle Protection Act.
- Continue to build efficiencies into permit regulations and simplify the permit application processes.
- Implementing new incidental take regulations.

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## Proposed Program Changes

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The 2024 budget request for Permits is \$13,311,000 and 46 FTE, a program change of +\$7,612,000 and +16 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Improving Permitting for the Future (+\$7,612,000/ +16 FTE)** – Demand for the Service to improve the clarity and efficiency of its migratory bird permitting operations is at an all-time high. With the requested funding, the Service will respond to this demand in several ways. First, additional resources will go to support the current Permit staff in our regional offices. This will allow the regions to better focus on efficiently processing and administering permit requests received from the public. Next, in response to the Administration’s focus on infrastructure and climate change—and the anticipated increased demand for permits from the energy industry—the Service will hire regional biologists to aid in processing permits in a timely manner. Through regulatory changes, the Service is focusing staff time on areas where conservation outcomes are balanced with minimizing public burden. The current rulemaking activities under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Eagle Protection Act highlight a need to add technical capacity to ensure effective implementation of these regulatory changes. The Service plans to build capacity to strengthen and streamline required economic and environmental analyses. Through these actions, the Service will be well positioned for the migratory bird permitting demands of today and tomorrow.

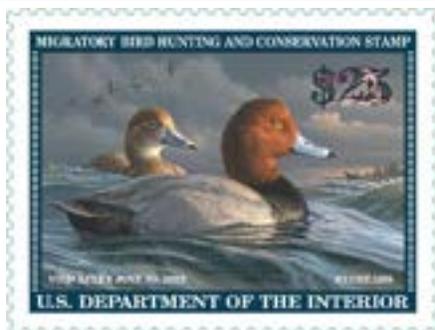
**Subactivity: Migratory Bird Management  
Program Element: Federal Duck Stamp**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change From 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Federal Duck Stamp	(\$000)	572	591	+30	0	+500	1,121	+530
	FTE	3	3	0	0	+1	4	+1

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Federal Duck Stamp Office**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Junior Duck Stamp and Urban Refuges	+500	+1
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+500</b>	<b>+1</b>

**Program Description**



*The 2022-2023 Duck Stamp features Minnesota artist James Hautman’s painting of a pair of redheads. Each fall approximately 200 artists submit artwork to become the next “Duck Stamp Artist” in the only federally regulated art contest.*

The internationally recognized Federal Duck Stamp Office supports conservation of vital migratory bird habitat within the National Wildlife Refuge System through the sale of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, commonly known as the Duck Stamp. The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act requires all waterfowl hunters aged 16 years or older to possess a valid Federal Duck Stamp.

Since it was first established in 1934, Duck Stamp sales have raised more than \$1.1 billion that have been used to conserve over 6 million acres of habitat for birds and other wildlife species.

The Migratory Bird Program produces the stamp, which sells for \$25 and raises nearly \$40 million through sales each year. At least 98 percent of these funds are used to conserve wetland habitats through conservation easements and fee title land purchases in the National Wildlife Refuge System. More than 300 National Wildlife Refuges were created or expanded using Duck Stamp dollars, and there is at least one refuge in nearly every State that has benefitted from the program.

In 2022, Duck Stamp sales totaled over \$37 million. Lands acquired with Duck Stamp dollars provide all Americans with opportunities to enjoy the outdoors by engaging in activities such as fishing, hiking and wildlife watching. In addition to waterfowl hunters, the Service encourages others interested in conservation, including bird watchers, nature photographers, and those who enjoy public wildlife areas to buy Federal Duck Stamps and support conservation. The conservation model of the Federal Duck Stamp is so successful that it became the model for raising conservation dollars for our State wildlife agency partners, other countries, and for other targeted species such as deer, turkey, trout and walleye. The Federal Duck Stamp is also distinctive in the way the stamp is created. Each year, the Service holds an art contest, the only juried art competition sponsored by the Federal government. The winning artwork from the national contest then becomes the next Federal Duck Stamp.

The 2023-2024 stamp will mark the seventeenth year that the Service is selling Duck Stamps through the Electronic Duck Stamp (E-Stamp) program in addition to physical stamps sold through the U.S. Postal Service and other retailers. In 2023, 29 States will participate in the E-Stamp program. E-Stamp sales have increased from 58,000 E-Stamps sold in 2007 (the program's pilot year) to nearly 1 million in 2022. The E-Stamp is a valuable customer service tool, making Duck Stamps immediately available to anyone with an internet connection, regardless of their State or country of residence. The Service will continue to promote participation in the program from qualified States to further meet customers' needs.



*At the 2022 National Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest, South Dakota student Madison Grimm's painting of a green-winged teal took top honors among the 53 State and Territorial winners.*

In addition to the Federal Duck Stamp, the Service also coordinates the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program. Since 1993, the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program for students in K-12th grade has helped encourage students to explore their natural world, study wildlife and their habitats and then share what they have learned with others in their communities. The Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program strengthens youth connection to nature through a dynamic art- and science-based curriculum that teaches wetland and waterfowl conservation to students in kindergarten through high school. It crosses cultural, ethnic, social, and geographic boundaries to teach greater awareness of our nation's natural treasures.

Students can participate in the Junior Duck Stamp Program at school, at home, in after-school groups, and at refuges, parks and nature centers. After learning about wetlands, waterfowl, and wildlife conservation, students express their learning through a drawing or painting of a duck, goose, or swan and a conservation message. Students then submit their entries to their state contest for local recognition. Each State's Best of Show is then forwarded to the national competition. The top piece of art in the nation – which is chosen at the annual competition – is featured on the Junior Duck Stamp, sales of which support educational programs and activities that nurture the next generation of wildlife conservationists and land stewards. Winning artwork from State contests may also be used on the cover of the States' annual hunting regulation brochures. The annual art contest participation averages about 20,000 students. Activities and events where students' artwork and other Junior Duck Stamp Program accomplishments are promoted, averages an additional 300,000 families, educators, and community members each year.

### 2024 Program Activities

The 2024 budget will:

- Manage the production and sale of the Federal Duck Stamp.
- Promote and diversify participation in the Junior Duck Stamp Program to target under-resourced and urban populations.
- Promote the Duck Stamp to increase participation in the program and generate revenues for habitat conservation.
- Expand the E-Stamp program to facilitate hunter access and improve satisfaction.

**Proposed Program Changes**

The 2024 budget request for Federal Duck Stamp Office is \$1,121,000 and 4 FTE, a program change of +\$500,000 and +1 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Junior Duck Stamp and Urban Refuges (+\$500,000/ +1 FTE)** – The Service proposes to use the requested funding to increase capacity to help coordinate and grow the Junior Duck Stamp programs in States that are home to Urban Refuges as well as programs in States and territories without Urban Refuges. This work will complement the proposed increase for the Urban Bird Treaty Program described above in the Proposed Program Changes section for Conservation and Monitoring.

**Subactivity: Migratory Bird Management****Program Element: North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP)/****Joint Ventures**

	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change From 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
North American Waterfowl Management/ Joint Ventures (\$000)	15,562	16,821	+402	0	+1,269	18,492	+1,671
FTE	41	41	0	0	0	41	0

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for NAWMP/Joint Ventures**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Strengthening Joint Ventures' Partnerships	+1,269	+0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+1,269</b>	<b>+0</b>

**Program Description**

More than a quarter century ago, waterfowl populations in North America languished at historic lows. The waterfowl management community in the United States and Canada developed a strategy to respond to those low populations through habitat protection and restoration—an unprecedented recognition of the need for international cooperation to help restore shared wildlife. This strategy became the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (Plan) and still serves as a model for international conservation.

Signed by the United States and Canada in 1986, and by Mexico in 1994, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan has sustained abundant duck, goose, and swan populations across North America by conserving habitats through partnerships for the past 35 years. The Plan has been updated over time and today strives to increase public awareness and understanding that waterfowl provide both ecological and economic benefits to as wide an audience as possible.

The habitat goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, as well as the conservation and management priorities of national and international shorebird, waterbird, and landbird partnership plans, are primarily implemented by 18 Migratory Bird Joint Ventures (JVs)—a network of regional, self-directed partnerships involving Federal, State, and local governments; corporations; individuals; and non-governmental organizations. JVs are considered a model for collaborative conservation in the 21st century, using state-of-the-art science and leveraging public and private resources to ensure that diverse habitat is available to sustain migratory bird populations. Moreover, these partnerships are a cornerstone of a collaborative effort to address the accelerated decline in bird populations observed over the last half century. JVs have an additional benefit of building capacity of participating partners, making their operations and activities more effective and efficient. In the Administration's initial report<sup>6</sup> outlining steps to achieve the America the Beautiful initiative, JVs were identified as an example of effective conservation partnerships that could be expanded.

JV partnerships play a critical role in addressing problems migratory birds face due to a changing climate. Armed with the best available scientific information, JVs help predict how bird populations will respond to

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/report-conserving-and-restoring-america-the-beautiful-2021.pdf>

habitat conservation and other management activities, and then tailor conservation plans for those specific populations. These plans employ landscape-level conservation strategies that prioritize and direct habitat management resources where they will have greatest impact and lowest relative cost. This strategy enables JV partners to focus conservation programs on the highest priority areas and identify resources at the level needed to sustain healthy populations of migratory birds.

North American landscapes will continue to change in ways and at scales that have potential to drive bird populations downward, with more species requiring Endangered Species Act protection. JVs recognize that the path to effective and sustainable bird conservation must incorporate an understanding of the ways in which people value, use, and depend on the natural environment. Thus, JV efforts seek to align bird conservation with benefits to human society and local communities. JV implementation plans often focus bird habitat protection and restoration in areas that also serve to abate flooding, improve water quality, and enhance carbon sequestration. Focusing on a more integrated approach to landscape conservation that links the ecological and social drivers of conservation together, JVs are working to develop better implementation strategies with existing partners, as well as new approaches to connecting bird conservation with new partners and stakeholders inherent to the changing demographics of America. This approach is well aligned with the principles outlined in the Administration's Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful report and the JV partnerships are well-poised to meaningfully contribute to the recommended areas of focus.

#### *Atlantic Coast Joint Venture – Building a More Resilient Coast through Bird Conservation*



*Saltmarsh Sparrow. Credit: Bill Thompson*

Coastal salt marshes are one of the most socially and ecologically valuable ecosystems in our country. They provide billions of dollars in community protection from storms and flooding, capture, store carbon at rates 10-50 times greater than temperate forests, support 75 percent of commercially important fisheries, and provide habitat for a suite of tidal marsh specialist bird species. Unfortunately, accelerated sea level rise coupled with centuries of human impacts to the marsh are interacting to cause this system to unravel and wash away. Without action, these countless ecosystem services will be lost – including the endemic Saltmarsh Sparrow, found nowhere else on earth, which is projected to

disappear within the next 30 years if nothing is done to stop its decline. The Atlantic Coast Joint Venture (ACJV) selected coastal marshes as a flagship priority due to their exceptional value to birds and people and the extreme threat this system faces within the next 50-100 years.

Thankfully, recent science indicates that healthy marshes, without human alterations like ditching, transportation infrastructure, and mosquito management, can be resilient to the impacts of sea level rise – possibly for thousands of years. Because human alterations are accelerating salt marsh degradation and loss, ACJV partners throughout the Atlantic Coast are focused on repairing this damage to restore natural hydrology and build resiliency. ACJV Partners have developed multiple innovative techniques to heal past damage that are showing great promise for moving our marshes toward resiliency. The JV has also developed tools that identify which marshes could benefit from these management techniques as well as the highest priority marsh migration corridors on which to focus. The work of the Joint Venture partnership is our greatest hope for sustaining the marshes and their myriad ecosystem services.



*Saltmarsh Restoration. Credit: Lauren Owens Lambert*

### ***Sonoran Joint Venture – Restoring Water Flow in Chihuahuan Desert Grasslands***

Chihuahuan desert grasslands are in decline as accelerated erosion caused by land-use change such as development, mining, ranching, and agriculture strips away vegetation that the quail and other species require for cover and food. At the same time, climate change, increasing drought conditions, and changes to surface water flows decrease soil moisture required to support food plants for birds and other wildlife. Combined, these impacts create a landscape that is drier, more fragmented, and less vegetated. These impacts can be observed throughout the range of many grassland bird species, and the Borderlands Wildlife Preserve in Arizona is no exception. The Preserve’s 1,400 acres of open space are the only remaining protected open space connection between the Santa Rita Mountains and the Patagonia and Huachuca Mountains, it is a vitally important corridor for wildlife traversing between Arizona’s southern sky islands. It is home to a diversity of wildlife, including many migratory grasslands bird species, including Sprague’s Pipit, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Baird’s Sparrow, and Vesper Sparrow. These species breed in the northern Great Plains of the U.S. and Canada and migrate south to spend the winters. It is also home to the Montezuma Quail, a species who can only be found in southeastern Arizona in the United States (most of their habitat is in Mexico).



*While easily recognizable, Montezuma Quail spend much of their time hiding in the vegetation. Credit: Alan Schmierer*



*BRN staff and volunteers above an erosion control structure build during a volunteer day. Credit: BRN*

Eroding ephemeral drainages slice through the oak and mesquite-dotted grasslands of the Preserve, draining the land of moisture when precious water flows through it. To combat this degradation, the Sonoran Joint Venture funded the Borderlands Restoration Network to undertake habitat restoration and community engagement at the Preserve to benefit Montezuma Quail and other grassland birds that depend on this critical habitat. Funding from the Sonoran Joint Venture supported a multi-pronged restoration approach that started with the restoration of water flows across the landscape. Borderlands Restoration Network staff, student interns, and community volunteers constructed over 270 log and rock erosion control structures within the eroding drainages. These structures physically slow

water flow, capture sediment, and pool water so that it can infiltrate the ground. This recharges groundwater and increases soil moisture while reducing erosion. Restoration crews distributed native seed sourced from local wild populations within and around the rock structures, encouraging re-establishment of native vegetative communities to increase habitat function, increase water retention in the landscape, and further reduce erosion through the stabilizing effect of root systems on the soil.

## 2024 Program Activities

The 2024 budget will:

- Implement the North American Waterfowl Management Plan with partners and the Joint Ventures to achieve waterfowl population, habitat, and human dimension objectives.
- Design and implement habitat strategies that work with landowners and other partners to conserve migratory birds across the landscape; and collect and analyze data on Arctic Geese and Sea Duck species to inform harvest strategies that lead to hunter opportunities.

## Proposed Program Changes

The 2024 budget request for NAWMP/Joint Ventures is \$18,492,000 and 41 FTE, a program change of +\$1,269,000 and +0 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Strengthening Joint Ventures' Partnerships (+\$1,269,000/ +0 FTE)** – The requested funding will contribute to achieving target funding levels for all 21 JVs. This will allow all JVs to address capacity issues that prevent them from fully supporting migratory bird conservation and adaptation. JVs will promote conservation of working lands in collaboration with private landowners and local communities for the benefit of wildlife and help support the Administration's America the Beautiful initiative. Funds will be strategically invested among the JVs to strengthen partners' ability to respond to a variety of pressures, including climate change, drought and flooding, invasive species, and habitat change. Specifically, the increased funding will support increased science capacity, including improved spatial tracking and assessment of landscape level changes; development or enhancement of conservation delivery networks that coordinate partners' on-the-ground conservation projects to accomplish greater results; and improved and increased outreach to raise awareness of JV activities and their many benefits: and contribute to continental partnerships and conservation plans for waterfowl, shorebirds, landbirds, and waterbirds. Together, these investments and activities will target the highest priority species and habitats across the Nation.

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# ePermits



# ePermits

**Activity: Conservation and Enforcement**  
**Program: ePermits**

	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change From 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
ePermits (\$000)	0	0	0	+7,500	+6,000	13,500	+13,500
FTE	0	0	0	+8	+4	12	+12

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for ePermits**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Program Enhancements	+5,000	+1
Operations	+1,000	+3
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+6,000</b>	<b>+4</b>

**Note:** The Service is proposing to create a new Subactivity by transferring funding that was previously appropriated to the International Affairs program, together with requested funding increases, to better clarify the cross-programmatic nature of the system.

**Program Overview**

In 2020, the Service launched the first phase of ePermits, a new electronic permitting system that enables permit applicants to apply for their permits online. Multiple Service programs worked together to bring ePermits to fruition and more are joining as the phased rollout gains momentum. Once it is fully operational, this system will streamline the permit application process while improving efficiency and reducing the regulatory burden associated with legal, sustainable trade, and other wildlife use. The system automatically integrates data submitted electronically into the permit database. Eventually, ePermits will also allow for the development of “expert” systems that will automate portions of the application review, permit issuance, and reporting, thereby allowing permit processors to harness the power of the data for decision-making. With the evolution and expansion of permitting requirements through time, the Service, will provide opportunities for refocusing personnel from administrative record-keeping to processing additional permits, and to improving customer experience through reduced applicant burden and enhanced customer support—all while maintaining or increasing conservation benefits of permitting.

**Program Elements**

Two elements comprise the ePermits program:

- **ePermits Operations:** Operations, maintenance, customer support and customer experience required to operate an easy to use, modern, and secure system that streamlines the end-to-end process for all Service permits. ePermits Operations includes building base system functionality of a fully operational and integrated system that meets the basic needs of external and internal users. Funding supports a variety of activities and functions. It covers Service positions that are engaged in the management, implementation, and monitoring of the ePermits system and activities. These

funds also cover costs associated with designing, building, maintaining, and supporting the system.

- **Program Enhancements:** Development of the ePermits system beyond its current capabilities. Current Program Enhancements include continued work on Secure Paperless CITES Permitting. The Service is requesting additional resources in FY 2024 to enhance the system for the Migratory Bird Program's recent regulatory changes around incidental take and the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) Special Use Permits. The Service envisions using the current and requested funds to accomplish the specific enhancements described above, then incorporating them into base operations. However, the need for enhancement funding is continual to reflect the dynamic environment in which ePermits operates, where regulatory and technological changes occur and the system must change to remain up-to-date, modern, secure, and compliant.

### **Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders**

Many laws, treaties, and conventions mandate that the Service permit import, export, or take of various species, and modernize its public services, including:

- The *Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act* (16 U.S.C. 668-668C) prohibits import, export, or take of bald or golden eagles including their parts and products without permits, and prohibits the sale, purchase, or barter of their parts or products.
- The *Migratory Bird Treaty Act* (16 U.S.C. 703-712) establishes Federal responsibility for protecting and managing migratory birds and implements bilateral migratory bird conventions with Canada, Mexico, Japan, and Russia.
- The *21<sup>st</sup> Century Integrated Digital Experience Act* (P.L. 115-336) requires agencies to ensure public-facing applications and services are made available in a digital format.
- The *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* (CITES) is an international agreement that aims to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species.
- The *Wild Bird Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 4901-4916) helps ensure that exotic bird species are not harmed by international trade and encourages wild bird conservation programs in countries of origin.
- The *Lacey Act* (18 U.S.C. 42; 16 U.S.C. 3371-3378) prohibits the importation, exportation, sale, or purchase of fish, wildlife, or plants taken, possessed, transported, or sold in violation of Federal, State, Tribal, or foreign laws.

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## 2024 Program Activities

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The 2024 budget will:

- Add new features to ePermits functionality for applicants, like improve website experience (e.g., account management and permit fee payment capabilities); and, stabilize and enhance existing internal ePermits functionality, such as facilitating permit reporting and streamlining permit renewals for Ecological Services, International Affairs, Migratory Birds, and Office of Law Enforcement.
- Provide additional operational capacity to support the proposed enhancements of the project.
- Add new features to ePermits that will modernize outdated processes for the National Wildlife Refuge System and respond to recent changes in permitting regulations under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Eagle Protection Act. See below for specific details.

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## Proposed Program Changes

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The 2024 budget request for ePermits is \$13,500,000 and 12 FTE, a program change of +\$6,000,000 and +4 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Program Enhancements** (+\$5,000,000 / +1 FTE)—The requested funding will allow the Service to add new features to ePermits beyond the original scope.

**National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) Customer Experience** (+\$2,500,000 / +1 FTE) —The Service also will improve the National Wildlife Refuge System customer experience by standardizing and consolidating their Special Use Permit (SUP) processing. The NWRS issues thousands of SUPs each year that cover a range of commercial (grazing, recreation), extractive (oil and gas leases), research, and general activities. The Service will allocate \$2.5 million to transition from a laborious and time-consuming application process that relies on email, to a modernized application process via ePermits.

**Migratory Birds Permits** (+\$2,500,000/ +0 FTE) —The Service is implementing new regulatory changes around incidental take and how permits are issued under the Eagle Protection Act. Similar changes are planned for permits issued under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. These changes provide common sense guidance and policies that protect migratory birds and provide regulatory certainty to industry and the affected public, and the planned enhancements to ePermits will ensure that the system is in-sync with the new regulations.

**Operations** (+\$1,000,000 / +3 FTE)—With the requested funding, the Service will continue to improve, stabilize, and enhance the functionality of ePermits, with the goal of making the permitting activities of Ecological Services, International Affairs, Migratory Birds, and Office of Law Enforcement more streamlined and efficient. Additionally, the Service would hire three additional staff to help support the ongoing operation, maintenance, and coordination of ePermits.

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# Law Enforcement



# Office of Law Enforcement

**Activity: Law Enforcement**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Budget Request	Change From 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Law Enforcement Operations	(\$000)	88,878	91,189	+4,111	0	+8,234	103,534	+12,345
	FTE	320	320	0	0	+32	352	+32
Equipment Replacement	(\$000)	910	910	0	0	0	910	0
<b>Total, Office of Law Enforcement</b>	(\$000)	<b>89,788</b>	<b>92,099</b>	<b>+4,111</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+8,234</b>	<b>104,444</b>	<b>+12,345</b>
	FTE	<b>320</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+32</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>+32</b>

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Law Enforcement Operations**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Wildlife Law Enforcement Capacity	+7,234	+29
Body Worn Cameras	+1,000	+3
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+8,234</b>	<b>+32</b>

**Program Mission**

The Service is the only agency in the Federal government that has the primary responsibility for management of fish and wildlife through conservation, protection, and restoration of certain populations of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the American public. The Service enhances its conservation mission through the Office of Law Enforcement (OLE). The OLE is the investigative arm of the Service tasked to enforce wildlife laws, regulate wildlife trade, investigate wildlife crimes, help Americans understand and obey wildlife protection laws, and work in partnership with international, Tribal, other Federal, and State counterparts to conserve and protect wildlife resources. Continuing to prevent introduction or transmittal of zoonotic diseases through inspection of wildlife imports is an important part of the Service’s preparation for future epidemics which is critical for public health as well as protection of our domestic wildlife populations.

It is our mission to protect wildlife and plant resources through the effective enforcement of Federal laws. By working with Federal, State, Tribal and foreign enforcement agencies and other conservation partners, we help recover endangered species, conserve migratory birds, preserve wildlife habitat, safeguard fisheries, combat invasive species, and promote global wildlife conservation. The Service is responsible for enforcing the U.S. laws, regulations, and treaties that protect wildlife and plant resources. The OLE officers work to intercept smuggling and facilitate the legal commerce in fish, wildlife, and plant resources by investigating wildlife crimes and monitoring the Nation’s wildlife trade.

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## Program Elements

The program elements for the Office of Law Enforcement:

- Law Enforcement Operations – funds the day-to-day activities of special agents, intelligence analysts, forensic scientists, and support staff who serve critical roles in facilitating legal trade, fighting wildlife trafficking, and in the successful prosecution of criminals who break Federal and international wildlife laws.
- Equipment Replacement – maintains and replaces property and equipment, including scientific instruments at the National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory; purchases and configures vehicles to satisfy operational requirements.

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## Economic Benefits

The Service recognizes the hard work of our special agents, wildlife inspectors, intelligence analysts, forensic scientists, and support staff who serve critical roles in facilitating legal trade, the fight against wildlife trafficking, and the successful prosecution of criminals who break Federal and international wildlife laws. In FY 2022, the Service conducted over 10,200 wildlife crime investigations, which resulted in ordered restitution of \$11.5 million in fines, \$873,000 in civil penalties, 57 years in prison, and 200 years in probation. Wildlife Inspectors processed over 167,000 declared wildlife shipments and facilitated legal trade valued at over \$5.4 billion.

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## Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders

The Service has the statutory mandate and trust responsibility to fulfill its mission derived from the Nation's wildlife and plant protection laws and several Presidential actions. Brief descriptions of several of these various laws follow:

- The *Lacey Act* (16 U.S.C. 3371-3378) prohibits the importation, exportation, transportation, sale, or purchase of fish, wildlife, or plants taken or possessed in violation of Federal, State, Tribal, or foreign laws.
- The *Migratory Bird Treaty Act* (16 U.S.C. 703-712) makes it unlawful to pursue, hunt, kill, capture, possess, buy, sell, purchase, or barter any migratory bird including their feathers, parts, and products.
- The *Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act* (16 U.S.C. 668-668C) prohibits import, export, or take of bald or golden eagles including their parts and products without permits, and prohibits the sale, purchase, or barter of their parts or products.
- The *Endangered Species Act* (ESA) (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543) prohibits the importation, exportation, take, and interstate or foreign commerce of fish, wildlife, and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered species.
- The *Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species* (CITES) is an international treaty to which 183 countries are parties, including the United States. CITES is implemented in the United States under the ESA and provides a set of universal protections and controls involving the international movement of plant and animal species engaged in significant global trade.
- The *Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act* (16 U.S.C. 718) requires waterfowl hunters to purchase and possess a valid Federal waterfowl hunting stamp before take of migratory waterfowl.
- The *Marine Mammal Protection Act* (16 U.S.C. 1361-1407) establishes a moratorium on the take and importation of marine mammals, including parts and products.
- The *Airborne Hunting Act* (16 U.S.C. 742j-1) prohibits taking or harassing wildlife from aircraft.
- The *National Refuge System Administration Act* (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee) provides guidelines for administration and management of all areas in the refuge system.
- The *African Elephant Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 4201-4245) places a moratorium on the importation of raw or worked ivory from African elephant-producing countries that do not meet certain criteria.

- The *Wild Bird Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 4901) limits or prohibits the importation of exotic bird species as necessary to ensure that their populations are not harmed by international trade.
- The *Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 5301-5306) prohibits the import, export, or sale of any product, item, or substance containing, or labeled or advertised as containing, any substance derived from tiger or rhinoceros.
- The *Antarctic Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 2401) makes unlawful for any citizen to take, possess, or sell any native bird or mammal from Antarctica.
- The *Archeological Resources Protection Act* (16 U.S.C. 470aa) prohibits excavation, removal, damage, or alteration to any archaeological resource located on public or Indian lands without a permit.
- The *Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990* (IACA) (P.L. 101-644) is a truth-in-advertising law that prohibits misrepresentation in marketing of Indian arts and crafts products within the United States.
- The *Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt (END) Wildlife Trafficking Act* (P.L. 114-231) authorizes support for law enforcement training, investigative capacity building, range state conservation programs, and other important tools to protect and sustain wild populations of imperiled species in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and other critical locations.
- The *Big Cat Public Safety Act* (P.L. 117-243) governs the trade of big cats, limits the possession and exhibition of big cats, and restricts direct contact between the public and big cats.
- In conducting investigations of wildlife crimes, OLE frequently encounters and investigates violations of other Federal laws to include conspiracy, smuggling, money laundering, narcotics, cybercrimes, unlawful possession and trafficking of firearms, mail fraud, tax evasion, wire fraud, corruption, and bribery.
- The *Presidential Executive Order on Combating Wildlife Trafficking* (issued July 1, 2013) coordinates efforts to combat wildlife trafficking and established a Presidential Task force, which released the *National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking*. The Strategy and accompanying Implementation Plan identify three main objectives – strengthening domestic and global law enforcement, reducing demand for illegally traded wildlife, and building international cooperation.
- The *Presidential Executive Order on Enforcing Federal Law with Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking* (issued February 9, 2017) strengthens enforcement of Federal law in order to thwart transnational criminal organizations and subsidiary organizations, including criminal gangs, cartels, racketeering organizations, and other groups engaged in illicit activities. This Executive Order specifically lists wildlife trafficking as a targeted transnational crime that presents a threat to public safety and national security.

### Program Overview

Through the OLE, the Service protects fish, wildlife, and plant resources by investigating wildlife crimes and monitoring the Nation's wildlife trade to intercept smuggling and facilitate legal commerce. Effective enforcement of the Nation's wildlife laws is essential to the Service's conservation mission and combats wildlife trafficking, which is a threat to U.S. and foreign species and global security.

Service special agents, wildlife inspectors, intelligence analysts, and forensic scientists play a critical global role in holding the line for species on the brink of extinction from the accelerating black market of the illegal wildlife trade. Service efforts protect wildlife resources, support strategic habitat conservation, and are vital in the face of ongoing threats such as habitat loss and climate



*During 2022, multiple shipments from a mammoth exporter from Russia were inspected at the International Mail Facility at the Port of New York. Seven of these shipments contained undocumented and falsely manifested shipments of walrus tusks that were seized.*

*Photo credit: USFWS*

change. These threats make wildlife populations even more vulnerable to crimes such as poaching, black market trafficking, and industrial take.

The U.S. remains one of the world's largest markets for wildlife and wildlife products, both legal and illegal. Illegal global trafficking represents a threat to the continued viability of thousands of fish, wildlife, and plants around the world. Additionally, it threatens to undermine not only natural areas but also governments, economies, and the rule of law itself.

### **Protecting our Nation's Species**

The OLE special agents investigate crimes involving federally-protected resources, such as endangered and threatened species native to the U.S., migratory birds, eagles, and marine mammals. Enforcement efforts focus on dismantling criminal enterprises that profit from the illegal trade in U.S. wildlife and plants. The Service's law enforcement addresses other potentially devastating threats to wildlife, including habitat destruction, environmental contaminants, and industrial hazards and investigate violations of laws that safeguard wildlife and wildlife habitat. The Service also works with industries whose activities affect American wildlife resources and habitats to reduce hazards and secure voluntary compliance with wildlife laws.



*Following a joint investigation with the FBI, a defendant fraudulently representing himself as an authentic Native American healer was convicted on five counts related to sexually abusing Native American minors and for possessing illegal feathers, talons, and heads from seven bald eagles and seven golden eagles. The individual was sentenced to life in prison and ordered to pay a \$100,000 fine. Photo credit: USFWS*

### **Working with Native Americans and Alaska Natives**

The OLE promotes well-being, equity, and justice for Native Americans, Alaska Natives, Hawaiian Natives, and other indigenous people from U.S. Insular Areas in numerous ways, which directly supports DOI's priority of strengthening the government-to-government relationship with sovereign Tribal Nations. Examples of this include training Tribal conservation law enforcement officers, assisting with criminal investigations, providing eagle feathers and parts for use in religious ceremonies, supporting subsistence hunting, and enforcing Federal laws that protect Native American culture. Such laws include the Marine Mammal Protection Act, Archeological Resources Protection Act, and the Indian Arts and Crafts Act (IACA).

The IACA is a truth-in-advertising law that prohibits misrepresentation in marketing of American Indian or Alaska Native art and craft products within the U.S. Native art is a critical part in telling the story of this country and can only be told by actual Native artists. Artists passed down their skills and traditions through generations so every piece carries with it cultural significance, family history, and knowledge. Native artists create incredible pieces of both traditional art and contemporary works, and they deserve credit and compensation for their crafts. Buying authentic pottery, jewelry, mixed media creations, paintings, and other art from Native American and Alaska Native artists helps support Tribal economies.<sup>1</sup> To enforce the IACA, the OLE works closely with the Department of the Interior's Indian Arts and Crafts Board.

The Service investigates retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers, counterfeiters, and smugglers who fraudulently produce and sell counterfeit American Indian arts and crafts. The OLE created its Indian Arts and Crafts Act Investigative Unit and assigned special agents to disrupt and dismantle this criminal activity. Successes are significant and numerous defendants have been investigated, indicted, and sentenced for their crimes. Their actions were documented in States such as Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, New Jersey, New Mexico and Texas; and in countries such as China, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand.

Most of these defendants ran similar multinational criminal schemes in the Southwest United States that involved fake Native American art that was mass produced in the Philippines. These fakes were then smuggled into the U.S. and sold as authentic American Indian jewelry to unaware consumers at numerous retailers across the Country.

These crimes were not simple to investigate because they were multifaceted and involved other serious crimes such as identity theft, mail fraud, wire fraud, smuggling, conspiracy, and money laundering. Throughout these investigations, OLE agents discovered that counterfeit American Indian art criminal networks operated a complex web of middlemen, across the Nation, who distributed and marketed fraudulent Indian artwork. In addition, these defendants used their illegal sales to undercut reputable competitors, often taking over their businesses. The millions of dollars generated by these counterfeit Indian art networks supported organized crime in the U.S. and were also funneled to overseas criminal operations.

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<sup>1</sup> Secretary Deb Haaland: Supporting Indian Artists <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2T-mgzV3OY>

*An art store owner in Juneau, Alaska was sentenced to three years of supervised probation, ordered to pay \$4,100 to the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, and forfeit more than \$1,000,000 (retail value) of stone carvings for his role in fraudulently selling stone carvings as authentic Alaska Native art in violation of the IACA. The store owner advertised and sold the carvings as authentic Alaska Native art when knew they had actually been produced in the Philippines. The store was located to in a Juneau shopping area where high volumes of cruise ship passengers would shop during shore visits. Pictured is an item fraudulently marketed as an Alaska Native Craft. Photo credit: USFWS*



### **Combating Illegal Global Wildlife Trafficking**

The Service's investigation of wildlife trafficking and assistance to international counterparts disrupts highly organized smuggling networks that traffic wildlife around the globe. The Service's trade monitoring activities at U.S. ports provide a front-line defense against the illegal wildlife trade. Service wildlife inspectors process declared shipments, intercept wildlife contraband, conduct proactive enforcement operations to catch smugglers, and work with special agents to investigate businesses and individuals engaged in wildlife trafficking. Service law enforcement officers also work to prevent the introduction of invasive species via international trade and travelers. In addition, special agents and wildlife inspectors enforce prohibitions on the importation of injurious wildlife. Costs of the inspection program that facilitates the legal trade, incurred by the Service, are charged against the Service's wildlife inspection user fee account. However, in the event that costs exceed the user fee collections, wildlife inspectors are funded by the law enforcement program's appropriated funds.



*In 2022, a defendant pleaded guilty to actions that violated the Lacey Act, Endangered Species Act, and CITES. Over a five-year period, he manufactured luxury goods such as boots made from protected wildlife species such as elephant, crocodile, monitor lizard, and python. Additionally, he knowingly and unlawfully imported, exported, transported, and sold the boots that had an estimated market value of \$129,361. Photo credit: USFWS*

### **Zoonotic Disease Protection**

The Service Mission Statement clearly states that all of the efforts its programs and employees make in the interest of wildlife conservation and protection are to be made for the continuing benefit of the American people. No area of focus, including the Service's duty to combat wildlife trafficking, dovetails more with that mission than the prevention of introduction or transmittal of zoonotic infectious disease. As the various classifications of diseases carried by wildlife potentially threaten wild populations of at-risk species, and in some cases may be transmissible to humans, it is necessary to focus an effort to prevent their spread through wildlife trafficking on

behalf of the American public.

As criminal networks have grown on a global scale, it has become increasingly necessary for law enforcement agencies to rely on any available technology or methodology that allows them to narrow their focus. There are many logistical challenges afforded to Service wildlife inspectors and special agents tasked with targeting potential disease vectors in imported and trafficked wildlife. Though proper identification, safe physical inspection, communication with cooperating agencies, and intervention with *declared* shipments is taxing enough; OLE staff are primarily expected to intercept undeclared, illegal shipments in both international and domestic shipments.



*A shipment from Nigeria that contained bush meat from primates, bats, and rodents, along with various whole bird, bird heads, bird feathers, and mammal teeth arrived into the Port of Chicago, Illinois. OLE wildlife inspectors inspected the shipment and found CITES protected primate bush meat and bird specimens and parts. The entire shipment was refused by U.S. Customs and Border Protection and was re-exported back to Nigeria.  
Photo credit: USFWS*

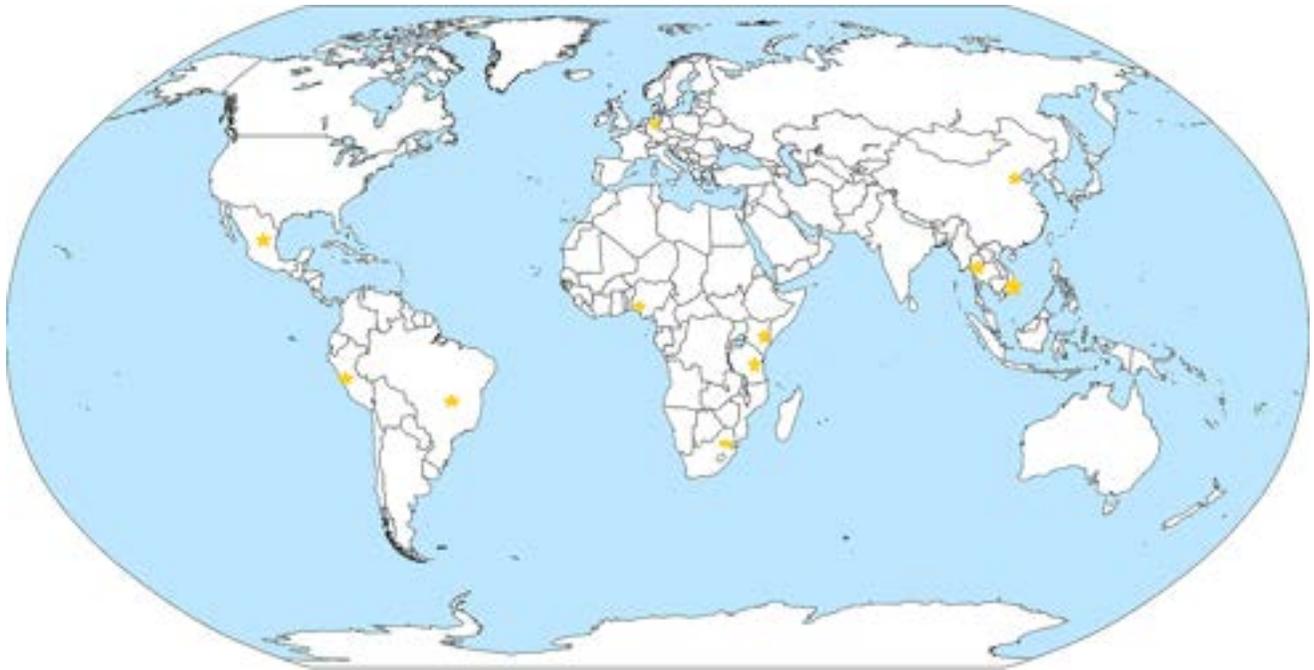
The OLE’s International Operations Unit stations special agents as attachés at U.S. embassies to investigate international wildlife trafficking. In 2023, OLE will have 11 personnel worldwide to address limiting factors in countries that drive or enable the illegal wildlife market. They support direct partnerships with foreign governments, share and coordinate intelligence, expand training programs, and provide technical assistance in customs monitoring. The attachés have assisted in wildlife trafficking investigations by providing investigative expertise, as well as highly technical assistance to local governments involved in wildlife trafficking investigations. They have also provided training and capacity building, increased coordination among government agencies, and provided support to Wildlife Enforcement Networks throughout their areas of responsibility.

This International Attaché Program is just one example of how OLE supports Wildlife Conservation: “Our Partners” Vision and DOI Priority Centering equity and environmental justice to build and foster national and international collaboration. The OLE builds and maintains trust with diverse, inclusive partnerships around the world to support species, habitats, and ecosystems.



**Kromah Network**

Special Agents in OLE’s International Operations Unit Special Operations Division initiated an investigation in 2016 focused on transnational criminal organizations involved with wildlife trafficking in Eastern Africa. In August of 2022, the fifth and final co-conspirator of the network was sentenced to 63 months in prison. He was extradited from Kenya following a posted reward of \$1,000,000 supported by the State Department. The criminal network was convicted of multiple counts of wildlife trafficking, money laundering, and distribution of heroin. These individuals allegedly trafficked over 10 tons of ivory poached from more than 100 elephants and over 400 pounds of horn poached from approximately 35 rhinoceros with a combined street value of approximately \$7.4 million. Close cooperation with the Drug Enforcement Agency, Department of State, and international governments led to the successful arrest and extradition. Photo credit: USFWS



*Wildlife Law Enforcement at U.S. Embassies: Brazil, China, Germany (AFRICOM), Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, South Africa, Tanzania, Thailand, Vietnam*

### **Facilitating the Legal Wildlife Trade**

The OLE's mandate to enforce wildlife trade laws encompasses a responsibility to deal fairly and efficiently with the businesses, organizations, and individuals that legally import and export wildlife. The speed and efficiency of wildlife inspection operations affect not only businesses trading in legal commodities, but also the international transportation of wildlife for purposes ranging from scientific research to public entertainment. Wildlife inspectors provide guidance to individuals and businesses to help them follow wildlife laws and expedite their import and export transactions. Customer service efforts use technology to speed trade, streamline communication, and improve public access to information about laws and regulations affecting trade in wildlife and wildlife products.

### **National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory**

The Service's National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory (Lab), the world's only full-service crime laboratory devoted exclusively to supporting wildlife law enforcement, is vital to the Service's efforts to fight the illegal wildlife trade and protect plants and animals. Lab scientists identify the species of wildlife parts and products (seized as evidence) to link suspect, victim, and crime scene through the examination of physical evidence, cause of death determinations, and crime scene analysis.

The Lab can scientifically identify the species source of mammal, bird, plant, and reptile wildlife parts and products, a function frequently used by Service special agents, wildlife inspectors, and U.S. Department of Justice prosecutors. Conclusive evidence of criminal activity in wildlife investigations often hinges on the ability of investigators and prosecutors to establish the origin of animal or animal parts, often by country, so the Lab's capacity is integral to enforcing wildlife laws and treaties. Wildlife populations have identifiable genetic profiles, which result in specific isotopic signatures that reflect a specific geographic location. For example, this research data helps the Service determine where poached elephants were from by analyzing illegal ivory, or where poached rhinos were from by analyzing illegal horns, all of which aid efforts to prosecute criminals and stem poaching.

### **Digital Evidence Recovery and Technical Support Unit**

The Digital Evidence Recovery and Technical Support Unit (DERTSU) provides special agents in the field with better support for retrieval and analysis of computer-based records and advanced surveillance techniques.

Based in Jacksonville, Florida, and co-located with a group providing similar support to criminal investigators from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, DERTSU is staffed by wildlife crime investigators with skills in computer forensics and technology-based investigations, as well as technical experts in these highly specialized fields. The unit provides a source of multi-layered expertise (both technical and investigative) to assist field officers with large-scale and complex investigations.

#### **Office of Law Enforcement**

To learn more about OLE's work, please visit <https://fws.gov/le/> and if you believe you have knowledge about a wildlife crime, you may report it via the Service's tip line by either calling 1- 844-FWS-TIPS (397-8477) or online at Wildlife Crime Tips <https://www.fws.gov/wildlife-crime-tips>

### **2024 Program Activities**

In FY 2024, the Service will continue to use its network of special agents and international attachés to build on past successes and continue the fight against wildlife trafficking, both domestically and internationally. Investigations will continue to prioritize crimes that jeopardize wild populations of protected species devastated by poaching, black market trafficking, and transnational profiteering. The Service will also focus on special agent and wildlife inspector staffing levels. Due to mandatory retirement age for law enforcement positions, field agents are at a historical low while global responsibilities continue to grow. The Service will also continue to implement a holistic enforcement strategy for investigating and enforcing new provisions of

the Big Cat Public Safety Act. The law makes numerous large cat species subject to seizure and forfeiture when possessed or exhibited illegally, the disposition of which will require collaboration with U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Justice, and private sector entities to ensure proper placement and care.

### 2022 Secretary's Diversity Award

The Office of Law Enforcement's Leadership Team received the 2022 Secretary of the Interior's Diversity Award for thoughtfully evaluating the work force and putting forth a succession strategy that focused on diversity. As a result, approximately 45% of OLE's new hires represented underserved communities and it increased the number of women by 20%. The OLE's Leadership Team was recognized as being an outstanding champion and role model for the Service regarding its diversity, inclusion, and engagement hiring directives.



### Proposed Program Changes

The 2024 budget request for Law Enforcement Operations is \$104,444,000 and 352 FTE, a program change of +\$8,234,000 and +32 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Capacity to Enforce Wildlife Laws (+\$7,234,000/+29 FTE)** – Due to the physical and dangerous nature of Federal law enforcement work, the Service's Special Agents face mandatory retirement at 57 years of age. Field Agent numbers are at a historical low while their global responsibilities continue to grow. Within the next four years, OLE will have 47 mandatory retirements. With this funding, OLE will hire a full class of new agents. A newly hired agent attends the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center academy and Field Training for Officers, which is an investment of 1.5 years until the agent is at full performance of sworn duties. This funding is needed ensure adequate overlap of retiring and onboarding officers. The Service will implement a holistic enforcement strategy for investigating and enforcing new provisions of the Big Cat Public Safety Act. The law makes numerous large cat species subject to seizure and forfeiture when possessed or exhibited illegally, the disposition of which will require collaboration with U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Justice, and private sector entities to ensure they receive proper placement and care.

**Body-worn Cameras (+\$1,000,000/+3 FTE)** – Executive Order 14074 *Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices To Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety* has mandated use of body worn cameras (BWCs) for Federal BWCs are a promising tool to improve evidentiary outcomes, and enhance the safety of, and improve interactions between, officers and the public. BWCs can be highly effective resources, providing an unalterable audio and visual record of interactions that capture empirical evidence in the event of a crime, execution of warrants, police-citizen interaction, or use-of-force incident. This funding will initiate the OLE BWC program and purchase cameras and recording equipment for purposes of recording law enforcement agents' actions during: pre-planned attempts to serve an arrest warrant, pre-planned arrests, and the execution of a search or seizure warrant or order. Funding will also be used to govern the collection, storage, access, retention and dissemination, consistent with applicable federal laws. This initiative supports Secretary's priority of "Centering equity and environmental justice."

# International Affairs



# International Affairs

## Activity: Conservation and Enforcement

### Subactivity: International Affairs

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Change From 2023 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
International Conservation	(\$000)	9,899	10,098	+286	0	+2,514	12,898	+2,800
International Wildlife Trade	(\$000)	15,466	18,981	+489	-7,500	+1,847	13,817	-5,164
<b>Total, International Affairs</b>	(\$000)	<b>25,365</b>	<b>29,079</b>	<b>+775</b>	<b>-7,500</b>	<b>+4,361</b>	<b>26,715</b>	<b>-2,364</b>
	FTE	72	79	0	-8	+6	77	-2

#### Summary of 2024 Program Changes for International Affairs

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
International Conservation Capacity	+1,889	+2
Wildlife Health and Preventing Zoonotic Disease Spread	+1,847	+1
Human Dimensions of International Wildlife Conservation	+825	+1
Eurasia Regional Program	+800	+2
Theodore Roosevelt Genius Prize	-1,000	+0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+4,361</b>	<b>+6</b>

**Note:** The Service is proposing to create a new Subactivity, ePermits, by transferring funding that was previously appropriated to the International Affairs program, to better clarify the cross-programmatic nature of the system. For details, please see the ePermits chapter.

### Program Mission

Using an evidence-based approach, the Service’s International Affairs Program works with partners worldwide to conserve fish, wildlife, plants, and the habitats on which they depend, and to maintain the integrity of ecological processes beyond our borders for present and future generations. Through this program, the Service leads domestic and international efforts to protect, restore, and enhance the world’s diverse wildlife and their habitats with a focus on international species, including domestic species that range beyond our borders or are traded internationally.

### Program Elements

The International Affairs Program is comprised of the following elements:

- **International Conservation** – These species and regional programs provide technical and financial assistance and engage in partnerships around the globe to address key threats and strengthen capacity to conserve high-priority species and habitats.
- **International Wildlife Trade** – This program is responsible for implementing the Convention on

International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and other laws and treaties to, among other objectives, ensure international wildlife trade is legal and does not threaten the survival of animals and plants in the wild. Through international collaborations and technical and financial assistance, this program strengthens global implementation of CITES, applies scientific analysis to decision-making concerning the conservation and sustainable use of U.S. native and international species, and combats wildlife trafficking. Additionally, this program administers the Service's marine mammal permitting program to ensure that otherwise prohibited activities, such as take and import involving marine mammal species under the Service's jurisdiction, are permitted to ensure conservation of marine mammal populations.

### **Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders**

The Service has the legal mandate and responsibility to engage in the conservation of wildlife species both within and beyond our borders in the context of several long-standing commitments. These obligations are contained in domestic laws, international treaties, and other multilateral agreements, such as:

- The *Endangered Species Act* (ESA) (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543) prohibits the importation, exportation, take, and interstate or foreign commerce of fish, wildlife, and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered species.
- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international agreement that aims to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species.
- The Multinational Species Conservation Acts assist in the conservation and protection of elephants, rhinoceroses, tigers, great apes, marine turtles, and freshwater turtles and tortoises in their natural habitats by supporting projects around the world through competitive financial assistance programs:
  - The *African Elephant Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 4201-4246)
  - The *Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 5301-5306)
  - The *Asian Elephant Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 4261-4266)
  - The *Great Ape Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 6301-6305)
  - The *Marine Turtle Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 6601-6607), amended to include freshwater turtles and tortoises by the *John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019* (Public Law 116-9, section 7001).
- The *Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt (END) Wildlife Trafficking Act* (16 U.S.C. 7601-7644) aims to disrupt the ability of terrorists and criminal syndicates to profit from wildlife trafficking.
- The Pelly Amendment to the *Fishermen's Protective Act* (22 U.S.C. 1971-1979) authorizes embargo of wildlife products when foreign nationals engage in harvest or trade that diminishes the effectiveness of an international program in force with respect to the United States for the conservation of endangered or threatened species.
- The Canada/Mexico/U.S. Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management facilitates and enhances cooperation and coordination among the wildlife agencies of the three nations in projects and programs for the conservation and management of wildlife, plants, habitats, and ecological integrity of ecosystems of mutual interest.
- The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention) is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.
- The Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere

(Western Hemisphere Convention) aims to preserve in their natural habitats all species and genera of native American fauna and flora from extinction, and to preserve areas of extraordinary beauty, striking geological formations or regions of aesthetic, historic, or scientific value.

- The *Lacey Act* (18 U.S.C. 42; 16 U.S.C. 3371-3378) prohibits the importation, exportation, sale, or purchase of fish, wildlife, or plants taken, possessed, transported, or sold in violation of Federal, State, Tribal, or foreign laws.
- The *Wild Bird Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 4901-4916) helps ensure that exotic bird species are not harmed by international trade and encourages wild bird conservation programs in countries of origin.
- The *Marine Mammal Protection Act* (MMPA) (16 U.S.C. 1361-1407) prohibits, with certain exceptions, the take of marine mammals in U.S. waters and by U.S. citizens on the high seas, and the importation of marine mammals and marine mammal products into the U.S.
- The *Migratory Bird Treaty Act* (MBTA) (16 U.S.C. 703-712) makes it unlawful to pursue, hunt, kill, capture, possess, buy, sell, purchase, or barter any migratory bird including their feathers, parts, and products.
- The *Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region* (Cartagena Convention) and its *Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife* (SPAW Protocol) aim to protect, preserve, and sustainably manage areas that need conservation to safeguard their special value and the threatened or endangered flora and fauna they contain.
- The *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021* (ARPA) (P.L. 117-2) supports efforts to reduce the risk of zoonotic disease spread through wildlife trade inspections and permitting, combating wildlife trafficking, and wildlife health monitoring.

## Program Overview



*African savanna elephant. Credit: Cyndi Perry/USFWS*

The survival of natural resources important to the American public depends on effective international and domestic conservation efforts. The Service, through the International Affairs Program, supports the Department of the Interior's Strategic Goal to conserve, protect, manage, and restore natural and cultural resources in numerous and complementary manners. These include supporting on-the-ground conservation efforts that address threats and strengthen capacity to manage and protect wildlife; expanding international cooperation, and commitment to address growing threats to species and habitats;

providing leadership in international wildlife conservation policy; and implementing laws and regulations in the United States to promote the legality, traceability, and biological sustainability of the international trade in wild plants and animals. The complex threats facing species under the Service's purview require a science-based conservation approach coupled with international wildlife and trade policy interventions. For example, through its International Conservation program, the Service works to address the poaching of species such as elephants and rhinos by providing technical and financial assistance and strengthening

capacity to protect these species in their habitats, while providing policy support and fostering interagency collaboration to combat wildlife trafficking. The Service's International Wildlife Trade program protects species such as elephants and rhinos by ensuring that Endangered Species Act protections address changing threats, evaluating permits for activities ranging from scientific research to the importation of sport-hunted trophies and live animals, and negotiating with and strengthening capacity of foreign governments to improve the compliance and effectiveness of CITES and other relevant agreements. These actions complement the activities of the Service's Office of Law Enforcement, which enforces, investigates, and supports the prosecution of violations of wildlife laws, domestically in conjunction with relevant government agencies, and around the world in partnership with foreign governments.

Elephants, rhinos, tigers, apes, marine turtles, and freshwater turtles and tortoises are just a few of the species that captivate the hearts and minds of the American public. The Service's work in International Affairs extends to numerous native species whose ranges extend beyond our borders, including monarch butterflies, marine mammals, and sea turtles, as well as native species of animals and plants that are traded internationally, including American alligator, American ginseng, paddlefish, bobcat, river otter and various freshwater turtles. The conservation of these species and the habitats on which they depend provide concrete benefits to U.S. residents and to the U.S. and global



*Mud turtle (Kinosternon spp.). Credit: Melody Ray-Culp/USFWS*

economy. In addition, this work benefits the American public in myriad other ways. Maintaining intact habitats and healthy wildlife populations provides ecosystem services such as clean air and water, helps combat the impacts of climate change, increases resiliency of wildlife and human communities, and helps prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases between wildlife and humans.

The Service works closely with State agencies and Tribes to ensure legal, traceable, and biologically sustainable wildlife trade and provides technical and financial assistance, working alongside indigenous and other local communities, foreign governments, and other partners, to strengthen the capacity of other countries to address conservation of some of the most iconic species on Earth. Our approach entails working together to find innovative solutions to address the most urgent threats to species' survival, including unsustainable harvesting, poaching and wildlife trafficking, disease, habitat loss and degradation, climate change, and inadequate capacity or resources to support wildlife conservation. Through these efforts, the Service's work supports biologically sustainable use and conservation of plants and animals in international trade, from helping to establish protected areas and supporting protected area and wildlife management and community-based conservation, to leading high-level international trade negotiations.



*Patagonian landscape with grazing guanacos.  
Credit: Jenny Martinez/USFWS*

The Service’s international wildlife conservation efforts extend to some of the regions of the world that are hardest hit by climate change, which compounds other threats like habitat loss and poaching and can amplify pre-existing vulnerabilities of marginalized human communities around natural resource access and control, including for livestock grazing. Through financial and technical assistance, the Service works with indigenous and other communities and foreign governments to help build resilience against climate change by establishing and managing protected areas and other large landscapes, while strengthening the capacity of in-country partners to more

effectively manage these landscapes and their wildlife over the long term. This support for landscape-level conservation helps protect habitats acting as carbon sinks and maintain important wildlife refugia, such as the Amazon and Congo Basin as well as savanna and steppe grassland systems. The Service’s approach helps build resiliency while supporting local solutions to complex problems.

Healthy intact habitats with rich biodiversity are linked to increased resiliency and reduced likelihood of zoonotic disease transmission between wildlife and humans. Conservation of the world’s biodiversity is a critical strategy for reducing the likelihood of future pandemics and is an important component of the Service’s international work. Through close collaboration with other U.S. agencies, the Service contributes to the government-wide One Health approach, holistically considering how human, animal, and environmental health are closely linked. Through financial and technical assistance programs, the Service applies a range of evidence-based approaches that support pandemic prevention at the source, such as addressing illegal commercial



*Confiscated shipment of live mitten crabs. All mitten crabs (Eriocheir species) and their viable eggs are listed as injurious under the Lacey Act. In addition to being highly invasive, they carry a parasitic disease that can be transferred to humans in undercooked crab meat. Credit: USFWS*

bushmeat trade, supporting protected area management, curtailing the spread of injurious species and pathogens, and building multi-partner initiatives to address complex threats to wildlife and human health. Through its engagement on international treaties and conventions, and its role as the U.S. Management and Scientific Authorities of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Service also contributes to halting current disease spread and reducing the risk of future outbreaks via illegal and legal wildlife trade.

Although long-term results are not yet known, the disease, economic, and security implications of the COVID-19 pandemic are expected to have a strong negative impact on many at-risk species. From 2020 onwards, increases in poaching, wildlife subsistence use, and habitat loss brought on during the pandemic occurred alongside significant reductions in tourist and donor revenue, which reduced the ability of many

countries to effectively manage their wildlife and protected areas. These devastating changes underscore the critical importance of continuing the Service's longstanding international investment in community-based conservation, protected area management, and combating wildlife trafficking, as well as engaging in the development of One Health approaches more generally.

Since 1989, the Service has prioritized regional and species programs, resulting in more than 4,500 awards and more than \$360 million in financial assistance for on-the-ground conservation actions. Investments in projects with more than 700 partners in developing countries have resulted in more than \$500 million in additional non-Federal support for grant projects, more than doubling the impact of appropriated funding. In addition to the impact on wildlife conservation, these investments help set a positive tone for U.S. relations around the globe, including throughout the Western Hemisphere and across Africa and Eurasia.

### **International Conservation Strategies**

#### ***Conserving Priority Species and Habitats across Landscapes***

With mounting threats to wildlife and wild places across the globe, protecting habitats using landscape-level conservation strategies in collaboration with local communities is one of the most effective strategies to secure existing wildlife populations and ensure their future survival. Adequately staffed and resourced



*Fiery-throated hummingbird. Credit: Levi Novey/USFWS*

protected areas have proven to be effective in stabilizing and increasing wildlife populations. The Service's International Affairs Program has a well-established history of both supporting the creation of new protected areas, as well as developing the human and financial capacity to effectively manage protected areas – ranging from supporting the creation of the first community co-managed protected area in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and supporting the development of the national parks agency of Gabon, to strengthening community forest management in one of Central America's largest intact forest blocks in Belize, and mitigating human-wildlife

conflict across mixed-use landscapes in Indonesia. This approach to conserving protected areas has been critical to the survival of the last remaining populations of great green macaws, forest elephants, and other species.



*Sand Lake Wetland Management District.  
Credit: Tom Koerner/USFWS*

Through the International Affairs Program, the Service also coordinates the U.S. implementation of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, known as the Ramsar Convention or the Convention on Wetlands. This intergovernmental treaty provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the convention and wise use of wetlands and their resources. In this work, the Program designates wetlands of international importance that are, in part, critical as migratory stopover sites for species in a changing climate.

The Service's investment in landscape-level conservation, both domestically and internationally, ensures ecosystem integrity and defends against further degradation due to unregulated industries and an expanding human footprint. It exemplifies a One Health approach – with healthy habitats, supporting healthy wildlife populations, supporting healthy human communities, and vice versa. Protecting intact habitats also serves the critical function of staving off the negative impacts of climate change at both the local and global scale by conserving vital ecosystem services and some of the world's most valuable carbon sinks.

### ***Africa Regional Program***

Central Africa's Congo and Ogooué Basins make up the world's second-largest expanse of tropical forests. These forests provide habitat to an incredibly diverse array of wildlife and plants and represent a critical carbon sink. Central Africa's forests also provide a vital source of food, clean water, and other benefits to approximately 80 million people across the region. The Service has more than three decades of experience working in Central Africa with foreign governments, multi-donor agencies, other U.S. government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local communities. Building on this experience, a strategic, results-based vision for wildlife conservation in Central Africa was established that focuses on 1) improving site-based wildlife conservation in priority population strongholds in Central Africa; 2) increasing individual and institutional capacity for more effective wildlife protection at the local, national, and regional level, including the professionalization of protected area staff; and 3) directly addressing regional and priority pressures on wildlife, including zoonotic disease and the unsustainable regional bushmeat trade. Through this program, the Service has achieved significant results, including a long-term government-to-government partnership with the new parks agency of Gabon; the stabilization of one of the largest remaining populations of critically endangered forest elephants, in Gabon and northern Republic of the Congo; and a series of seven of the Service's signature MENTOR fellowship programs, which have educated a total of 61 Fellows, with Fellows for two new MENTOR programs beginning in FY 2023: MENTOR-Conservator in Gabon that will be a new Master's degree program for park managers, and MENTOR-Bat that will develop a global team of bat and One Health conservationists.

### *Latin America Regional Program*



*Jaguars are one of the priority species for the Latin America Regional Program. Credit: Levi Novey/USFWS*

Latin America is the most biologically diverse region on Earth and is critically important for wildlife conservation in the Western Hemisphere and globally. It holds half of the world's tropical forests, 40 percent of the planet's available freshwater, and nearly 50 percent of the species known to science, making it Earth's richest genetic reservoir and a critical carbon sink for mitigating climate change. The U.S. and Latin America also share many species that depend on the region's unique ecosystems for their survival. Protecting wildlife and habitats in the Western Hemisphere is critical for regional stability, security, and economic prosperity.

The goal of the Latin America Regional Program is to conserve priority species and habitats in the region by reducing threats to key wildlife populations from wildlife trafficking, unsustainable resource use, and human-wildlife conflict. Competitive grants are the main vehicle the program employs to deliver financial and technical assistance to partners.

Through the Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management, the Service collaborates with the governments of Mexico and Canada to implement shared, regional priorities like wildlife law enforcement, CITES implementation, shared ecosystem conservation, conservation of species of concern, and migratory birds. Hosted annually on a rotational basis by the three countries, the Trilateral Committee meeting is an important space for building relations between the three countries and improving natural resource management. In Mexico, the Service works with local and indigenous communities to protect key species and habitats, like jaguars, scarlet macaws, and monarch butterflies. In Central America, the Service supports partners to implement a regional strategy to conserve the five largest remaining intact forests, which are strongholds for species like jaguars and tapirs, and for mitigating climate change. In South America, the Service assists partners in the Tropical Andes, the Gran Chaco, and Patagonia to curb wildlife trade, reduce human-wildlife conflict, and protect key species. Through these projects, the Service aims to promote wildlife management practices that foster sustainable livelihoods for local communities and indigenous people. For example, the Service supported a community-led project to protect scarlet macaws in Honduras' Moskitia region from trafficking, making it the largest community-based parrot conservation area in Latin America (around the size of the Grand Canyon National Park).



*Scarlet macaw rescue center in Honduras' Moskitia region. Credit: USFWS and Christi Love Productions*

### ***Eurasia Regional Program***

Eurasia has a vast and diverse terrestrial and marine environment and is home to numerous iconic species, including tigers, elephants, rhinos, orangutans, snow leopards, pangolins, and saiga antelopes. The Service's Eurasia Program manages three Multinational Species Conservation Fund Programs: Asian Elephants, Asian Rhinos, and Tigers. The program works on shared conservation interests with countries across Europe and Asia. The U.S. shares populations of wildlife species that migrate between the U.S. and Eurasia and partners with the relevant countries to share information and improve wildlife management.

### **Foundations for Evidenced-Based Decision-Making**

The Service's international financial assistance programs are emerging as agency leaders of evidence-based conservation. In support of the Evidence Act and the Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act, the Service's International Affairs Program has pioneered methods and partnerships to establish clear, measurable goals against which progress and Service resources can be monitored and evaluated. For species and projects where Service support has been sustained, the agency is positioned to assess the cost-effectiveness and return-on-investment of its activities. For example, the Service has supported conservation of the highly threatened forest elephant since 1990. At surveyed sites across the region, a reported 60 percent of the current elephant population would not exist today if not for past Service funding and support.

International Affairs' emerging monitoring and evaluation protocol represents an important milestone to improve the agency's monitoring and evaluation of its foreign assistance, and is helping the Service meet important objectives described in Congressional legislation<sup>1</sup>. For the foreign species under the International Affairs Program's purview, monitoring and evaluation often require expensive methods or long-time frames, or both, to credibly census and detect population trends. While recognizing these challenges, International Affairs is committed to an iterative approach to improving its practices. Active evaluation-related work includes collaborating with third parties to review and assess the evidence for the activities funded by the Service and building program and partner capacity to report results and outcomes.

### **International Wildlife Trade Strategies**

#### ***Sustainable Use of Wildlife***

The U.S. is one of the world's largest importers and exporters of legal wildlife and wildlife products and plays a significant role in the global legal wildlife trade, currently valued in billions of dollars annually. To facilitate legal trade between the U.S. and the CITES members (currently 184 Parties, including 183 countries and the European Union) and to ensure this international trade does not threaten the survival of animals and plants in the wild, the Service is responsible for implementation of CITES in the U.S. Each Party to the agreement designates Management and Scientific Authorities to issue permits, make legal and scientific non-detriment findings, and monitor trade. For the U.S., these authorities are delegated to the Service's International Affairs Program.

#### ***CITES Implementation and Leadership***

CITES provides the necessary framework to ensure scientific integrity and global cooperation in order to

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<sup>1</sup> *Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act of 2016* (P.L. 114-191); and OMB memo (January 2018): M-18-04 "Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines for Federal Departments and Agencies that Administer United States Foreign Assistance"

facilitate legal and sustainable trade and combat wildlife trafficking for over 37,000 species of wild plants and animals, which are listed on one of three Appendices. On an ongoing basis, the International Affairs Program implements the treaty by providing leadership for the U.S.'s engagement at CITES meetings, ensuring that U.S. exports and imports align with sustainable use of species in international trade, and supporting capacity-building efforts abroad for CITES implementation around the world.



*Martha Williams (right), Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, looks on as Naimah Aziz, FWS International Affairs' Division Chief of Management Authority, makes an intervention on behalf of the United States at CoP19. Credit: Credit IISD-ENB/Diego Noguera*

Signatories to CITES, known as Parties, gather at policy and technical meetings. Conference of the Parties (CoP) meetings, which take place every two to three years, provide an opportunity to promote evidence-based policymaking and strengthen diplomatic relations and collaborations. At these meetings, the Parties review the implementation of CITES, make decisions regarding the financing and function of the CITES Secretariat in Switzerland to enable it to carry out its functions, consider amendments to Appendices I and II, consider reports presented by the Secretariat, and adopt recommendations for the improved effectiveness of CITES. Any Party to CITES may propose amendments to Appendices I and II, resolutions, decisions, and

other agenda items for consideration by all the Parties at the meeting.

In addition to the CoPs, the work of the Parties is also carried out through regular Committee meetings, which take place yearly between the CoPs. These include the Standing Committee, Animals Committee, and Plants Committee meetings. The Standing Committee provides general policy and operational direction to the Secretariat regarding CITES implementation and advises the other committees as appropriate. The Animals and Plants Committee meetings fill in the gaps in biological and other specialized knowledge. The committees undertake periodic reviews of listed species and advise when trade in a particular species may be unsustainable. Throughout this work, the Service adheres to the principle of scientific objectivity and integrity and uses the best available scientific information and trade data to inform U.S. positions for technical meetings and making non-detriment findings.

The Service has always provided leadership at CITES CoPs and technical meetings, coordinated and supported through the International Affairs Program. At a previous CoP, this included encouraging Parties to consider climate change in their evaluations and scientific findings for CITES-listed species affected by both climate change and international trade.

The Service supports sustainable trade compliant with CITES in the U.S. through a variety of activities: administering the nation-wide permitting program, maintaining trade records, supporting law enforcement efforts in confiscations, monitoring trade levels, and updating U.S. regulations to comply with CITES policies. The Service has also focused on strengthening the capacity of partners in developing nations to implement the treaty in their own countries, play leadership roles in CITES decision-making, and improve the effectiveness of CITES as a whole. The International Affairs Program builds capacity abroad, and often in partnership with the CITES Secretariat, by providing technical assistance and financial assistance to improve the ability of other parties to implement CITES.

### *Supporting U.S. State, Tribal, and Local Economies through Conservation of Native Species*

The international trade in CITES-listed native animal species such as bobcats, river otters, freshwater turtles, alligators, and plant species such as cacti and American ginseng, provides livelihoods for rural communities in the U.S. As an example of the value of this trade, the declared value of U.S. exports of skins from American alligators, bobcats, and river otters from 2013 to 2018 totaled more than \$790 million. The Service works to restore trust, reduce regulatory burden, and ensure that sustainable wildlife trade can remain an important part of our economy by working directly and closely with its partner State agencies to implement CITES for species of economic importance. Examples of this collaboration include assessing the status of native species impacted by trade, seeking input on CITES permit findings, facilitating participation on US delegations to CITES meetings, and coordinating CITES export programs. Through the CITES Coordination Committee, the Service also works closely with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) to facilitate communication between State wildlife agencies and the Service's CITES authorities.

The Service's coordination of American ginseng conservation exemplifies how the Service works with States and Tribes to ensure conservation of America's natural resources. In 2021, the harvest of wild and wild simulated American ginseng roots exceeded 33,000 dried pounds, with most of this ginseng being legally exported to Asia. Harvesters, the first tier in the economic chain for the sale and export of American ginseng, received \$600 to \$1,000 a pound for dried wild American ginseng roots. Conservative estimates have placed the wholesale value of wild American ginseng roots at roughly \$26.9 million per year.<sup>2</sup> The Service is working with State and Tribal ginseng program officials in four American ginseng working groups (enforcement, biology, regulatory, and outreach) across 19 States to address issues and challenges associated with legal and biologically sustainable trade in American ginseng. Each working group has identified needed steps to improve the sustainability of wild ginseng. In coordination with the States and Tribes, the Service is now working to support and implement measures these working groups recommended.

#### *Sustainable Use of Native Species alongside Conservation Supports Local Economies*



*American alligator at the Blackbeard Island National Wildlife Refuge in Georgia. Credit: Molly Martin/USFWS*

Working with various stakeholders, the recovery of the American alligator, together with the transformation of U.S. industry practices, is a success story that illustrates how conservation and sustainable use can go hand-in-hand and can contribute to building our economy. Once hunted to near extinction, the American alligator made a full recovery due to collaboration between the Federal government, State wildlife agencies, local and Tribal communities, and the leather industry. Today, the management program for American alligators includes a sustainable harvest, supporting industry while also conserving the species and its habitat, which in turn benefits many other species of plants and animals. This collaborative approach can serve as a model to promote sustainable trade and conservation of other native species.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.fws.gov/media/wild-american-ginseng-information-dealers-and-exporters>

### ***Innovating and Improving a Responsive and Efficient Permitting Process***

The Service's conservation permitting program managed through the International Affairs Program issues more than 30,000 permits per year under CITES and other permitting authorities. These permits facilitate more than \$675 million in legal wildlife trade annually and authorize a wide variety of activities, such as import, export, and re-export; captive breeding of non-native species; interstate commerce; and marine mammal research and public display.



*Permits for biomedical research are instrumental in the fight against COVID-19. Credit: Pan American Health Organization*

This permitting work supports individuals, businesses, scientific institutions, States, Tribes, and others, and is a strong component of the Service's work in helping to build back this Nation's economy. In addition, this work is a component of the Service's efforts to fight COVID-19 and other zoonotic diseases, as permits facilitate the import and export of biological samples needed for medical research, including studies on COVID-19 and preventing future outbreaks of other zoonotic diseases.

Another way the Service supports research on wildlife disease is through its authorizations and agreements related to marine mammal research, rescue, and rehabilitation activities. For example, the International Affairs Program works with its State, Federal, and private partners to ensure that responses to marine mammal unusual mortality events, strandings, and related research activities, including on disease, are in compliance with the MMPA and ESA. The Service has jurisdiction and authority for implementing the MMPA with respect to the polar bear, walrus, sea otters, the marine otter, manatees, and the dugong, and International Affairs has delegated authority for authorizing activities through permits, such as for the take and import of marine mammals under the MMPA and ESA.

In reviewing permit applications, the Service uses the best available biological information to make findings, as required by Service regulations, such as whether the trade in CITES-listed species may be detrimental to their survival, or whether it will enhance the survival of species listed under the ESA. Decisions on whether to issue permits are frequently made in close consultation with foreign CITES authorities, State wildlife agencies and Tribes, other Federal agencies, the CITES Secretariat, other relevant experts, and applicants.

### **Cross Program Strategies**

#### ***Combating Wildlife Trafficking***

Conserving species impacted by wildlife trafficking is vitally important to wildlife as well as people. Wildlife trafficking is a multibillion-dollar transnational crime that involves the unlawful harvest of and international trade in animals and plants or parts and products derived thereof. Organized crime syndicates are well structured, often violent, and capable of moving large volumes of poached wildlife and wildlife products. As such, illegal wildlife trade threatens biodiversity, national security, and economic prosperity by depleting natural resource assets and revenues, driving numerous species of economic and ecosystem value to the brink of extinction.



*Cheetahs are one of the priority species of the Combating Wildlife Trafficking financial assistance program. Credit: Ahmed Galal/Unsplash*

The International Affairs Program works to counter wildlife trafficking worldwide through a two-fold approach:

First, with funds from the Service’s program on International Wildlife Trade, International Affairs advances laws and policies related to wildlife trade and trafficking. As the U.S. Management and Scientific Authority of CITES, International Affairs implements the treaty and provides financial and technical assistance to strengthen implementation capacity of the CITES Secretariat and Parties, advancing global policy that supports legal trade and sustainable use of wildlife while combating illegal trade. Investments of these funds in capacity building have also sponsored scholarships for two cohorts and a total

of 29 professionals from Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean to graduate from the CITES Master’s Course at the *Universidad Internacional de Andalucía* in Spain; graduates are part of a growing cadre of experts leading CITES policy and implementation efforts, and often become leads for their respective country’s CITES Authorities.

Second, with funds from the Service’s program on International Conservation, the International Affairs Program provides financial and technical assistance to support on-the-ground conservation actions for species primarily threatened by illegal trade and for building capacity among emerging conservation leaders working on these issues. The Service especially supports efforts focused on understanding and addressing human behaviors along the illicit supply chain, including consumer demand – the ultimate driver of wildlife trafficking. Since 2016, grants and cooperative agreements have supported 64 field partners in more than 50 countries, advancing cutting-edge work such as piloting the use of African giant pouched rats to detect pangolin scales and hardwoods in shipping containers, and mapping emerging supply chains for lion bone.



*Saiga horns are trafficked for Asian traditional medicine. Credit: Andrej Gilnov/Creative Commons*

The Service is also increasingly investing in the conservation of international species experiencing profound, rapid declines due to illegal trade but have not yet received conservation attention and funding. In FY 2022, the Combating Wildlife Trafficking program launched its Species Conservation Catalyst Fund (SCCF) to invest strategic seed funding in priority species by supporting evidence-based, collaborative conservation efforts, with funds intended to catalyze transformational recovery for the species into the future. The first round of the SCCF is investing in (1) support for four conservation organizations to address the illegal capture of

cheetah cubs from the Horn of Africa for the live pet trade in the Middle East and (2) support for six conservation organizations to address the poaching of saiga antelope from Central Asia and Mongolia for the international trade of its horn. Initial support for cheetah resulted in critical research findings on the distribution of cheetah in the Horn of Africa and on potential illegal trade routes that will inform subsequent conservation interventions. Initial support for saiga antelope enhanced community conservation and engagement and was associated with an increase in the saiga population at the Ustyurt plateau in Kazakhstan from 1,270 in 2016 to 5,900 in 2019.

### ***Partnerships to Advance Shared Conservation Goals***

Working with others towards shared conservation goals is a theme that runs throughout the Service's international work. One example is the shared leadership that our International Affairs and Office of Law Enforcement programs provide in representing the Department of the Interior on the interagency Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking. Bringing together 17 Federal departments and agencies, the Task Force serves as the primary Federal platform for coordination and priority-setting for a whole-of-government approach to wildlife trafficking. Through the Task Force, the Service helped implement the Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt (END) Wildlife Trafficking Act, providing support to develop and advance anti-trafficking strategies at U.S. Embassies in countries identified as significant source, transit, or destination locations for the illegal wildlife trade.

The International Affairs Program is a valued partner both internally and externally. Whether it is assisting the California Fish and Game Department to address the illegal trade in *Dudleya* succulents; collaborating with officials from the Government of Oman and colleagues from the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to achieve conservation goals for shared marine turtle species; coordinating with Canada and Mexico to manage shared wildlife species; engaging with zoo staff to strategize how captive rhinos and outreach programs in the U.S. can contribute to the survival of wild rhinos; working with JetBlue Airlines to create an in-flight video to raise awareness about the need to preserve the beauty of the Caribbean; or collaborating with the U.S. Postal Service to raise funds for international wildlife conservation through sales of the Save Vanishing Species semipostal stamp – the Service's past and current partnerships increase the impact and reach of our work and establish the Service as a trusted and respected partner in wildlife conservation around the globe.

***Fighting Disease Risk to Salamanders and Other Species with the Lacey Act:*** In 2016 for the first time, the Service used the Lacey Act as a defense against disease. The Service listed 201 salamander species as injurious for their potential to introduce *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* (Bsal), a pathogenic chytrid fungus that is lethal to many salamander species, into native populations in the United States. The listing has prohibited interstate transport of the listed species and their importation into the United States without a Service-issued permit, protecting native salamander health; to date, Bsal has not been detected in the United States. International Affairs' Branch of Permits implements this restriction by reviewing and issuing permits when appropriate. Support from the American Rescue Plan Act is enabling the Service to consider additional species listings that target the reduction of zoonotic disease risk, benefiting both people and wildlife.

***CITES as a Defense against Disease Transmission:*** The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the disease risk of wildlife trade to human health and prompted demands for CITES to explicitly address this issue. International Affairs convened an internal team to rigorously consider impactful, science-based approaches for CITES to work within its mandate to reduce the international transmission of pathogens, including zoonotic diseases with pandemic potential. The Service's proactive planning and strategic partnerships played an important role in the 2021 recommendation (jointly proposed by Canada, Mexico, and the U.S.)

and subsequent establishment of a CITES intersessional working group on zoonotic disease. In the working group, International Affairs contributed to discussions regarding the need for risk assessments, safer transport of live animals, and international cooperation. To deepen CITES' considerations of disease prevention, the Service also submitted a proposal to CITES' 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP19) in 2022 to improve the transport of live animals. In response, CITES committed to several actions (i.e., Decisions) that will help Parties to better access and implement the existing transport regulations for live animals and plants in CITES trade – with positive implications for safer, healthier transport of live specimens. These steps could benefit some of the eight million live animals and 241 million live plants in CITES international trade each year. The Service is emerging as a key and collaborative player on the global stage to strengthen how CITES can address zoonotic disease risk in international wildlife trade.

***FWS International Affairs activities funded through the American Rescue Plan Act***

- The International Conservation program is:
  - Providing financial and technical assistance that helps prevent future zoonotic disease pandemics by investing in healthy wildlife and habitats and reducing high-risk interactions between humans and wildlife. It plans to launch MENTOR-Bat, the most recent program in its signature MENTOR series, to develop an interdisciplinary, global, One Health-focused team to address the role of bats – in terms of ecosystem health, commercial markets, cultural perceptions, and potential disease spillover – and develop policy actions for bat conservation. MENTOR-Bat financial assistance will be awarded in spring 2023 and activities may extend into FY 2024. (\$1M; P.L. 117-2, Sec. 6003 (a) (3))
- The International Wildlife Trade program is:
  - Working with the Service's Office of Law Enforcement and other partners to support the design and implementation of a wildlife and zoonotic disease surveillance system across the U.S. ports of entry, and to facilitate processing of permit applications for international trade related to zoonotic disease research and reducing the spread of disease. This work started in FY 2022 and will extend beyond FY 2024. (\$1M; P.L. 117-2, Sec. 6003 (a) (1))
  - Implementing regulatory permitting requirements for additional injurious species listed by Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation (FAC) under Title 18 of the Lacey Act. This will include identifying high-risk species in international trade that might carry disease, training biologists or hiring staff with biosafety and zoonotic disease expertise to develop possible mitigation/protocols and requirements for the non-commercial import of these injurious species, and conducting outreach and customer service to permit applicants. This work will build on FAC's work and is expected to start in FY 2023. (\$3.5M; P.L. 117-2, Sec. 6003 (b))

**2024 Program Activities**

The 2024 budget will:

- Work with partners around the world to increase transparency and accountability in technical and financial assistance programs for the conservation of species of international concern and their habitats.
- Combat wildlife trafficking through international cooperation and technical and financial assistance programs that focus on species conservation and successful implementation of CITES.
- Support the Service's leadership following the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP19). Currently the U.S. chairs the CITES Standing Committee and is a member of the Standing Committee representing the North American Region and the CITES Technical Committee Meetings for Animals and Plants. Implement species decisions and outcomes taken at CoP19.

- Advance implementation of CITES and other U.S. wildlife laws domestically and ensure international wildlife trade does not threaten the survival of animals and plants in the wild through decision-making based on robust science.
- Increase the Service's capacity to address its permit processing workload and become more efficient in applying our risk-based approach to permit issuance.
- Develop solutions to securely eliminate the need for paper-based CITES permitting.
- Prevent the development and spread of zoonotic diseases.
- Develop and implement tools to address and adapt to the impacts of climate change on wildlife and habitats.
- Enhance foundations for evidence-based decision-making.

### Proposed Program Changes

The 2024 budget request for International Affairs is \$26,715,000 and 77 FTE, a net program change of +\$4,361,000 and +6 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

#### **International Conservation Capacity (+\$1,889,000/ +2 FTE):** This includes:

- **\$1,239,000** for enhancing financial assistance, including conservation in Latin America, which is the most biologically diverse region of the globe, harboring half of the world's tropical forests, 40 percent of the planet's available freshwater, and nearly half of all species known to science. Protecting and conserving wildlife and ecosystems in Latin America is critical for regional security and economic prosperity. While the focus will primarily be the Western Hemisphere, the program will address conservation issues of imminent concern throughout the world. The projects will support conservation goals that address climate change, support local economies, and improve environmental justice. These projects may include:
  - Conserving shared species of importance for the U.S. and Mexico, such as the Monarch butterfly and the California condor.
  - Bolstering conservation of key habitats, like tropical forests, to protect these strongholds for critical species, like the jaguar, scarlet macaw, and tapir, and adapt to climate change.
  - Promoting sound wildlife management practices and fostering sustainable livelihoods for local communities, indigenous people, and underrepresented groups (women, Afro-descendants, etc.) in the region.
- **\$650,000** to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of its international conservation efforts and increase transparency, accountability, and oversight in technical and financial assistance programs. Efforts support evidence-building activities and evaluation capacity, as directed by the Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act (FATTA) of 2016, and the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act (Evidence Act) of 2018. The Service has developed an approach to measure and evaluate the conservation impact of its international financial assistance, including quantifiable outcome measures and associated monitoring methods; to use and build evidence via evaluation-related contracts, grants, performance measures, and funding opportunities; and to represent its programs to partners on these issues in international fora. This will support an Evaluation Officer, one additional staff member, and other resources to implement the effort.

**Wildlife Health and Preventing Zoonotic Disease (+\$1,847,000/ +1 FTE)** – This funding will enhance the Service’s work to address zoonotic disease risk and will support projects to improve wildlife and habitat health and ecosystem resilience in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, including in regions that are hotspots for zoonotic disease. Additionally, the Service reduces the risk of zoonotic disease transmission in international wildlife trade by strengthening U.S. permitting processes for injurious species, live animals, and biomedical materials and supporting capacity building with CITES Parties. The Service will also use this funding to engage in outreach and communication with the American public and global external partners to build awareness about the important role that wildlife conservation plays in preventing the spillover and spread of zoonotic disease and promote human behaviors that support healthy ecosystems and safe, legal wildlife trade.

**Human Dimensions of International Wildlife Conservation (\$825,000/ +1 FTE)** –Conservation issues occur in complex systems with many interacting variables, most of which are social in nature. It is only in recent decades that the formalized field of Human Dimensions of Wildlife, also known as conservation social science, has been increasingly seen as a critical component of a cross-disciplinary, socio-ecological approach to conservation and natural resource management. The International Conservation program has already taken steps to improve our conservation impact by building our social science capacity throughout the program. The additional resources will allow the program to build upon these first steps, further advance our conservation mission, and continue to show leadership on this issue within the broader conservation community. Additional programming may include:

- Building internal capacity and a community of practice to understand and address Human-Wildlife Conflict or Co-existence, which is a primary threat for every program in the International Conservation program.
- Providing additional social science technical assistance to implementing partners. Addressing many of the most significant threats to wildlife requires understanding and changing human behaviors, such as drivers for poaching and trafficking of threatened species and the consumption of bushmeat. Having additional social scientists on staff within the program will allow us to provide technical assistance to partners in the development, execution, and evaluation of these social science-based interventions for improved conservation outcomes.
- Increasing our capacity to assess and mitigate non-financial risk in our international programming. We are directed to provide support to conservation efforts in regions with conflict and instability. Additional resources will allow us to more quickly develop and implement risk mitigation tools and social safeguard guidance for improved conservation delivery and compliance which mitigates risks, including the risk of human rights abuses.

**Eurasia Regional Conservation Program (\$800,000/ +2 FTE)** –Eurasia encompasses all major types of ecosystems and the world’s highest number of threatened species. Pressure from growing populations, urban development, linear infrastructure, and the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources have decimated wildlife populations and habitats. The region is also the top destination for illegal wildlife products and, as such, fuels the illegal wildlife trade. Currently, it is the only regional focus in the International Conservation program without dedicated funding to address wildlife conservation needs at a landscape level. New regional funding will provide the opportunity to develop programs that work

synergistically with the Multinational Species Conservation Funds in the region to amplify conservation impact for all threatened species. Programs may include:

- Building the capacity of in country wildlife conservation practitioners to manage threatened species in situ through regional and bilateral programs.
- Developing innovative interventions to address the most urgent threats to wildlife conservation at a landscape level, such as consumption of illegal wildlife products and human-wildlife conflict.

**Theodore Roosevelt Genius Prize (-\$1,000,000/ +0 FTE)**— The budget does not request funding for this program.

# Fish and Aquatic Conservation



# Fish and Aquatic Conservation

**Activity: Fish and Aquatic Conservation**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Budget Request	Change From 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
National Fish Hatchery Operations	(\$000) <i>FTE</i>	71,776 318	76,356 335	+2,476 0	-6,000 -15	+7,114 +26	79,946 346	+3,590 +11
Maintenance and Equipment	(\$000) <i>FTE</i>	26,046 61	26,314 64	+431 0	0 0	+22,906 +20	49,651 84	+23,337 +20
Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation	(\$000) <i>FTE</i>	123,004 292	138,901 293	+2,282 0	-1,954 -10	-9,042 +34	130,187 317	-8,714 +24
<b>Total, Fish and Aquatic Conservation</b>	(\$000) <i>FTE</i>	<b>220,826</b> <b>671</b>	<b>241,571</b> <b>692</b>	<b>+5,189</b> <b>0</b>	<b>-7,954</b> <b>-25</b>	<b>+20,978</b> <b>+80</b>	<b>259,784</b> <b>747</b>	<b>+18,213</b> <b>+55</b>

<b>Summary of 2023 Program Changes for Fish and Aquatic Conservation</b>		
<b>Request Component</b>	<b>(\$000)</b>	<b>FTE</b>
Hatchery Operations	+13,014	+20
Fish Technology and Health Centers	+5,000	+10
Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Partnership	-400	-1
Yukon River Salmon Agreement	-1,000	0
Pacific Salmon Treaty	-1,500	0
Warm Springs Fish Health Center	-8,000	-3
Deferred Maintenance	+15,000	+0
Annual Maintenance	+7,906	+20
National Fish Habitat Action Plan	+500	+0
Habitat Assessment and Restoration	+494	+1
Delaware River Basin Conservation Act	-1,500	0
Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement	-7,000	+0
Population Assessment and Cooperative Management	+2,267	+6
Alaska Subsistence Co-Management	+2,000	0
FWS Subsistence In-Season Management	+750	+6
Pacific Salmon Treaty	-150	-0
Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission	-700	0
Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey	-818	0
Snakehead Eradication	-1,000	0
Great Lakes F&W Restoration	-2,110	0
Prevention	+4,075	+17
Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid Response Fund/Team	+2,600	+5
Lake Tahoe Restoration	-950	0
Contract Fishing (Invasive Carp)	-1,000	0
Hydrilla, Eel and Milfoil Invasive Grasses	-1,500	-0
Invasive Carp	-5,000	0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+20,978</b>	<b>+80</b>
Transfer Office of Subsistence Management to Operation of Indian Programs Appropriation	-7,954	-25
	<b>+13,024</b>	<b>+55</b>

## Program Mission

The Fish and Aquatic Conservation (FAC) program works with partners and the public to conserve fish and other aquatic resources for the continuing benefit of the American people. For over 150 years, the Service has provided economic and ecological benefits through the conservation of aquatic species and habitats. Since its inception as the United States Commission on Fish and Fisheries in 1871, the Service's Fisheries Program has worked collaboratively with Native American Tribes, States, landowners, and other partners and stakeholders to achieve the goals of healthy, self-sustaining populations of fish and other aquatic species, and the conservation or restoration of their habitats. Building on this foundation, the FAC program will work closely with our partners in FY 2024 to implement the ambitious conservation goals established by Executive Order 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, and Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful. The FAC program focuses on restoring and retaining connected freshwater ecosystems to provide habitat for aquatic species and foster resiliency to effects of climate change.

## Program Elements

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The Fish and Aquatic Conservation program is comprised of the following program elements:

- National Fish Hatchery System Operations – propagates healthy, genetically diverse aquatic species to re-establish wild populations and meet Tribal trust responsibilities, conducts applied scientific research, monitors and diagnoses aquatic animal health in captivity and in the wild, and develops management models to conserve fisheries in the face of climate change.
- Maintenance and Equipment – maintains property and equipment, including the repair, rehabilitation, and replacement of constructed assets, for 86 National Fish Hatchery System facilities and a national network of 51 Fisheries Offices (FOs). The Service’s ability to accomplish its mission and ensure the safety of employees and visitors is dependent upon the condition of key assets associated with water delivery, aquatic species propagation, and effluent management.
- Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation – works to assess, conserve, and restore aquatic habitats and some of the Nation’s most iconic fish and other aquatic species. FOs develop the science and evidence-based information that the Service and its partners rely upon to guide fish conservation and management decisions. This work includes initiatives to conserve aquatic species, support climate adaptation, and build resiliency. Specific program areas include:
  - *Habitat Assessment and Restoration* – improves habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms through programs such as the National Fish Passage Program and the National Fish Habitat Partnership.
  - *Population Assessment and Cooperative Management* – works in cooperation with Federal, Tribal, and State partners to understand current and emerging challenges facing our Nation’s aquatic resources, to proactively manage these complex systems, and to monitor and evaluate the impacts of conservation actions.
  - *Aquatic Invasive Species* – prevents and controls the introduction and spread of invasive species, a primary threat to the Nation’s natural resources. FAC conducts this work through leadership of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, Injurious Wildlife listings, and species-specific AIS control and management.

## Economic Benefits

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The positive environmental, social, and economic effects stemming from the Service’s work are of growing importance to communities nationwide, as the health and well-being of Americans are linked to the health and well-being of nature. According to the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation’s special report on fishing activities, roughly 52 million Americans went fishing in 2021, up 4.5% over 2019. Research indicates that in recent years, new participants are more likely to be female, younger, living in an urban area, and be more diverse than existing participants. This gives us much to build on in terms of growth in participation and diversity of anglers. Our opportunity is learning from this growth and working to remove barriers to participation in fishing and other connections with nature. Fishing and other aquatic-based recreational opportunities are multi-cultural, multi-generational experiences that improve the quality of life for diverse American families and generate substantial economic returns for local communities. These outdoor recreational opportunities depend on the Service’s vital work to conserve wild fisheries, propagate and release healthy fish, and enhance our Nation’s diverse aquatic habitats.



*Photo Credit: Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation*

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### Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders

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The Service's Fish and Aquatic Conservation program is authorized by a wide range of statutes, treaties, compacts, court orders, mitigation agreements, and cooperative agreements. Relevant statutes include, but are not limited to:

- *The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956* (16 U.S.C. 742a-742j) — establishes a comprehensive national fish and wildlife policy and authorizes the Secretary to take steps required for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fisheries and wildlife resources through research, acquisition of refuge lands, development of existing facilities, and other means.
- *The Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act* (16 U.S.C. 661-666(e)) — directs the Service to investigate and report on proposed Federal actions that affect any stream or other body of water and to provide recommendations to minimize impacts on fish and wildlife resources.
- *The Endangered Species Act* (ESA) (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544) — prohibits the import, export, or taking of fish and wildlife and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered species; provides for adding species to and removing them from the list of threatened and endangered species; and for preparing and implementing plans for their recovery.
- *The Mitchell Act* (16 U.S.C. 755-757) — authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to carry on activities for the conservation of fishery resources in the Columbia River Basin.
- *The Colorado River Storage Project Act* (43 U.S.C. 620) — provides that facilities will be built and operated to mitigate losses of, and improve conditions for, fish and wildlife in connection with the Colorado River Storage Project.
- *The Sikes Act* (16 U.S.C. 670a-670o) — directs the Secretary of Defense to conserve and rehabilitate natural resources on military installations and requires the military to work with the Service in preparing integrated natural resource management plans.
- *The Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Species Prevention and Control Act*, as amended by the *National Invasive Species Act*, (NISA, 16 U.S.C. 4701 et seq.) — authorizes the Service to develop and implement a program to prevent and control infestations of zebra mussels and other nonindigenous aquatic invasive species in waters of the United States.
- *The Lacey Act Amendment*, (18 U.S.C. 42; 16 U.S.C. 3371-3378) — provides that the Secretary designate injurious wildlife and ensure the humane treatment of wildlife shipped to the United States.
- *America's Conservation Enhancement Act*, (16 U.S.C. 8201 et seq.) — Title II encourages partnerships among public agencies and other interested persons to promote fish conservation.

**Activity: Fish and Aquatic Conservation**  
**Subactivity: National Fish Hatchery System Operations**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Change From 2023 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
National Fish Hatchery	(\$000)	71,776	76,356	+2,476	-6,000	+7,114	79,946	+3,590
Operations	FTE	332	335	0	-15	+26	346	+11

**Summary of 2023 Program Changes for National Fish Hatchery System Operations**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Hatchery Operations	+13,014	+20
Fish Technology and Health Centers	+5,000	+10
Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Partnership	-400	-1
Yukon River Salmon Agreement	-1,000	0
Pacific Salmon Treaty	-1,500	0
Warm Springs Fish Health Center	-8,000	-3
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+7,114</b>	<b>+26</b>
Transfer to Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation	-6,000	-15
<b>Total Changes</b>	<b>+1,114</b>	<b>+11</b>

**Program Overview**

The National Fish Hatchery System (NFHS) consists of 71 National Fish Hatcheries, one historic National Fish Hatchery, six Fish Health Centers, seven Fish Technology Centers, and the Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Partnership Program. Quite simply, there is no other system on the globe matching the diverse skill and production potential of the NFHS where we shape responsible conservation aquaculture for generations to come. The NFHS operates under the authority of numerous treaties and consent decrees, statutes, and recovery and restoration plans.

The Service’s 71 captive rearing facilities, produce over 150 million fish and other aquatic organisms each year to aid in the recovery of threatened and endangered species, restore imperiled species, mitigate the impact of Federal water development projects, meet Tribal trust responsibilities, and enhance recreational and commercial fishing opportunities for a diverse American public. With growing impacts of climate change, habitat fragmentation and degradation, and invasive species, the Service’s rearing facilities are increasingly relied on to meet the needs and expectations of the American people that depend on robust aquatic resources for their sustenance, livelihood, and the mental health benefits they provide. Highly skilled staff operating a national network of Fish Health and Fish Technology Center conduct applied scientific research to advance and develop responsible propagation and stocking programs, expand the fundamental understanding of aquatic species, and improve future conservation efforts.

For over 150 years, the National Fish Hatchery System has served diverse communities across the United States and have become ingrained in their culture and traditions. Their proximity to waterways and connections with local communities position them to promote administration priorities and the America the Beautiful initiative by increasing equitable recreational angling opportunities for a diverse public in both nature-rich and nature-deprived communities. These facilities not only contribute to the

recovery and restoration of aquatic species and scenic waterways, but also act as gathering places and education centers from coast to coast, and generation to generation.

In FY 2022 NFHS bolstered its long-standing reputation as global leader in captive rearing and conservation by releasing or transferring 121 species, including fish, mollusks, reptiles, amphibians, mammals, and arthropods totaling over 150 million individuals. Within that total, the NFHS stocked or transferred over 20 million threatened or endangered organisms across 36 species. In addition, the Service released more than 4 million individual trout and salmon in support of Tribal management plans. To help avoid further declines and Endangered Species Act listings, NFHS facilities worked closely with FAC partners to implement Fisheries Management Plans and other agreements, benefitting at least 50 at-risk species.

### Fish Health Centers

The Service's six Fish Health Centers (Health Centers) comprise an unparalleled collection of aquatic animal health professionals and are the hub of the Service's aquatic animal health program. Rising water temperatures and other climate change impacts to aquatic ecosystems produce environmental conditions for diseases to flourish. The Service's Health Centers are unique in their ability to detect, identify, monitor, and mitigate disease-causing pathogens that threaten aquatic populations and the diverse communities and industries that depend on them. Their findings inform decisions that not only improve the health of captive fishes at Federal, Tribal and State hatcheries but also valuable fish populations in the wild.

Working closely with State and Tribal partners via programs like the National Wild Fish Health Survey, Health Centers help maintain the health of native fish populations important to local communities, subsistence harvest, and recreation. To help prevent the introduction and spread of dangerous aquatic pathogens, fish health professionals investigate emerging health issues, such as invasive species that can be vectors for disease. The Health Centers are also an integral part of the Nation's aquatic animal health testing system: the National Animal Health Laboratory Network. This network of standardized testing facilities serves as the preeminent source of information on the status of aquatic animal pathogens in the wild and facilitates interstate and international commerce of aquatic animals, while protecting the natural resources of the U.S.



Biologists with the Bozeman Fish Health Center survey samples of fish collected from the Colorado River as part of a bacterial kidney disease project. *Photo Credit: USFWS*

### Fish Technology Centers

In the face of a changing climate, increased demand for clean water, and rising extinction rates, practical and applied research emerges as a critical component to the resilience of both aquatic populations and diverse human communities. The Service's seven Fish Technology Centers (Tech Centers) provide the scientific foundation for recovery and restoration programs, enable fisheries professionals to carry out their work more effectively, and position aquatic populations to adapt to challenging conditions. The Tech Centers conduct practical research in animal culture biology, genetics, ecological physiology, nutrition, biometrics and modeling, and cryopreservation for application in aquatic resource management. The

knowledge gained through Tech Centers informs and benefits conservation, the aquaculture industry, and other fish propagation efforts. Tech Center work maximizes conservation aquaculture production

and success by supporting the food aquaculture industry, which acts as an ultra-efficient protein production source shaping human nutrition on global scales. Tech Center staff have published more than 1,000 papers in peer-reviewed journals over the last 30 years, covering a broad range of scientific fish conservation challenges and findings to support the conservation of aquatic resources across the Nation.

### **Aquatic Animal Health**

The Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Partnership (AADAP) program helps ensure nationwide compliance of the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act and helps maintain the health and fitness of fish reared at Federal, State, Tribal, and private hatcheries.

AADAP works with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), other Federal and State agencies, Tribes, academic institutions, and private partners to obtain FDA approval of safe and effective new drugs needed for aquaculture and fisheries management. AADAP is the only program in the country singularly focused on obtaining critically needed new drugs for use in aquatic species. AADAP is comprised of four sub-programs: the National Investigational New Animal Drug (INAD), Research, New Animal Drug Approval (NADA), and Outreach programs. These programs provide Federal, State, Tribal, and private fish culturists and fish health professionals legal access to 19 aquaculture drugs currently in the drug approval process and conducts studies to evaluate the safety and efficacy of aquaculture drugs critical to the health and fitness of captive and wild fish populations. AADAP assists drug sponsors in navigating the new animal drug approval process and provides fisheries professionals with up-to-date information about existing and pending drug approvals as well as extensive drug use guidance information. By helping to ensure the health and survival of fish introduced to the wild for restoration, recovery, and recreational purposes and increasing production and economic returns of fish reared in industry aquaculture, AADAP also provides fisheries professionals tools to mitigate and promote resilience of populations undergoing stresses due to climate change.

### **Recreation and Education**

Hatcheries are integral parts of the communities in which they are located, providing opportunities for the public to visit and learn about the Service's work to propagate and conserve fish and their habitats through collaborative conservation. For generations, the Service has engaged families and



Urban Fishing Intern Marye Martin shows youth from Alaska's Mat-Su Valley how to cast a spinner reel. *Photo Credit: Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Alaska.*

local communities to instill a love of the outdoors and a strong conservation ethic in tomorrow's leaders. Through the National Fish Hatchery Volunteer Act of 2006, Service hatcheries offer volunteer opportunities and education programs that provide hands-on experiences and opportunities for discovery to enhance the public's understanding of America's unique and diverse aquatic species and habitats. In 2022, 1,284 youth and adults still managed to contribute 82,000 volunteer hours (the equivalent of 36 FTEs), assisting biologists in a variety of hands-on resource management activities. Twenty-two Friends Groups, composed of local volunteers, organized to support the NFHS

in the Regions and helped coordinate volunteers and businesses in local communities to assist with NFHS facility operations, special events, and outdoor classrooms for youth.

The 86 facilities within the NFHS are located in geographically and culturally diverse regions and promotes the Service's equity and justice goals. This is accomplished by applying various programs, including Pathways and the Youth Conservation Corps to build the next generation of conservation and community leaders through youth engagement activities, exposing youth to conservation careers, and targeting under- represented groups in urban centers, minorities and women. Youth engagement and introductions to FAC careers also include educational programs that connect youth directly with FAC staff on and off site. This includes school and community career days, Fish in the Classroom lessons, and hatchery tours to encourage the public to take advantage of recreational activities on hatchery grounds.

### **Mitigation**

The Service conducts mitigation programs under the broad authorities of the *Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956*, the *Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act*, as well as authorities for specific Federal water development projects to promote the sustainable use of natural resources while also supporting local communities and economies. The Service propagates fish at its hatcheries to mitigate the impacts of Federal water development projects on fisheries that are important for recreation and Tribal sustenance. Water development agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Tennessee Valley Authority, Bureau of Reclamation, National Marine Fisheries Service and the Bonneville Power Administration contribute funds towards these mitigation propagation programs.

### **2024 Program Activities**

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The 2024 budget will:

- Support work to propagate healthy, genetically diverse aquatic species to help sustain wild populations, fulfill Tribal trust responsibilities, and develop new scientific tools to advance conservation of threatened, endangered, and imperiled species; and
- Support the Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad to address climate change and its impacts to aquatic species.

### **Proposed Program Changes**

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The 2023 budget request for National Fish Hatcheries Operations is \$79,946,000 and 346 FTE, a net program change of +\$7,114,000 and +26 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Hatchery System Operations Activities (+\$13,014/ +20 FTE)** – This request will focus on propagating fish and other aquatic species to carry out Tribal trust responsibilities and sustain wild populations, many of which are increasingly threatened by climate change. Funding will enable the Service to implement additional actions to help prevent the further decline of at-risk species and reduce the need for Endangered Species Act listings. In addition, these funds will help further refine hatchery propagation methods. The America the Beautiful initiative calls for a decade-long effort to support locally led and voluntary conservation and restoration efforts across public, private, and Tribal lands and waters in order to create jobs and strengthen the economy's foundation; tackle the climate and nature crises; and address inequitable access to the outdoors. These increases support this effort and contribute to the America the Beautiful effort by supporting tribally led conservation and restoration priorities and expanding collaborative conservation of fish and wildlife habitats and corridors.

**Fish Health and Technology Centers (+\$5,000,000/ +10 FTE)** – This request will enhance our

Service wide ability to perform scientific research and analysis by increasing staffing. This will allow for increased services and applied research to mitigate disease-causing pathogens that threaten aquatic species, evaluate the impacts of climate change on the Nation's aquatic ecosystems, eDNA research and staffing, and improve the effectiveness of our conservation efforts in response to climate change and other threats facing our native species.

**Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Partnership (-\$400,000/ -1 FTE)** – The Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Partnership will prioritize work with other Federal agencies, along with State and industry partners, to pursue U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval of safe and effective new drugs needed for aquaculture and fisheries management.

**Yukon River Salmon Agreement (-\$1,000,000/ -0 FTE)** – The budget includes a reduction in funding for this agreement, which is a pass-through to the State of Alaska. The Service will use funds to address other priority hatchery projects.

**Pacific Salmon Treaty (-\$1,500,000/ -0 FTE)** – The budget reduced funding for Pacific Salmon Treaty to preserve funding for higher priority work within Hatchery Operations.

**Warm Spring Fish Health Center (-\$8,000,000/ -3 FTE)** – The 2024 budget submission does not request dedicated funding for the Warm Spring Fish Health Center as was directed in the 2023 Interior Appropriation. The Service will broaden coordinated efforts towards eDNA analysis, equipment, and research in our national fish health and tech centers.

**Activity: Fish and Aquatic Conservation**  
**Subactivity: Maintenance and Equipment**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Change From 2023 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
<b>Maintenance and Equipment</b>	(\$000)	26,046	26,314	+431	0	+22,906	49,651	+23,337
	FTE	64	64	0	0	+20	84	+20

**Summary of 2023 Program Changes for Maintenance and Equipment**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Deferred Maintenance	+15,000	+0
Annual Maintenance	+7,906	+20
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+22,906</b>	<b>+20</b>

**Program Overview**

The Service’s National Fish Hatcheries produce fish and other aquatic species to meet recovery and restoration goals for threatened and imperiled species, enhance recreational angling access and opportunities through collaborative conservation, and provide equitable public access to hatchery facilities for recreation and education. Properly functioning infrastructure is essential to fish production and to the safety of Service employees and visitors. The propagation process requires a complex life-sustaining system of wells, pumps, pipelines, filters, and heating/cooling equipment to deliver a consistent, well-oxygenated water supply; tanks, ponds, and raceways to grow fish; and boats and trucks to transport this valuable cargo to its destination. While every piece of this infrastructure must be well maintained to prevent mortality and meet production goals, a comprehensive asset management system prioritizes adequate water flow and quality to sustain captive aquatic populations to meet recovery, restoration, and Tribal trust responsibilities.

**National Fish Hatchery System Maintenance and Equipment**

The NFHS’s unique ability to promote collaborative conservation, balance resource use and diverse local economies, and contribute to building and fueling a better future is dependent on operational facilities. Maintenance and equipment funds allow the Service to provide timely upkeep of hatchery property and equipment; purchase maintenance-related supplies; and repair, rehabilitate, or replace constructed assets. The Service’s ability to accomplish its mission is largely determined by the condition of key assets associated with water delivery, aquatic species culture, and effluent management. These assets deliver, treat, and discharge water from hatcheries and regulate the environment to maximize and optimize survival of aquatic organism to promote ecosystem health, and sustainable use of resources. The reliability of all these assets is critically important with respect to threatened and endangered species, with three-fourths of the NFHS’ \$3.5 billion of real property assets considered as mission-critical water management assets.

Since deferred maintenance needs of the FAC program are not eligible to receive funding under Great American Outdoors Act, maintenance needs for the aging hatchery system are primarily reliant on discretionary funding as is requested here. The application of this discretionary funding to NFHS projects positions the system to build back better in communities across the country, in both nature-rich and nature-deprived areas.

The Service has developed asset performance measures and a strategy to ensure effective operations and service delivery. The Department measures real property asset conditions using a Facility Condition Index (FCI), a ratio of repair cost to replacement cost. A rigorous condition assessment process ensures objectively determined repair needs, and appropriately estimated associated costs using industry standards. The Service’s Asset Management Plan and Regional Asset Business Plans are used to manage assets, address repair needs, and dispose of assets that are low in priority or excess to the Government’s needs.

**Annual Maintenance**

Annual maintenance funds ensure timely upkeep of NFHS real property and equipment. In addition to employee’s salaries, these funds purchase maintenance-related supplies (e.g., lumber, pipe, paint, tools and filters) and replace small equipment costing less than \$5,000. Current annual maintenance funding expenditures focus on priority preventive maintenance needs. Through the Service Asset Maintenance Management System (SAMMS) and condition assessments, the Service can plan recurring maintenance to reduce long-term costs, and foster successful operations and mission delivery.

**Deferred Maintenance**

Functional properties and equipment are essential to the long-term success of the NFHS. Deferred maintenance projects are directed at the repair, rehabilitation, or replacement of constructed assets, and encompass assets used for propagation of threatened, endangered and imperiled species, fulfilling Tribal trust and Federal mitigation responsibilities, and enhancing outdoor recreational access and subsistence opportunities. The NFHS uses a proactive and well-supported approach to fix failing infrastructure. This allows the Service to be responsive to the changing demands brought on by climate change and other environmental stressors. In part, we accomplish this by directing deferred maintenance funds at the highest priority assets in greatest need of repair across the NFHS based on a combination of Facility Condition Index and Asset Priority Index scores.



Genoa National Fish Hatchery, Wisconsin, replacing the old fiberglass indoor fish production raceways with long lasting concrete raceways. Photo credit: USFWS

The Service has \$417 million in current deferred maintenance needs for the NFHS, of which \$342 million are maintained with Service funds and \$75 million maintained with non- Service funds.

**Fisheries Office Maintenance and Equipment**

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office maintenance and equipment funds purchase and maintain over

**Service Asset Maintenance Management System (SAMMS)**

Under the auspices of the Occupational Safety and Health Act and DOI standards, the Service developed an Asset Management Plan that guides management of the NFHS’ \$3.5 billion in essential real and personal property inventories, including systematic and objective tracking, evaluation, reporting of asset condition, and prioritization of asset management. Using the Service Asset Maintenance Management System (SAMMS), an integrated web-based information system, the Service standardizes asset management, corroborates deferred maintenance needs with objective condition assessment data, identifies short- and long-term maintenance needs, and analyzes annual operating and maintenance expenditures.

\$34 million in assets such as boats, vehicles, and specialized fisheries equipment. This equipment is essential for inventory and monitoring of aquatic species and is critical to the Service's mission to restore native aquatic populations to self-sustaining levels.

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### 2024 Program Activities

The 2024 budget will:

- Support maintenance of property and equipment, including the repair, rehabilitation, and replacement of constructed assets, for 86 Hatchery System facilities and 51 FOs;
- Maintain key assets associated with water delivery, aquatic species culture, and effluent management; and
- Prioritize energy efficiency and climate resilience investments in construction and therehabilitation of facilities.

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### Proposed Program Changes

The 2023 budget request for Maintenance and Equipment is \$49,651,000 and 84 FTE, a net program change of +\$22,906,000 and +20 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Deferred Maintenance (+\$15,000,000/ +0 FTE)** – This request will be used to maintain, assess, modernize, renew, and repair the Hatchery System's aging real property assets, of which 76% are critical aquatic life sustaining water management and effluent control equipment. Projects will incorporate green infrastructure and energy efficient systems such as solar photovoltaic systems, new HVAC systems, and replace old pumping systems to reduce energy demands. These projects will allow the Service to sustain operations of its 71 propagation fish hatcheries. Operations are essential to the production and conservation of a wide range of aquatic species threatened by climate change, habitat loss and fragmentation, and invasive species. Growing deferred maintenance is not only a direct threat to aquatic population persistence, but also to the diverse human communities that depend on aquatic resource conservation.

**Annual Maintenance (+\$7,906,000/ +20 FTE)** – This request will focus on energy efficiency improvements in Hatchery Systems while maintaining complex water system capabilities for production of fish and other aquatic species. Funding will also provide for additional staff and resources to increase preventative measures and better maintain assets. These changes will allow the Service to reduce the risk of costly deferred maintenance repairs and keep hatcheries operating to fulfill their vital role in conserving aquatic species and ecosystems and addressing the climate crisis.

**Activity: Fish and Aquatic Conservation**  
**Subactivity: Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Budget Request	Change From 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Habitat Assessment and Restoration	(\$000)	46,326	51,826	+684	+3,000	-7,506	48,004	-3,822
	FTE	87	86	0	+8	+1	95	+9
Population Assessment and Cooperative Management	(\$000)	33,965	36,932	+904	-4,954	+239	33,121	-3,811
	FTE	123	127	0	-18	+11	120	-7
Aquatic Invasive Species	(\$000)	42,713	50,143	+694	0	-1,775	49,062	-1,081
	FTE	80	80	0	0	+22	102	+22
<b>Total, Aquatic Habitat &amp; Species Conservation</b>	(\$000)	123,004	138,901	+2,282	-1,954	-9,042	130,187	-10,996
	FTE	293	293	0	-10	+34	317	+24

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
National Fish Habitat Action Plan	+500	0
Habitat Assessment and Restoration	+494	+1
Delaware River Basin Conservation Act	-1,500	0
Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement	-7,000	0
Population Assessment and Cooperative Management	+2,267	+6
Alaska Subsistence Co-Management	+2,000	0
FWS Subsistence In-Season Management	+750	+6
Pacific Salmon Treaty	-150	0
Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission	-700	0
Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey	-818	0
Snakehead Eradication	-1,000	0
Great Lakes F&W Restoration Prevention	+4,075	+17
Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid Response Fund/Team	+2,600	+5
Lake Tahoe Restoration	-950	0
Contract Fishing (Invasive Carp)	-1,000	0
Hydrilla, Eel and Milfoil Invasive Grasses	-1,500	0
Invasive Carp	-5,000	0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>-9,042</b>	<b>+34</b>
Transfer from National Fish Hatchery Operations	+6,000	+15
Transfer Office of Subsistence Management to Operation of Indian Programs Appropriation	-7,954	-25
	<b>-10,996</b>	<b>+24</b>

## Program Overview

Fifty-one Fisheries Offices (FOs) are strategically located across the Nation and play an important role in guiding, implementing, and evaluating the Service's fish and aquatic resource conservation programs. Service staff work with a broad range of partners, and utilize a variety of non-regulatory conservation tools, to recover and restore some of the Nation's most iconic fish and other aquatic species and their habitats, many of which are listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA or are at-risk of listing. These offices are the Service's "boots on-the-ground" fisheries conservation capacity and are responsible for providing the science and data to inform natural resource management decisions. These essential components of Service efforts are under increasing demand for their expertise, which align with Administration priorities, to address climate challenges and build ecosystem resilience, strengthen tribal nations, and support underserved communities. FO work supports the Department's Strategic Goal to conserve, protect, manage, and restore natural resources.

The Service's support to partners to conserve aquatic species and their habitats is a key component of Administration efforts to pursue a collaborative and inclusive approach to conservation, as outlined in the America the Beautiful initiative. FOs work to restore degraded and fragmented habitats, organize and implement projects with partners, provide technical and scientific expertise, enlist voluntary efforts of landowners and local communities, and deliver cost-shared resources to complete projects. These efforts improve habitat for fish and aquatic resources, support local economies, reduce public safety hazards and help our communities become more resilient to climate change. FOs also provide important technical and biological information to partners on the condition of aquatic habitats and populations of fish and other species. This is increasingly important in the face of climate change to inform ESA decisions, guide hydropower license conditions under the Federal Power Act, and establish frameworks to manage recreational and commercial fisheries. It also informs resource management decisions that lead to on-the-ground conservation actions (e.g., habitat restoration) conducted by FOs in collaboration with private landowners, non-profit organizations, Tribes, and local, State, and Federal agencies. Other core functions include working closely with Tribes to fulfill trust responsibilities associated with fish and aquatic resources, preventing and controlling the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species, and monitoring and evaluating the survival of the more than one hundred million fish propagated and stocked each year by the Service's National Fish Hatcheries.

### Improving Collaborative Conservation

The FAC Program continually looks to improve the effectiveness of its work and has recently commissioned six studies to evaluate current species and habitat conservation efforts by the Service and its partners. These reports identify gaps between the current state of species conservation and the future we hope to achieve. These reports are being used to engage our state, Tribal and conservation organization partners as we refine our assessments, inform our restoration approach, and guide monitoring efforts for greater effectiveness and impact. Four additional evaluations are underway and the FAC Program intends to complete several more in order to better focus finite funding resources nationwide.

### Habitat Assessment and Restoration Program Overview

Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation is a primary factor in the decline of native aquatic species. Utilizing its network of FOs, the Service works with partners to restore aquatic habitats for the benefit of Federal trust species and local communities. Through this network, the Service works to restore natural flows to streams and rivers, restore riparian areas and wetlands, remove barriers to fish passage, and improve water quality. The Service enlists the voluntary efforts of landowners and local communities, provides technical expertise, delivers cost-shared resources to complete habitat conservation projects, and organizes

habitat conservation projects with partners. Work to restore degraded habitats also benefits human communities through development of more resilient infrastructure, reduced public safety hazards, and improved recreational opportunities. The National Fish Passage Program (NFPP) and National Fish

Habitat Partnership (NFHP) are two of the tools used by the Service to restore aquatic habitats in collaboratively with partners.

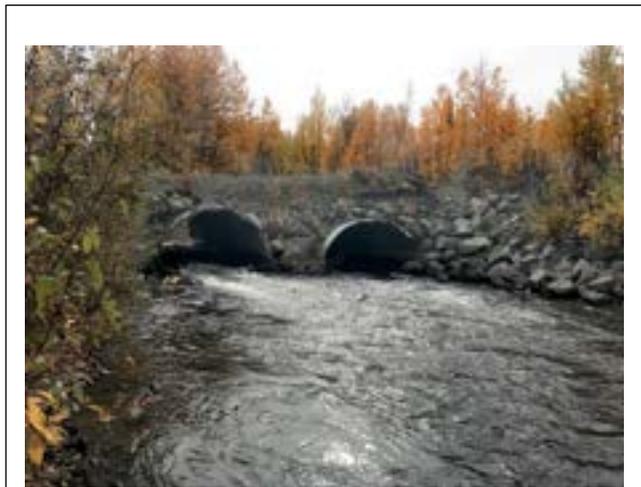
**National Fish Passage Program**

Millions of barriers, including dams, poorly- designed culverts, and water diversions fragment rivers and watersheds across the Nation. Barriers to fish passage have compromised the ability of the

- Over the past 20 years, the National Fish Passage Program has:**
- Removed or bypassed over 3,500 barriers to fish passage
  - Reopened access to over 64,000 miles of upstream habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms
  - Worked with over 2,000 partners across the country

Nation’s waterways to sustain healthy fish populations as many fish species and other aquatic life require open, free flowing rivers and streams to complete their life cycle. In addition, barriers can lead to public safety hazards, water quality degradation, and higher water treatment costs. Undersized culverts in road crossings can cause water to back up behind the crossings during storms, often leading to culvert failure and severe road damage. Aging dams can fail, which can affect aquatic species and human health and safety. Recreational and commercial fishing and boating opportunities may be reduced due to impacts on habitat and fish populations. Climate change is exacerbating these impacts by further increasing the warming of our waters and changing flow regimes.

The NFPP is a cooperative conservation program that relies on a network of Service biologists and engineers stationed throughout the country to provide technical expertise, financial assistance, and



Looking upstream through two undersized culverts on the Little Tonsina River in Alaska. *Photo Credit: USFWS*

The **Little Tonsina River Project**, which was the first of the FY 2022 NFPP BIL projects to break ground, will replace a double-barrel undersized, hazardous culvert with a 100-foot bridge that spans both the channel and floodplain. The project, located in the Valdez-Cordova Borough, will reopen over 70 miles of Pacific salmon spawning and rearing habitat and is a monumental effort between the Copper River Watershed Project, Chugach Native Corporation, and a host of other State, Federal, Tribal, and NGO partners.

coordinate with partners to complete aquatic ecosystem restoration projects. The NFPP is consistent with the vision outlined in the America the Beautiful initiative to pursue a collaborative and inclusive approach to conservation as it is a voluntary conservation program that brings together diverse partners to achieve benefits for aquatic species and local communities. FOs work with Federal agencies, State governments, private landowners, Tribes, and community organizations to restore fish passage and aquatic connectivity by removing or bypassing barriers. Projects range in size from large-scale dam removals to the repair or removal of culverts at road-stream crossings, to the installation of fish screens at agricultural water diversions. The NFPP has reopened access to tens of thousands of miles of habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms.

The NFPP is also an essential element of Service efforts to address climate challenges and build resilience, strengthen Tribal nations, and support underserved communities. In addition to providing benefits for fish and aquatic species, the

NFPP’s work to restore degraded and fragmented habitats creates construction, engineering, and other

### NFPP Under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

In FY 2022, the NFPP allocated \$38 million to 40 projects across 23 States and Puerto Rico to restore rivers, protect wildlife, support communities, and improve climate resilience. The 40 projects will collectively remove over 100 barriers, including 50 culverts and 25 dams, and reopen over 3,700 miles of river and streams once complete. Progress on FY 2022 implementation continues steadily. As described below, some projects have already broken ground and others have successfully completed construction. Project solicitation in FY 2023 expands upon FY 2022 with input from internal and external partners, including Tribes. FY 2023 project selection criteria will prioritize projects that provide ample benefits to species and habitats, as well as human communities including benefits to underserved and Tribal communities, such as public safety improvements. For FY 2023, NFPP is utilizing ongoing collaborative efforts, such as Tribal listening sessions and increased interagency collaboration, to expand the program's network and extend project solicitation to new potential projects.

comprehensive fish passage engineering and technical assistance capacity. Program engineers and technical specialists ensure that passage projects are strategically selected and structurally sound, meet conservation goals for Federal trust species, and provide benefits to surrounding communities. NFPP program staff assist Federal and State partners with design work for projects that affect the aquatic environment. The NFPP also develops training materials and guidance documents to assist others in minimizing impacts to fish passage and aquatic connectivity. In 2020, the program published design guidelines for culverts in fish bearing streams in Alaska. In 2021, the Service finalized agency-wide policy and guidance on consideration of aquatic connectivity and fish passage in all Service actions. In the northeast, the NFPP is working with several States to develop guidelines for design of road-stream crossings that benefit aquatic connectivity, stream health, and resilient infrastructure. These design standards can be incorporated into streamlined permitting processes, incentivizing fish-friendly crossing design and reducing the permitting timeline for infrastructure projects.

Investments in the NFPP through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) in FY 2024 will expand ongoing, collaborative work to remove or bypass in-stream barriers to fish passage and improve ecosystem and infrastructure resiliency. BIL funds will allow the Service to make additional headway to address the millions of barriers to fish passage that fragment rivers and watersheds across the Nation. The BIL funding will also provide the Service the opportunity to work with conservation partners to address projects at a scale and impact formerly unattainable with base program

jobs, stimulating the local economy. Work to reconnect aquatic habitats also decreases public safety hazards and improves infrastructure resilience by reducing flood risks, removing obsolete dams, and improving water delivery for local agriculture irrigation districts. In addition, this work often occurs in underserved communities such as old industrial areas of the northeast, rural parts of the southeast and Great Plains, mining communities in Appalachia, and Tribal lands in the southwest. Fish passage projects provide quality-of-life benefits for local communities by providing new fishing and other outdoor recreational opportunities to include kayaking, canoeing, and rafting.

A key element of the NFPP is its



Evanston Dam before the implementation of a fish ladder.  
Photo Credit: David Kimble/USFWS

The first FY 2022 NFPP BIL projects to be completed was the **Old Evanston Dam**, one of 4 projects included in the **Upper Bear River Project**. The Upper Bear River meanders between Wyoming and Utah and is a significant refuge for native Bear River Cutthroat, which are unique to the watershed. The Bear River has been successfully rechanneled around Old Evanston Dam and, when completed, the project will re-open 44.7 miles of critical habitat as part of a decades long effort to improve aquatic connectivity.

appropriations.

The development and implementation of projects using BIL funding will engage a diverse array of partners, including other Federal agencies, State governments, private landowners, Tribes, NGOs, and partnership groups such as the existing network of Fish Habitat Partnerships under the National Fish Habitat Partnership program. All projects selected for BIL funding through the NFPP will provide benefits for aquatic species and habitats with selection priority for projects that also provide benefits for climate change resilience, public safety, Tribal nations, and disadvantaged communities, advancing Administration priorities. The Service will coordinate with other State and Federal agencies (e.g. NOAA Fisheries, Department of Transportation) to implement other BIL projects and funding aimed at improving fish passage. Coordinating implementation of this funding among Federal agencies, and ensuring collaboration with key stakeholders such as States and Tribes, will help maximize the effectiveness of this investment. Opportunities for improved coordination among Federal agencies and others include sharing scientific and technical expertise; working collaboratively

**Coordinating the Implementation of BIL Fish Passage Funding**

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), provides unprecedented funding to the Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, US Forest Service, Federal Highway Administration, US Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Energy, and others to fund projects that remove instream barriers, improve fish passage, and restore rivers and water quality nationwide. This represents a critical investment into the nation’s infrastructure, ecosystem restoration, and species conservation, as well as climate resiliency and public safety of adjacent communities. Ensuring the maximum positive impact on high priority species and habitats, climate resiliency, and communities hinges on the strategic investment of these funds across all agencies.

In July 2022, the Service, along with the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), convened a three-day workshop to discuss opportunities and challenges with the \$2 billion in fish passage funding provided by the BIL. The workshop included over 100 federal, State, Tribal, and non-governmental organization partners involved in fish passage to align objectives, identify potential barriers to collaboration, and coordinate efforts to restore and maintain aquatic connectivity and ecosystem restoration nationwide. From this gathering a series of small groups were established to address urgent needs including capacity to deliver the program, project prioritization, opportunities to reduce the funding burden on applicants, models for communication and collaboration, and opportunities to increase involvement with, and provide benefits to, Tribes and underserved communities. The small groups included representatives from federal, State, Tribal, and non-governmental entities.

Building from the small work groups, the Service facilitated discussions with other Federal agencies on the various options developed to advance collaborative implementation of BIL fish passage funding. The agencies then collectively decided to advance several recommendations including development of an interagency task force to serve as the primary mechanism for coordination and strategic decision-making across federal agencies involved in fish passage and aquatic connectivity. Other recommendations that will be pursued include refining approaches to communication and coordination with non-federal partners, identifying approaches to reducing the administrative burden on funding applicants, and seeking opportunities to work more with tribes and disadvantaged communities.

to identify priority species, watersheds and projects; and utilizing existing partner networks to help develop, fund, and implement individual projects.

**National Fish Habitat Action Plan**

Developed in 2006 and updated in 2012, the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Action Plan) provides the framework for the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP). In October of 2020, Title II of America’s Conservation Enhancement (ACE) Act codified the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) and established a new 26-member National Fish Habitat Board (Board) to promote, oversee, and coordinate implementation of the program. The Service is leaning into the vision for program implementation established by Title II of the ACE Act. The Action Plan was highlighted in the

Administration's initial steps to achieve the President's America the Beautiful initiative, which sets a goal of conserving 30 percent of the Nation's lands and waters by 2030.

There are 20 Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) that leverage Federal, State, Tribal, and private funding to conserve fish habitat under NFHP. FHPs are formed around distinct geographic areas, important fish species, or ecosystems, and include representatives from Federal, State, and Non-governmental entities. FHPs identify and prioritize fish habitat conservation projects for funding within their boundaries, guided by individual FHP strategic plans. FHPs work with States, other Federal agencies, Tribes, private landowners, businesses, and others to restore stream banks, provide aquatic connectivity, plant vegetation, renovate oyster reefs, and to improve other habitat conditions.

The Service is a key partner in implementing NFHP with States, Tribes, other Federal agencies, conservation organizations and industry. Under this program, the Service has worked with the Board and FHPs to provide funding to hundreds of projects across the U.S. to protect, restore, and enhance priority habitats. Additionally, through appropriations from Congress, the Service has traditionally provided substantial support to FHPs to develop strategic plans, identify and develop fish habitat conservation projects, provide technical and engineering support, administer financial assistance agreements, and assist with required environmental compliance and permitting. The Service has also provided funding and staff to support operations of the Board and FHPs.

Fiscal Year 2022 marked the first year of program implementation under the vision established by Title II of the ACE Act. The ACE Act envisions significant changes to operations of the NFHP program relative to pre-enactment. This includes FHPs taking more active roles in implementing projects and the FHPs becoming formally designated by Congress. Under the ACE Act, the Board also holds the responsibility of making funding recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior for fish habitat conservation projects.

We anticipate Fiscal Year 2024 will be a transition year where important fish habitat conservation projects will continue to be implemented under NFHP as the structure of the program changes. The Service is committed to working with the Board and the FHPs to continue a transition to the new model of program implementation under the vision of the ACE Act. The Service will work with the FHPs and the Board to keep the program operational, while working collaboratively to develop plans for ACE Act implementation in future fiscal years. This will include continuing to administer funding for fish habitat conservation projects, maintaining a primary point of contact within the Service for each FHP to assist with the transition, and providing staff support to the Board.

#### **Monitoring and Modeling for Successful Fisheries Restoration**

The restoration of fisheries frequently hinges on population monitoring and modeling programs. Information collected via these programs is needed to understand how fish populations will respond to climate change, actions to mitigate it, or other measures to restore populations to historic numbers.

The Vermont FO conducts data collection and analyses that are critical to a collaborative effort to restore Atlantic salmon to Lake Champlain. FO biologists couple data from tagging and movement studies with life cycle models and this allows the partners to better understand where to target limited resources. This is enabling biologists to identify recruitment bottlenecks and both visualize and prioritize actions to overcome these limitations.

Life cycle models developed by the Vermont FO are being used to focus management efforts and restoration funding on Lake Champlain's tributary rivers, which are important potential spawning and nursery areas. The use of radio telemetry data to monitor salmon movement in the Bouquet River watershed was analyzed by the Lake Champlain FO using life cycle models. They showed that low-flow events in the river are limiting spawning in the upper reaches of the river. This information is being used by managers to adapt by focusing restoration efforts to those areas of the river that are less susceptible to low-flow impacts.

### Population Assessment and Cooperative Management Program Overview

Through the FOs, the Service provides assistance to partners in efforts to maintain self-sustaining, healthy, and diverse populations of fish and other aquatic species. FOs assess the status and trends of aquatic species, evaluate the causes of species decline, determine the limiting factors for aquatic populations, work with partners to implement actions to restore populations across habitat types and jurisdictional boundaries, and evaluate the impacts of conservation activities. This work is essential to efforts to advance and incorporate science throughout the Service. Providing this assistance to partners also supports Administration efforts to pursue a collaborative and inclusive approach to conservation, as outlined in the America the Beautiful initiative. Further, this work aligns with the Department's Strategic Plan Goals 1 and 3.

Through monitoring and assessment efforts, the FOs ensure that the Service and its partners have the vital science and evidence-based information available to guide fish conservation and management decisions. Making informed and appropriate decisions on the conservation and management of fish and other aquatic species is dependent on the availability of accurate and up to date information. FOs collect and evaluate population data and develop models to estimate population trends and evaluate management decisions. This information is utilized by fisheries commissions, Tribes, and Federal and State natural resource agencies, to establish conservation and management strategies for a wide range of aquatic species and their habitats. This includes decisions under the Endangered Species Act, hydropower license conditions under the Federal Power Act, and management of recreational and commercial fisheries.

In addition, FOs monitor and evaluate the contribution of fish propagated and stocked each year by the Service's NFHS towards stated conservation goals. Recent in-depth evaluations of NFHS species recovery and restoration propagation programs identified a need to prioritize expanding these efforts to ensure the best science is available to guide our conservation actions.

The Service's work in the Great Lakes area is an example of how FOs work closely with Tribal, State, Provincial, and other partners to restore lake trout, a native species important to the ecosystem, a valuable recreational species, and a species harvested by Tribes. The Service monitors populations by marking all hatchery-produced fish with coded wire tags. Partners cooperate in this activity by



Biologists from the Green Bay FO implant telemetry tag in lake trout to track habitat use in Lake Michigan, *Photo Credit: USFWS*

#### Sustaining Tribal Fisheries on Lake Michigan

Tribal Trust and self-sustainability of native species in Lake Michigan is top priority for the science and monitoring that is conducted by the Green of refuge areas for lake trout rehabilitation is an example of this priority work. The northern refuge area in northern Lake Michigan is part of the 1836 Treaty fishing Bay FO. Current efforts to evaluate the efficacy of the use waters for tribes. This area is currently closed to fishing as a management tool to protect valuable lake trout and their habitats from fishing pressure. This refuge has been in place, via the 1836 Consent Decree, since the 1980's.

The Green Bay FO is utilizing the latest technologies and science to conduct a lake trout movement study in conjunction with a multi-partner lake wide reef habitat and use mapping study that aims to document the changing open water reef habitats in the face of climate change and environmental pressures. Using the latest multi-beam technology for mapping and the latest in telemetry and tagging equipment for documenting lake trout movement, monitoring will help determine if this refuge is still needed to rehabilitate populations of lake trout or if restrictions may be lessened to provide sustainable fishing opportunities for the Tribes.

recovering and returning tags to the Service for extraction and analysis. This data helps the Service and partners in the Great Lakes to understand lake trout population trends, assess program success, and inform management actions such as harvest limits. These efforts also help ensure the Service meets our Tribal trust responsibilities.

Service biologists also provide leadership to technical committees and aquatic resource management boards and participate in unique regional management initiatives to help recover and sustain fish and other aquatic species nationwide. These collaborative efforts are improving the management of river herring and striped bass along the Atlantic coast and in the Chesapeake Bay, helping to ensure the sustainable harvest of Pacific salmon in Alaska, and recovering iconic species such as the Lahontan cutthroat trout in Nevada.

#### *Tribal Trust Responsibilities*

As part of the Service's Tribal trust responsibilities and an important element of our efforts to deliver environmental justice, FOs work with Tribal resource agencies to manage a diverse array of fish and wildlife on millions of acres of Tribal and Alaska Native lands. In 2021, 8.6 million fish were stocked for the benefit of 63 Tribal communities.

FOs provide technical assistance, training, financial support, and equipment. The Lander (WY) FO has provided support to Tribes on the Wind River Reservation since 1941 on the conservation and management of cutthroat trout, burbot, and saugeye. The Arizona FO works with Tribal partners on the recovery of ESA-listed Apache trout. The Green Bay (WI) FO works with multiple Tribes on the management of fishery resources in Lakes Michigan, Huron, and Superior. The Lahontan FO in Nevada is working with the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe to recover the Lahontan cutthroat trout and the cui-ui sucker in Pyramid Lake and nearby waters, including the Truckee River. FOs in the Pacific Northwest work with Tribes in WA, OR, and ID to mitigate impacts of hydropower in the region. FOs in Alaska employ cutting-edge genetic techniques to monitor Pacific salmon stocks as they enter the Yukon River, information that is critical to inform in-season harvest limits and other actions necessary to maintain healthy, sustainable salmon stocks. Many of these efforts align with one of the key priorities of the America the Beautiful initiative to support Tribally-led conservation and restoration priorities. In addition, the support provided to Tribes aligns with the Department's goal to promote well-being, equity, and justice for Tribes, Native Americans, and Alaska Natives.

#### **Military Partner Spotlight: U.S. Army Fort Benning**

Fort Benning is a 182,000-acre installation in located in Georgia and Alabama's longleaf pine ecosystem. As such, Fort Benning worked with the states and the Service to develop an Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan that takes an ecosystem management approach to better conserve 16 species that are federally-protected or considered by the Army to be species at-risk.

Among these are the gopher tortoise, which is actively managed and conserved under a Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA). Through the CCA and the Georgia Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative, Fort Benning engages in partnership with the USFWS, state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and others to implement conservation actions on approximately 22,363 acres of the installation, and thousands of acres outside the installation.

These efforts center on protecting, restoring and managing habitat for gopher tortoises and numerous other species that utilize tortoise burrows in the longleaf pine ecosystem. Fort Benning's collaborative effort to manage gopher tortoise and other at-risk species provides more than conservation benefits to wildlife. Management of ecosystems to protect gopher tortoises and other at-risk species rely heavily on prescribed fires and forest management, which also provides the U.S. military forces with a more effective and safer military training environment.

*Alaska Subsistence Management Program*

Based on a 2010 economic assessment by the Service, over 135,000 people in over 270 communities in rural Alaska are entitled to subsistence fishing, hunting, and trapping on Federal lands. The average subsistence harvest in Alaska is approximately 375 pounds of food per person, or 50 million pounds of food per year. The Alaska Fisheries Subsistence Management Program manages fish and wildlife for subsistence uses on Federal public lands and waters in Alaska. The program provides a direct benefit to rural subsistence users on more than 237 million acres of Federal lands encompassing 66 percent of Alaska's land area and 52 percent of Alaska's rivers and lakes.

Currently, the Service is the lead Federal agency in administering this program for the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture. Since 1999, the Service's Office of Subsistence Management has implemented an annual regulatory program and a fisheries monitoring program, supported 10 regional advisory councils, and has provided administrative and technical support to five Federal agencies and the Federal Subsistence Board. The Subsistence Management Program operates with strong stakeholder participation by rural residents and the State of Alaska. The Department is proposing to transfer management of the Office of Subsistence Management to the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in the 2024 President's Budget in response to feedback received from Alaska Native communities and people through a series of Departmental Tribal consultations and listening sessions focused on the Federal subsistence management program.

With the proposed transfer of OSM out of FWS, the FWS retains a critical role in the in-season management of subsistence resources, including when the Federal Subsistence Board delegates authority to the FWS. This includes ongoing resource management work on the Yukon River, Cook Inlet and SW Bristol Bay, Chignik, Alaska Peninsula, and Aleutian Islands; and the Kuskokwim River, Kodiak and other Refuges. As in-season managers of fisheries and of refuge lands and waters, FWS staff play a critical role in implementing the Federal subsistence management program through science and monitoring; collaboration and coordination with Tribes, subsistence users, the State of Alaska, and others; and communication and outreach on in-season management decisions.

*Military Lands Conservation*

The Service works with the Department of Defense (DOD), steward to millions of acres of land used for national defense purposes, to protect and enhance natural resources on military installations. Under the authority of the Sikes Act, the Service works with DOD, States and other Service programs to review and update Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans and implement conservation projects on military installations nationwide. Given the millions of acres of land under DOD stewardship, this provides an unprecedented opportunity to tackle climate change on a truly landscape scale.

For example, the Service is working with DOD using Sikes Act authorities to leverage resources to prevent the extinction of the black-footed ferret (BFF). This species is central to grassland ecosystem function and the health of military lands. The Colorado FO is collaborating with Buckley Space Force Base and the U.S. Army's Pueblo Chemical Depot to establish a new population of endangered black-footed ferrets. BFFs are dependent upon blacktailed prairie dogs and their colonies for food, shelter, and raising young. The Colorado FO is working with these installations to relocate and establish prairie dogs from Buckley SFB to Pueblo Chemical Depot. The Colorado FO plans to cooperate with Pueblo Chemical Depot to begin establishing BFFs at the installation in 2023. Few self-sustaining populations of BFFs exist in the wild, therefore this Sikes Act collaboration represents a crucial first step in turning the tide in favor of recovery of the species.



*Veronica Reed with the Colorado FO organized and led Buckley Space Force Bases (BSFB) blacktailed prairie dog relocation project in fall 2022. With assistance of Colorado FO staff and numerous civilian and military partners, 55 blacktailed prairie dogs were captured at BSFB and relocated to U.S. Army's Pueblo Chemical Depot. Photo Credit: USFWS*

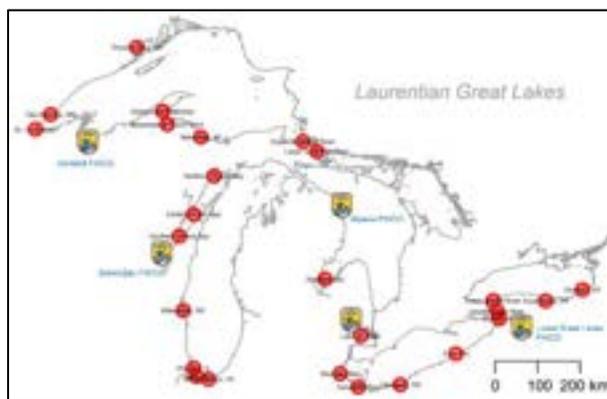
### **Aquatic Invasive Species**

Invasive species are a significant threat to human, animal, and plant health, infrastructure, the economy, and cultural resources. Invasive species, such as bigheaded carp, quagga and zebra mussels, Elodea, snakehead, and nutria cause tens of billions of dollars globally in economic and ecological impacts each year. They diminish fish and wildlife resources, recreational opportunities, agricultural productivity, personal property values, human health and safety, and public utility capacity. Studies of invasive species impacts since 1970 have reported an annual increase in these costs at a rate of more than threefold per decade. The threat of invasive species grows as the globalization of trade and transport provide increased pathways for new species to move into and within U.S. ecosystems. Climate change is expected to exacerbate these trends as melting sea ice opens additional and faster shipping routes. Sea level rise and increased magnitude and frequency of flooding will create new pathways for invasion, whereas warming temperatures will provide a longer growing season and make it possible for more non-native species to survive.

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are particularly difficult to detect before establishment and to eradicate once they establish. Once established, they can persist and spread widely, leading to global declines of fish and wildlife as well as the quality of their habitats. Native and underserved communities, whose economies, traditions, and culture rely heavily on fishing, agriculture and forestry, are particularly vulnerable to impacts from invasive species. In addition, natural areas already stressed by invasive species are more susceptible to harm from climate change than healthy ecosystems.

The Service plays a critical role in safeguarding the Nation’s waters from AIS by preventing introduction, detecting and responding to new invasions, and suppressing populations of existing invasive plants and animals. The Service also educates the public about threats from invasive species and actions they can take to lessen AIS impact and spread. Reducing invasive species supports Administration priorities by increasing resilience of native species and ecosystems to climate change and reducing opportunities for zoonotic pathogen spillover that can jeopardize human health.

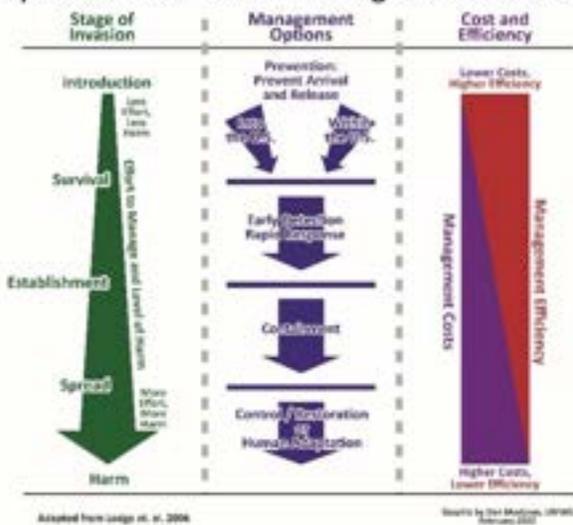
Reduced impacts from invasive species will conserve biodiversity and the health of our waters. When native species thrive, recreational opportunities are enhanced for users from all backgrounds, culturally significant resources remain available for Tribal members, and the economy benefits from increased spending on recreational fishing and other water-based outdoor activities.



**Great Lakes Hot Spots for Detection**

Great Lakes early detection for aquatic invasive species requires site prioritization due to the large geographical size, multiple pathways of introduction, and limited resources. Partner groups and agencies worked together to evaluate the highest risk pathways and develop an index to identify hotspots in the Great Lakes. The Service is also working with USGS to develop processes to identify AIS hotspots throughout the United States.

**Aspects of the Invasion Management Process**



The Service has made significant strides to strengthen partnerships and modernize scientific and administrative approaches to quickly identify and prevent invasive species threats before they become pervasive on the landscape. Preventing the arrival and release of a species can reduce future costs at the trilliondollar scale and circumvent significant harm to the environment, economy or human health<sup>2</sup> as opposed to trying to manage a species after it is established. The Service uses science to guide our priorities and management decisions, and where appropriate, includes States, Tribes, and stakeholders in prioritizing and responding to invasive species introductions.

The Service, alongside the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), chairs the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANS Task Force). The ANS Task Force was established by Congress with the passage of the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act (NANPCA) in 1990 and reauthorized with the passage of the National Invasive Species Act (NISA) in 1996 (collectively, the Act). The Act charges the ANS Task Force with leading a coordinated, unified program that raises awareness and takes action to protect the Nation’s waters from AIS. Composed of 13 Federal and 13 ex-officio members, it is the only federally mandated intergovernmental organization solely dedicated to preventing and controlling AIS. The ANS Task

Force currently operates under its Strategic Plan for 2020-2025 that includes six goals, each with a targeted set of objectives and associated strategies. These six goals include Coordination, Prevention, Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR), Control and Restoration, Research, Outreach and Education. Much of the FAC's work on invasive species is structured around these programmatic goals.

#### *Coordination*

A central role of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force is to facilitate cooperation and coordinate efforts among Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies, the private sector, and other North American interests. To progress such efforts, the ANS Task Force works in conjunction with six regional ANS panels (panels) and issue-specific subcommittees to coordinate efforts among Federal and State agencies and the private sector. The panels have a unique role under the Act to coordinate, prioritize, and implement regional invasive species management activities. The panels are a critical and effective mechanism for achieving the goals of the ANS Task Force and foster collaboration among states to address regional aquatic nuisance species threats and ongoing invasions.

Since its establishment, the ANS Task Force has approved 45 State or interstate management plans that identify feasible, cost-effective management measures to prevent and control infestations of AIS. The Service provides essential funding to implement these plans and facilitate work with partners to plan, direct, and accomplish significant regional and landscape-level invasive species prevention and management resource outcomes.

The ANS Task Force also works with member organizations and subject matter experts to develop species management plans. There are currently nine Species Management and Control Plans approved by the ANS Task Force, which can be downscaled to basin-specific operational plans. This downscale is perhaps best exemplified by the Management and Control Plan for Bighead, Black, Grass, and Silver Carps in the United States (Invasive Carp National Plan). This plan has become the foundation for basin-specific Invasive Carp Control Strategy Frameworks, implemented by State and Federal agency partners. The Service plays a lead role in coordinating, implementing, and funding this work.

*Prevention*

AIS are transported and introduced through a variety of pathways including ballast water and hulls of ships, canals and waterways, fish stocking, the aquarium pet and water garden trades, the bait industry, and recreational activities. Prevention is the most cost-effective strategy to minimize the long-term risk and impacts of invasive species to the American people and trust resources. AIS already present in the United States can be prevented from spreading into new areas (secondary spread) through efforts such as inspecting and decontaminating watercraft and gear, advocating against the release of potentially harmful species, and enforcing current laws and regulations aimed at reducing the risk of introduction and spread of AIS. However, the most effective prevention is by stopping the introduction of a potentially harmful species into the United States. A powerful authority that the Service employs to accomplish this is 18 U.S.C. 42(a) (also known as title 18 of the Lacey Act), under which the Service can promulgate rules to list wildlife species as injurious if they are harmful to the interests of human beings, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, wildlife, or wildlife resources of the United States. This designation prohibits their importation into the United States and subsequent shipment within the country among certain enumerated jurisdictions. Previous proactive listing of high-risk species has proven very successful in preventing these species from becoming established. The Service has a long history of prohibiting the importation of high-risk injurious species before they become established and will continue to focus these effective regulatory efforts on species that pose the greatest risk and are not yet introduced or widely established in the United States. To accomplish this, the Service has worked with partners to develop risk assessment tools to identify species of concern and evaluate likely pathways for introduction into the United States. This information and the identification of geographical areas that are the most vulnerable to these species help inform efforts to target early detection and response measures.



Zebra mussels can also hitchhike on moss balls.  
 Photo Credit: Deborah Kornblut/USFWS

**Zebra Mussel Response**

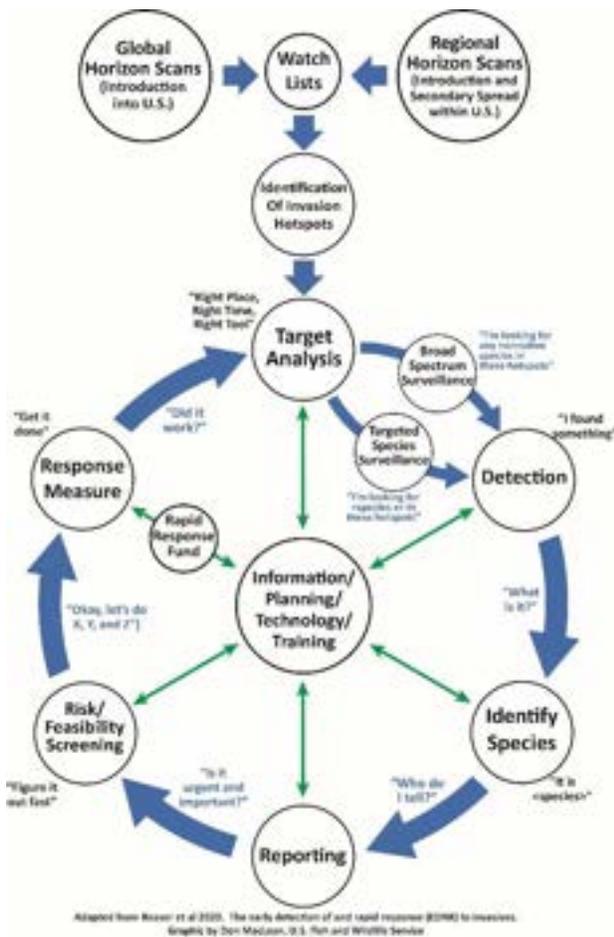
In the Spring of 2021, invasive zebra mussels were found in moss balls, a plant product sold at aquarium, garden, and pet supply stores. Zebra mussels are regarded as one of the most destructive invasive species in North America and there is concern that live mussels from moss balls could be released into waterways and cause significant damage. The FAC program provided a national communication response for the incident, coordinating information between the private sector, states, and federal agencies. Our website served as a central resource for timely messaging and disposal instructions, and was frequently cited by media and partners.

**American Rescue Plan Act of 2021**

Under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), the Service is working with the Smithsonian Institution to develop a global horizon scan and risk analyses to identify wildlife species at greatest risk of carrying zoonotic pathogens and parasites into the United States that could cause pandemics in humans. The project will also identify management measures to reduce the risk of such introductions and provide a foundation for evaluating species for listing as injurious under 18 U.S.C. 42(a), utilizing DOI’s One Health philosophy of bolstering wildlife health to support the health of humans and the environment

The Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, or BIL) funding provides an opportunity to build an institutional architecture for coordinated invasive species management efforts that will have meaningful impacts across the nation and implement prevention, detection, and eradication projects that have a high likelihood for success. Programmatic priorities for these funds include: 1) preventing the introduction and spread of high-risk species into or within the United States; 2) investing in the protection of at-risk ecosystems and other priority areas; 3) supporting States, Tribes, Territories, and underserved communities to build capacity for

prevention, detection, and eradication projects; and 4) building a coordinated National Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) framework.



*Early Detection and Rapid Response*

Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) is a comprehensive approach to defend the United States from newly arriving, establishing, and spreading invasive species. BIL invasive species funding will form the foundation of a National EDRR Framework that uses a series of coordinated and integrated steps to stop the next invasion. These steps include: horizon scanning technologies to identify species and vectors that present the greatest risk to the United States; invasion hotspot analyses to identify areas most likely to be invaded; the deployment of genetic and traditional sampling tools to detect invading organisms at the earliest point possible; and interjurisdictional response processes to quickly eradicate new invaders.

The National EDRR Framework brings together these activities and establishes processes to accomplish coordinated outcomes that may not otherwise be achieved. FAC is using appropriated funds to conduct a series of regional horizon scans to identify species at risk of being introduced from outside a region (internationally or inter-regionally) through pathways other than live trade, and using the results to develop species watch lists. FAC Fish Technology Centers are working to enhance early detection surveillance programs by

acquiring source tissues necessary for the development and validation of genetic markers for molecular sampling that targets watch list species. In FY 22, USGS received BIL funding for an initial set of projects to develop decision support and early detection tools that will be used to guide targeted surveillance and response actions, based on the results of horizon scanning and watch list

development. The Service is also helping to lead a Department of the Interior team to develop important operational aspects of the framework, including an EDRR Laboratory Network and Interjurisdictional Invasive Species Rapid Response Team [InSRRT, (pronounced “insert”)]. In FY 2023 it is anticipated that BIL funds will be directed to Framework implementation. The Service has developed a full EDRR Operations Plan that identifies FAC capabilities and tasks necessary to advance each component of the EDRR Framework for aquatic species. BIL and base program investments in these tasks will be essential to help institutionalize and ensure the long-term sustainability of the Framework.

#### *Control and Restoration*

Once an invasive species becomes established in the environment, multiple tools and significant resources are often necessary to lessen the impacts to public interests and slow the rate of range expansion. The Service uses risk analysis, benefit-cost analysis, and other tools to identify, select, and target high-priority AIS for control, as well as the most appropriate and cost-effective mitigation measures. Once AIS populations are controlled and contained, the Service may implement habitat restoration to ensure that native and managed ecosystems resiliency is restored. Adequate funding, public awareness, and management expertise are critical to success, particularly because AIS can span geographic and jurisdictional boundaries.

#### *Applied Research*

In November 2021, the ANS Task Force approved a National Priorities List for Research on AIS. The Service will help to advance the priorities within this list as it promotes, funds, and develops applied technologies to assess and mitigate the environmental and economic risks and impacts associated with the introduction of AIS. In addition, the Service works to evaluate the principal pathways by which AIS are introduced and dispersed and to develop and assess the effectiveness of new methods, such as developing eDNA markers that can be used for early detection surveillance of high-risk species that may enter the United States. This research is an essential part of our ongoing work to prevent, detect, respond to, and control AIS nationwide.



On the road to protect Lake Champlain. Photo Credit: USFWS

#### **Sea Lamprey Control in Lake Champlain**

The Service, in partnership with Vermont and New York, has successfully restored lake trout, land-locked Atlantic salmon, lake sturgeon, and other fish populations to Lake Champlain. Central to this success is the control of invasive sea lamprey and the reduction of lamprey parasitism on the lake’s valuable fisheries. Without sustained sea lamprey control, these successes will quickly succumb to lamprey parasitism and be lost.

Sea lamprey are controlled using physical barriers and chemical lampricides in tributary rivers to Lake Champlain. Together these methods prevent the lamprey populations from growing and from entering the Lake. Prior to the Service assuming a leadership role in controlling sea lamprey in Lake Champlain, parasitic wounding rates were as high as 99 per 100 lake trout and 79 per 100 landlocked Atlantic salmon and were impacting the iconic lake sturgeon’s recovery from near extirpation. Since investing in sea lamprey control, wounding rates have dropped by 92 percent and are now at historic lows, lake trout are once again abundant and reproducing naturally, landlocked salmon are returning to rivers, lake sturgeon are rebuilding their populations, and fishing records for lake trout and salmon are being set. In addition, recreational fishing is restoring an economic engine to the local economy with an estimated \$3.80 return for each one dollar invested in the lamprey control program.

Lake Champlain sea lamprey control costs \$1.3 million annually. For the last several years, the Service has provided 28% from base funds while Congress has legislatively directed funds to meet the remaining 78% of the program cost needs (nearly half of which was directed through the Great Lakes Fishery Commission). Sustained support of sea lamprey control in Lake Champlain was foundational to the restoration gains made and is critical to ensuring the future of native species, the recreational fishery in Lake Champlain and the economic benefits to the local community.

### *Outreach and Education*

To protect the waters of the United States, the public must also understand the wide-ranging impacts of AIS and actions necessary to prevent their introduction and spread. In many instances, the introduction of non-native species occurs due to the lack of public knowledge and understanding of the threats these species pose to the environment, recreation, and local communities. The Service and the ANS Task Force work alongside partners to implement national AIS awareness and education campaigns, such as Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!, Habitattitude™ and Don't Let It Loose. These campaigns empower recreational water users and pet owners to become environmental stewards by taking action to prevent the spread of AIS. In 2022, the ANS Task Force, under the auspices of the Service, funded assessments of these national campaigns to improve their effectiveness and reach. To implement the recommendations from these studies, investments in marketing strategies and new outreach products and tools will be needed. These investments will encourage the public to undertake preventative measures to reduce AIS spread and facilitate on-the-ground action.

### **2024 Program Activities**

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The 2024 budget will:

- Use partnership programs such as the National Fish Passage Program and the National Fish Habitat Partnership to implement numerous local fish habitat restoration projects to improve riparian and aquatic habitats making them more resilient to the impacts of climate change;
- Implement monitoring and assessment programs to ensure that the Service and its partners can use science and evidence-based information to guide fish conservation and management decisions;
- Work with partners to inventory, monitor, manage and restore fish and other aquatic species to maintain self-sustaining, healthy and diverse populations;
- Monitor and evaluate the survival of fish propagated and stocked each year by the Service's NFHS;
- Work to prevent the introduction and reduce the spread of AIS; a primary threat to the Nation's natural resources, infrastructure, economy and cultural resources;
- Implement the National EDRR Framework, including establishing a Rapid Response Fund coordinated through the ANS Task Force and Interjurisdictional Rapid Response Teams for expedited and efficient management responses to new invasions; and
- Continue to target quagga and zebra mussels and invasive carp as high-priority species, leveraging prevention, surveillance, control, and outreach resources among partners.
- Promulgate rules to list wildlife species as injurious under ARPA if they can serve as hosts of pathogens or parasites that can cause serious infectious diseases in humans.

### **Proposed Program Changes**

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The 2022 budget request for Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation is \$130,390,000 and 332 FTE, a net program change of -\$16,996,000 and +39 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Habitat Assessment and Restoration (+\$494,000/ +1 FTE)** -- This funding request will expand efforts within each Service region to coordinate with, and provide technical assistance to, tribal governments, underserved communities, and other partners. Technical assistance will include support to plan, design, and implement aquatic habitat conservation actions for trust species and to help ensure this work is implemented strategically, as part of a landscape-scale approach. Funding will also increase FOs ability to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of habitat restoration actions implemented to benefit trust species and provide science based decision support tools. Funding will provide the science to inform decisions that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of hatchery efforts, and to coordinate strategic

habitat restoration efforts. Propagation activities and scientific research to support propagation will increase under this funding request. This transfer will allow for resources and staff to be placed according to need for this coordinated effort.

**National Fish Habitat Action Plan (+\$500,000/ -0 FTE)** – Consistent with the vision established in Title II of America’s Conservation Enhancement Act, this request will significantly increase the amount of funding for fish habitat conservation projects. This funding request will allow the Service to continue to work with the FHPs and the Board to keep a level of operational continuity during FY 2024, while we work collaboratively to develop plans for ACE Act implementation in future fiscal years.

For FY 2024, the Service is requesting \$6,323,000 for fish habitat conservation projects. An additional \$316,000 is requested for administrative and planning expenses, a portion of which will be provided to the Board to support reporting requirements under the Act. This represents an amount equal to 5 percent of the amount requested for fish habitat conservation projects, as authorized under the Act. Additionally, as authorized under the Act, the Service is requesting \$400,000 in scientific and technical assistance. We anticipate this funding will be used primarily to support required environmental compliance and permitting for fish habitat conservation projects approved for funding by the Secretary of the Interior. Finally, the Service requests funding for the equivalent of five FTE to support the 20 FHPs to continue to provide a consistent point of contact and assistance during the transition to the new model of program implementation under the vision of the ACE Act.

**Population and Assessment and Cooperative Management Activities (+\$2,267,000/ +6 FTE)** -- Funding at the requested level will provide for Service field staff in FOs, who will work in close cooperation with our Federal, Tribal, and State partners to analyze the status and trends of aquatic resources and conserve these complex ecosystems. With the goal of maintain self-sustaining, healthy, and diverse populations of fish and other aquatic species, this funding will increase staff’s ability to implement monitoring and assessment programs to ensure that the Service and its partners can use science and evidence-based information to guide fish conservation and management decisions. This will include increasing efforts to monitor and evaluate the survival of fish propagated and stocked each year by the Service’s NFHS.

**FWS Subsistence In-Season Management (+\$750,000/+6 FTE)** – Additional resources are requested to strengthen in-season resource management capacity in on-going Alaska fisheries programs, which remain core Service responsibilities once the transfer of OSM is completed, including:

- Fulfilling the Service responsibility for Subsistence Management Program delegated duties and related fishery management coordination with Tribes, subsistence users, State of Alaska, other agencies, and stakeholders.
- Supporting in-season management decisions, conduct stock status and trend analysis, offer technical information and assistance to subsistence users and Tribal fish commissions on subsistence fishery management and resource monitoring.
- Providing dedicated help and capacity to communicate in-season fishery management decisions and support actions to garner Tribal and subsistence user input into the Federal subsistence management process and decisions.
- Supporting the Alaska Region’s Subsistence Coordinator in order to address increased demands for Service analysis and interpretation of existing and proposed subsistence management program regulatory actions, policy proposals and Interagency Staff Committee recommendations, as well as review, analysis and consideration of funding requests from the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Fund (FRMP).

**Alaska Subsistence Co-Management (+\$2,000,000/ +0 FTE)** – The Service is requesting funding for

several projects to strengthen the Subsistence program in Alaska. An increase of \$1.5 million will be split between three legally directed Alaska Native co-management subsistence bodies the Service is involved in: the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council, Eskimo Walrus Commission, and Alaska Nannut Co-management Council. An increase of \$500,000 is for seed funding for compacting with Tanana Chiefs Conference which will result in TCC assuming responsibility for certain functions, including those associated with subsistence management, currently provided by DOI bureaus.

**Prevention (+\$4,075,000/ +15 FTE)** – Invasive species are a risk to ecosystem resilience and by conducting public awareness and education campaigns, evaluating likely pathways for introduction of new invasive species, and developing and implementing new risk assessment and risk mitigation tools the Service can reduce risks posed by invasive species before they become established. Prevention funds will support work by the Service and its partners to prevent the introduction, establishment and spread of AIS, and to help avoid and minimize their ecological and economic impacts. This funding increase will develop a sustainable risk assessment capability that allows FAC to conduct and maintain rapid screening and assessment, horizon scanning, and feasibility screening results needed to identify and prioritize species and pathways at greatest risk of causing harm to wildlife, wildlife resources and human health. As part of a nationally coordinated EDRR framework and a failsafe to prevention, early detection surveillance will occur within invasion hotspots and at points of entry into the United States. This funding increase will leverage the institutional architecture for a coordinated EDRR framework developed under BIL. Building upon this foundation, Injurious Wildlife listings and other management actions will manage high-risk species and pathways in collaboration and consultation with partners and existing processes, such as the ANS Task Force.

**Prevention-Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid Response Fund (+\$2,600,000/ +5 FTE)** – Funding will establish a pilot Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid Response Fund within the existing authorities of the FAC program, to be coordinated through the ANS Task Force. A model framework is being developed to establish a process and decision model to operate a rapid response fund in support of a National EDRR Framework. FAC will also contribute AIS response expertise to Interjurisdictional Invasive Species Rapid Response Teams to carry out expedited management responses to new AIS invasions across jurisdictions and in collaboration with State, Tribal, and Federal land management partners.

**Pacific Salmon Treaty (-\$150,000/ -0 FTE)** – The 2024 budget submission does not request funding for Pacific Salmon Treaty.

**Hydrilla, Eel and Milfoil Invasive Grasses (-\$1,500,000/ -0 FTE)** – The FY 2024 request would reduce science and technological expertise to mitigate or eliminate the harmful impact of invasive grasses to aquatic ecosystems.

**Snakehead Eradication (-\$1,000,000 / -0 FTE)** – The 2024 budget submission does not request funding for Snakehead Eradication.

**Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey (-\$818,000/ -1 FTE)** – The FY 2024 funding request would result in staffing reductions and limit the Service's ability to implement restoration activities with partners and private landowners or assess program effectiveness for the Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey.

**Delaware River Basin Conservation Act (-\$1,500,000/ -0 FTE)** – The FY 2024 request will limit the Service's ability to contribute technical and financial support for the Delaware Basin restoration activities under the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act.

**Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement (-\$7,000,000/ -0FTE)** – The 2024 budget submission does not request dedicated additional funding for Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement.

**Great Lakes F&W Restoration Program (-\$2,110,000/ -0 FTE)** – The FY 2024 request would reduce funding available for external partners to restore and research projects in the Great Lakes under the GLFWRA.

**Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission (-\$700,000/ -0 FTE)** – The 2024 budget submission does not request dedicated additional funding for Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission.

**Invasive Carp (-\$5,000,000/ -0 FTE)** – The 2024 budget submission does not request dedicated additional funding for Invasive Carp.

**Contract Fishing (-\$1,000,000/ -0 FTE)** – The 2024 budget submission does not request dedicated additional funding for Contract Fishing.

**Lake Tahoe Restoration (-\$950,000/ -0 FTE)** – The 2024 budget submission does not request dedicated additional funding for Lake Tahoe Restoration.

**Transfer of the Office of Subsistence Management to the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs (-\$7,954,000/ -25 FTE)** – The Department is proposing to transfer management of the Office of Subsistence Management to the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in response to feedback received from Alaska Native communities and people through a series of Departmental Tribal consultations and listening sessions focused on the Federal subsistence management program.

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# Science Applications



# Science Applications

## Activity: Science Applications

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change from 2023(+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Science Partnerships*	(\$000)	29,202	26,400	802	0	+12,698	39,900	+13,500
	FTE	73	64	0	0	+32	96	+32
Service Science	(\$000)	6,833	8,972	109	0	+6,471	15,552	+6,580
	FTE	16	22	0	0	+17	39	+17
<b>Total Science Applications</b>	(\$000)	<b>36,035</b>	<b>35,372</b>	<b>911</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+19,169</b>	<b>55,452</b>	<b>+20,080</b>
	FTE	<b>89</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+49</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>+49</b>

\*Science Partnerships is the subactivity name created by the 2023 Interior Appropriations Act, which consolidated the program into a single activity, combining the previous Cooperative Landscape Conservation Activity and the Adaptive Science Subactivity. In FY 2022, \$12,802 was in Cooperative Landscape Conservation and \$16,400 was in Adaptive Science. FY 2022 reflects the current funding structure.

### Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Science Applications

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Science Partnerships Activities	+20,698	+32
Chesapeake WILD	-8,000	-0
Conservation Science	+3,500	+9
Climate Science	+2,971	+8
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+19,169</b>	<b>+49</b>

### Program Overview

Our nation is facing a biodiversity crisis that threatens livelihoods, food systems and health. Conservation efforts to restore ecosystems across large geographies are often fractured or disjointed, hampered by numerous jurisdictional boundaries and authorities that lead to disparate conservation priorities. Securing a vibrant future for the nation’s fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats depends on successfully bringing together a diverse array of stakeholders to identify shared conservation priorities and find ways to work in concert with each other. Science Applications has the lead for pulling together information and people to address complex, multi-jurisdictional conservation challenges across the nation.

The Science Applications program is dedicated to uniting the natural resources community and the American public around effective, collaborative conservation. Science Applications promotes an inclusive and participatory approach to landscape conservation; one that seeks to bring Service programs, States, Tribes, other federal agencies, industry, and partners together in pursuit of a shared conservation vision.

A central facet of the program is to deliver scientific information and tools partnerships need to achieve conservation goals. The program addresses science gaps related to landscape and species conservation and climate adaptation strategies. Additionally, Science Applications provides essential internal science support to the Service’s regulatory programs, focusing our work on cross-cutting conservation science needs that rise above program lines. A special emphasis in the program’s work is the distillation of climate science to help natural resource managers implement climate adaptation strategies.

The program's work across the Service and the conservation community leads to durable conservation outcomes where partners collaboratively implement proactive and voluntary actions to directly conserve at-risk species or reduce habitat stressors. Our work can reduce the need to list species and the impact of regulatory interventions and it opens new, more effective opportunities for Federal government work with stakeholder partners to effect positive environmental change. This approach also opens increased paths for historically marginalized groups to become involved in conservation planning. In pursuit of the Service's larger mission, Science Applications is dedicated to working with others to create a network of connected lands and waters for thriving ecosystems and communities for current and future generations.

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### Program Elements

Two program elements comprise the Science Applications Program:

- Science Partnerships – Facilitates work with State fish and wildlife agencies and their regional associations, sovereign Tribal nations, territories, local officials, private landowners, non-governmental organizations, and others in support of landscape conservation with the goal of creating a network of connected lands and waters for thriving ecosystems and communities. Through these partnerships, the Science Applications program identifies gaps in scientific knowledge needed to achieve conservation goals and delivers scientific research and decision support tools essential to the success of our partnerships. Work leads to durable conservation outcomes where partners collaboratively implement proactive and voluntary actions to directly conserve at-risk species or reduce habitat stressors, often precluding regulatory interventions.
- Service Science – Coordinates and facilitates Service-wide conservation initiatives that cross Service programs. Provides scientific support for Service programs by providing policy, guidance, information, and tools that inform decision-making, as well as providing connections to other important collaborators. This work supports National Wildlife Refuge management, at-risk and endangered species management including pollinators, data and evidence management, climate adaptation strategies, and other conservation priorities.

### Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders

The Service has the statutory mandate and trust responsibility to fulfill its mission derived from various statutes and authorities. Through these operating authorities, the Service identifies potential impacts and provides solutions that prevent species and their habitats from becoming imperiled and support the Secretary's priorities. Brief descriptions of these various laws follow:

- *Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956*, as amended, (16 U.S.C 742(a)-754), establishes a comprehensive national fish and wildlife policy and authorizes the Secretary to take steps required for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fisheries resources and wildlife resources through research, acquisition of refuge lands, development of existing facilities, and other means.
- *Executive Order 13990*, "Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis" issued in January 2021, directs all executive departments and agencies to immediately review and, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law, take action to address the promulgation of Federal regulations and other actions during the last administration that conflict with national objectives, and to immediately commence work to confront the climate crisis.
- *Executive Order 14008*, "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad" issued in January

2021, directs climate considerations be an essential element of United States foreign policy and national security. The United States will work with other countries and partner to put the world on a sustainable climate pathway and build resistance against the impacts of climate change.

- *Presidential Memorandum*, “Restoring Trust in Government Through Scientific Integrity and Evidence-Based Policymaking” issued in January 2021, emphasizes the Administration’s commitment to making evidence-based decisions and developing policies and programs that are guided by the best available scientific data.

**Sub-activity: Science Partnerships**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Change from 2023 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Science Partnerships	(\$000)	29,202	26,400	802	0	+12,698	39,900	+13,500
	FTE	73	64	0	0	+32	96	+32

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Adaptive Science**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Science Partnerships Activities	+20,698	+32
Chesapeake WILD Program	-8,000	-0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+12,689</b>	<b>+32</b>

**Program Overview**

While smaller, narrowly focused conservation efforts are valuable efforts to preserve species and habitat, it is coordinated conservation at large landscape scale that often has the highest return on investment in biodiversity, functional ecological processes, and benefits to communities. Addressing complex, inter-jurisdictional, environmental issues such as climate change, habitat degradation, and habitat fragmentation are complicated by the fact that no one agency or organization can effectively manage all these stressors. The Science Applications program was established to work with States, sovereign Tribal nations, Federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, universities, private landowners, and others to provide science in support of collaborative conservation on a landscape scale beyond the scope of any one organization. The resulting collaborative landscape conservation partnerships transcend political and jurisdictional boundaries and emphasize working together to identify shared conservation goals. With clear goals established, the Service and partners prioritize how to best contribute to the larger conservation effort. A defining characteristic of the program and its work is to seek conservation solutions in a non-regulatory context.

***Catalyzing and Maintaining Collaboration***

Capacity for coordination and collaboration is essential to maintaining partnerships yet is often difficult to obtain. Building durable relationships requires years of earning trust and is easily disrupted when momentum is not sustained. For more than a decade, the Service’s Science Applications program has built this trust, successfully fostering regional, national, and international partnerships to identify shared conservation goals. With clear goals and understanding of shared outcomes established, the Service and partners work within their respective authorities and priorities to deliver conservation actions that are collectively greater than the sum of their parts.

Collaborative conservation is further strengthened by working with other landscape partnerships, such as the regionally based Migratory Bird Joint Ventures, National Fish Habitat Partnership, and the Network for Landscape Conservation, as well as with private landowners’ organizations such as the National Alliance of Forest Owners, Western Landowners Association, and Partnerscapes. This inclusive approach to conservation fosters agreement on priorities and leverages limited conservation dollars to projects that are agreed to have the most important impacts at state and local levels. Science Applications maintains a birds-eye view of these efforts, seeking opportunities to weave together local and state conservation actions at a

regional and national scale, as demonstrated by the Future of Conservation Forum.

In 2022, the Service, in partnership with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Network for Landscape Conservation, and others, assembled more than 200 Federal, State and nonprofit partners, for a virtual Future of Conservation Forum. The forum brought together public and private thought leaders from across the country representing diverse groups with the goal of creating sustained and connected networks of lands, waters, and people that fosters healthy wildlife populations and vibrant communities. Through a participatory process, attendees worked on identifying actions that can lead to an implementable national framework for landscape conservation in the era of climate change. Science Applications took the lead on producing a report which is now being used by other organizations to implement highest priority actions for collaborative landscape conservation.

### ***Customized Support***

The Service recognizes that every collaborative conservation partnership has science and coordination needs unique to their respective geography and conservation challenge. The program is therefore committed to meeting partners where they are to identify and collectively meet shared science needs that inform resource management decision-making. For example, the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, a threatened species that formerly occupied perennial waters across the Humboldt, Truckee, Carson, and Walker River watersheds, is undergoing a recovery plan revision. Science Applications serves a support function for the recovery planning and science development process by providing expertise and insight through a collaborative research project to test and refine methods that vastly improve understanding of aquatic habitat conditions and functions. Other examples include our work with fuels management. Increases in the frequency, severity, and size of fire outbreaks in forested ecosystems have resulted in destructive mega-fires that threaten human communities, ecosystems, and resident species. The program is working with others to synthesize existing science that informs implementation of future forest-fuels projects and monitor the impact and benefit of these projects on resident biodiversity. The program works to collaboratively prioritize monitoring needs and continues to develop priority research projects that allows for the adaptive management of affected ecosystems. The program funds studies and the development of decision support tools essential to the success of the partnerships we support.

Working with several long-standing and new partners, the Service continues to strengthen its collaborative conservation efforts, framed in part, around regional associations of State fish and wildlife agencies. At the forefront of this collaborative work is the Landscape Conservation Joint Task Force (Task Force) made up of leaders at the Federal and State fish and wildlife agencies. The Task Force develops shared priorities, fosters communication, explores new opportunities, and provides a forum for early problem-solving on issues to enhance landscape conservation progress. The task force also supports the work of other regional State and Service collaboratives, such as the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy, the Midwest Landscape Initiative, Nature's Network in the Northeast, and the numerous collaboratives in the West. In total, the program works with and supports more than 90 collaborative landscape level partnerships throughout North America.

### ***Responding to Science Needs for Landscape Conservation Design***

Equally important to catalyzing collaboration is equipping partnerships with the best available science to inform decision-making. This work often takes the form of landscape conservation designs (LCDs), which serve as blueprints to guide partners in targeting their management efforts to areas they collectively identify as having high conservation value. Development of LCDs underpins the program's overall collaborative landscape conservation efforts. LCDs are a partner-driven proactive approach that requires flexibility and adaptive management to achieve a sustainable, resilient landscape that meet the ecological needs of fish, wildlife and plants, and the social and economic needs of current and future generations. It is an iterative,

collaborative, and holistic process resulting in spatially explicit products and adaptation strategies that provide information, analytical and decision support tools, maps, and strategies to achieve conservation goals collectively held among partners.

Current examples of our Landscape Conservation Design work include:

- **Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS):** This partnership encompasses 15 states across the southeastern United States, plus Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. Since 2011 the group has worked to identify important areas for conservation and restoration. In fiscal year 2022, SECAS completed an annual update to the Southeast Conservation Blueprint based on the best available science and the feedback from the wider conservation community, partners, and users. New Blueprint users include the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, who used the Blueprint to help inform an America the Beautiful Challenge proposal to support the development of an integrated ecological plan for the surrounding landscapes around 60,000 acres of tribal land. In addition, most Southeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies states are using the Blueprint to help revise, update, and inform their State Wildlife Action Plans. To date, more than 300 people from over 130 organizations have used or are using the Southeast Conservation Blueprint to inform conservation decisions and bring in new resources for conservation. So far, the Blueprint has helped bring in more than \$80 million to protect and restore over 100,000 acres of partners' shared priority conservation areas.
- **Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI):** Formed in 2018, the MLI includes 13 Midwest states, three Canadian Provinces and other partners. The group uses shared conservation and management priorities to guide scalable solutions to achieve healthy, functioning ecosystems. In fiscal year 2022, MLI continued to develop the Midwest Conservation Action Plan (MC Action Plan) products, including a conservation blueprint and landscape science portal. In fiscal years 2023 and 2024, MLI will deliver the preliminary version of the MC Action Plan products, enabling the states and the Service to coordinate and plan across broad regions and use shared evaluation metrics; it will also work to engage additional partners beyond the Service and states. In fiscal year 2023, MLI hosted a symposium at the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference to showcase, highlight, and promote shared learning of collaborative efforts and opportunities for engagement across the Midwest. The MLI will also be hosting the development of a Midwest Conservation Grassland Roadmap to complement the developing Central Grasslands Roadmap but with a focus on the different land-use, water quality issues, cultural values, and resource needs of the upper Midwest.
- **NEAFWA Northeast Regional Landscape Wildlife Conservation Partnership:** Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA) state directors have formed a regional landscape wildlife conservation partnership with the Service that will guide coordinated strategic, science and partner-based landscape conservation at regional and watershed scales. As part of that effort, Science Applications will continue to provide capacity and work with state partners on the science foundation needed for watershed and regional-scale conservation design. These designs include the Delaware River watershed for the Delaware River Conservation Act partnership and the Chesapeake watershed for Chesapeake WILD, as well as similar anticipated watershed scale partnerships in the NY-NJ Harbor watershed and Connecticut River watershed.
- **State Wildlife Actions Plans in the West:** Science Applications began supporting the states of Nevada and Arizona in State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) coordination beginning in fiscal year 2021. This work included regular coordination meetings as well as the development of range-wide species distribution modeling for shared Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCNs). Coordination has expanded to include the SWAP coordinators for neighboring states of Utah, New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, and California. This multi-state partnership is now exploring regional, multi-state planning to

enhance conservation of SGCNs in cooperation with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Science Applications is offering technical and scientific support for range-wide species modeling while also working through the At-Risk Species Program to develop collaborative research and conservation initiatives for SGCNs that can be incorporated in SWAPs.

While the program's work with states continue to strengthen, Science Applications also recognizes the value of Tribal co-stewardship and the consideration and inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge in conservation decisions. Science Applications works closely with the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society (NAFWS) in assessing the conservation needs of its more than 227 member Tribes. Through this partnership, the program implemented a Tribal collaboration project using a self-determination contract pursuant to Public Law 93-638. This project works with the NAFWS on shared priorities including climate change, biodiversity, wildlife disease, and wildlife corridors and connectivity. Through this partnership, Science Applications provides resources to support the NAFWS in providing technical assistance to Native American and Alaska Native Tribes, further promoting Tribal collaboration, and laying the groundwork for co-stewardship. Additionally, Science Applications provides dedicated federal capacity to ensure that tribally led conservation, a priority of the Biden Administration, is central to collaborative conservation actions. The program is developing Service-level guidance on the use of Indigenous Knowledge designed to increase internal capacity and improve access to the best available scientific knowledge, thus improving federal decision-making and subsequent conservation actions.

With the program's founding emphasis on the distillation of climate science for natural resource managers, Science Applications ongoing collaboration with the U.S. Geological Survey's Climate Adaptation Science Centers (CASCs) is an important science partnership to spotlight. The CASCs provide science, research, and technical assistance to help Science Applications understand how climate change affects the Trust resources managed by the Service. In turn, the Science Applications program connects the CASCs to regional conservation networks, ensuring that the CASCs' science meets the current needs of on-the-ground managers. Working together, Science Applications and CASCs share and translate climate science, identify and respond to training needs, and integrate cutting-edge climate data and adaptation approaches to landscape conservation designs and at-risk species status assessments.

Collaborative conservation is among the most effective methods to meet the enormous and diverse conservation challenges the Service faces in the 21st century. Science Applications is at the forefront, helping to shape landscape partnerships and associated landscape conservation designs across partners, with a focus on States and Tribes with whom we share Trust responsibilities for fish and wildlife management.

## Key Examples and Accomplishments

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### North American Pollinator Conservation

It is widely understood that pollinators are essential to the health of our economy and people and yet they are declining globally. Collaborative pollinator conservation efforts are necessary to help reverse declining populations and prevent the need to list additional high-profile pollinators under the Endangered Species Act. The resulting benefits extend beyond pollinators and their habitat, helping to advance the bureau's conservation mission in ways that reach new and non-traditional partners, drive innovation, and inspire the next generation of conservationists. In June 2022, the first-ever Monarch Butterfly Summit was held in Washington, D.C. hosted by Senator Jeff Merkley and the Department of the Interior. During the summit, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland announced that the Service would establish a pollinator conservation center to address the decline of pollinators, including monarch butterflies. Launched in December of 2022, the Center for Pollinator Conservation works to provide leadership and coordination across partners, advance the state of pollinator science, support strategic decision making, and coordinate and share best practices with land managers for overcoming some of the biggest challenges facing pollinators. With the increases this year, the Service intends to grow the Center to at least 4.25 FTE and continue its development into a center of leadership and coordination for the Service's pollinator efforts. In FY 2024, the Center will be a key contributor to implementing the July 2022 Department of the Interior memorandum on pollinators which established an interagency task force among the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Geological Survey, National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Science Applications plays a central leadership, coordination and technical assistance role for both the Monarch Summit and the Center for Pollinator Conservation. The program continues to set a precedent for collaborative pollinator conservation across North America.



*Monarch butterfly. Photo by USFWS*

### Using Research to Inform Wildlife Highway Crossings and Provide Wildlife Corridors

Highways create a significant problem for wildlife habitat connectivity given the magnitude of the highway network across our country. Highways can impact wildlife habitat connectivity by severing movement corridors that are necessary for food, shelter, and water and genetic exchange among population segments. There are between 1-2 million wildlife-vehicle collisions with large mammals across the country each year. Estimated costs from these encounters is above \$8 billion dollars. A public safety issue, approximately 200 people annually lose their lives from these collisions. To prevent these collisions and mitigate the harm to wildlife movement, Science Applications funded research projects in Utah and California. These projects informed the location of critical highway crossings or where exclusionary fencing can protect the driving public and wildlife and reestablish much needed wildlife habitat connectivity. In partnership with the California Department of Transportation as well as state and federal agencies, these projects were used to secure commitments to provide safe wildlife crossing structures and to plan road mitigation projects (e.g., wildlife crossings, wildlife fencing, etc.) that will reduce deer-vehicle collisions, making roads safer for drivers and wildlife and reestablishing connectivity.



*Undercrossing to facilitate wildlife crossing. Photo by USFWS*

### The Wildlife Conservation Initiative: Collaborative Approach to At-Risk Species Conservation



*Golden winged warbler. Photo courtesy of Khustochka/Creative Commons*

The Wildlife Conservation Initiative (WCI), a partnership between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), National Alliance of Forest Owners, and the National Council for Air and Stream Improvement is one of the best models of collaborative conservation between the Federal government and private natural resource industry to achieve the non-regulatory conservation of dozens of at-risk, forest-reliant species. The partnership has resulted in ten on-the-ground research projects in six Service regions to evaluate the role of sustainable forest management practices in conserving at-risk forest-reliant species. Progress is measured through the successful completion of funded projects and the use of data gathered from these projects to improve the conservation status of at-risk species. Science Applications has aided work through project funding, collaborative scientific development and technical project management. In fiscal 2022, the Wildlife Conservation Initiative worked to complete four ongoing projects, continue with six projects, and initiated three new projects. At-risk species benefiting from this work include Northwestern pond turtles, golden-winged warbler, and the Texas heel splitter. Work to-date has focused on improving the conservation status of these species while simultaneously reducing the need for regulatory action (i.e., Endangered Species Act listing). Science Applications is committed to facilitating private industry partnerships to ensure ongoing success of the Wildlife Conservation Initiative.

### Zoonotic Disease Initiative Helps States, Tribes and Territories

Authorized by the American Rescue Plan, the Zoonotic Disease Initiative is a new federal financial assistance program created and administered by Science Applications that funds wildlife health projects for Tribes, States, and Territorial governments. Funding is used to establish and enhance fish and wildlife agencies' capabilities to effectively address diseases impacting free-ranging terrestrial, avian and aquatic wildlife. The projects aim to minimize the negative impacts of health issues affecting free-ranging wildlife through surveillance, management, and research to protect the public against zoonotic disease outbreaks. In fiscal year 2022, the Initiative funded projects in five states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, and Oregon, and five Tribal organizations, including the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Intertribal Buffalo Council, Karuk Tribe, Lummi Nation and Qawalangin Tribe of Unalaska. In fiscal years 2023 and 2024, \$9 million in annual funding will again be available to help Tribes, States and Territories strengthen early detection, rapid response, and science-based management actions to address wildlife disease outbreaks before they become pandemics.



*Fawn. Photo by USFWS*

### America the Beautiful Challenge

Working with other bureaus and offices within the Department of Interior and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Science Applications facilitated creation of the new America the Beautiful Challenge grant program, supported by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The America the Beautiful Challenge has created a strong partnership focused on developing and implementing large-scale, locally led, collaborative projects that address shared priorities across landscapes including public, private, Tribal, and working lands. Grants included \$81.5 million in Department of the Interior (DOI) funding awarded to advance the coordination of ecosystem restoration across the United States and to implement projects that connect and restore the lands, waters and wildlife upon which we all depend. Science Applications played a lead role in the administration of the new grant program. Working with the Service's Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program, Science Applications developed the Directed Announcement, the Cooperative Agreement with

the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the process of reviewing and awarding grants. The America the Beautiful Challenge prioritized proposals that fostered community engagement, included outreach to communities, and pursued co-design of processes and the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge. Science Applications ensured proposal criteria were developed to reflect those priorities and that there was a wide diversity of reviewers scoring proposals. Subsequently, conservation projects that directly contributed to local economies and underserved communities or honored Tribal sovereignty and advancing equity for Indigenous people, were recognized during the review process. The selected projects were announced by DOI in early fiscal year 2023. Of the 37 projects that were funded, 23 projects included engagement with or activities within an underserved community. Thirteen of the projects provided direct funding to Tribes. Science Applications will continue to coordinate and administer the Challenge in fiscal years 2024 through 2026.

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### 2024 Program Activities

The 2024 budget will:

- Continue work with peer fish and wildlife agencies, Tribes, and other conservation partners to support continuation of, expansion and adaptive changes to collaborative landscape conservation efforts including SECAS, MLI, Nature's Network, grasslands, and sage steppe.
- Support integration of State Wildlife Action Plans at regional levels as described in the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies framework to enhance landscape-scale and cross-boundary conservation.
- Continue addressing science needs and supporting landscape conservation design development to assist partners in creating a connected network of healthy lands and waters.
- Enhance and support the critical partnerships with private landowners through the National Alliance of Forest Owners as well as with the more than 200 landscape collaboratives that are part of the Network for Landscape Conservation.
- Support innovation in and monitoring of critical pollinator populations and other at-risk species.
- Share, translate, and integrate climate science and data from the Climate Adaptation Science Centers into cutting-edge adaptation approaches.

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### Proposed Program Changes

The 2024 budget request for Science Partnerships is \$39,900,000 and 96 FTE, a program change of +\$12,698,000 and +32 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Science Partnerships Activities (+\$20,698,000/+32 FTE)** — The 2024 request increases will build and expand operational capacity that is needed to grow and sustain partnerships that address a full range of conservation challenges. Funding will support the coordination of local, State, private, and Tribal conservation and restoration initiatives in the following areas:

- **Sagebrush Conservation:** Funding increase will support the collaboration with others to identify the information, research, and knowledge needed to promote conservation strategies that support a healthy sagebrush ecosystem and the critical species that depend on it. Funding will help guide coordinated conservation actions that address grassland threats and restore degraded grasslands.
- **At-Risk Species Conservation:** Through the Wildlife Conservation Initiative, the Service will expand collaboration with private forestry owners in all Service regions with the goal of producing information to support proactive conservation of a diverse range of at-risk species and their habitats,

including pollinators, mussels, turtles, and songbirds with a goal of precluding the need for federal listing and associated regulations.

- **North American Pollinator Conservation:** Funding will support the continued development of the virtual pollinator center to coordinate conservation actions and support partnerships focused on pollinator conservation. The increase will allow for more capacity to address partner needs across local, regional, national and international geographies.
- **Nature-based Solutions:** Funding will allow the Service and its partners to incorporate Nature-based Solutions into coastal, riverine, and terrestrial habitat conservation projects. These projects will provide climate adaptation and resiliency for natural resource management while also enhancing climate mitigation through carbon sequestration and supporting local communities with numerous benefits such as improved recreational opportunities and severe storm mitigation.

Paramount to the success of sustaining a connected network of lands and waters is a capacity to manage and make transparent information generated by partners about the landscape and a technical ability to provide geospatial tools to make better decisions at local, regional, and national scales. There is a significant need to improve data management in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and to enhance geospatial mapping capability to help translate the science and information developed at the regional scale to address local interest and needs. A funding increase allows for Science Applications to invest in data managers and geospatial mapping capacity who will work with States, Tribes, and local partners to better incorporate new and ongoing efforts that often are unaccounted for in national databases.

Meeting people where they are, which includes earning trust and respecting cultural norms, is key to building successful partnerships. The funding increase will allow the Service to improve its conservation efforts by incorporating critical social science knowledge and approaches to inform a better understanding of (1) the types of conservation planning and strategies that are relevant, beneficial, and accepted by the citizens we serve; (2) how conservation impacts people; and (3) how the work that the Service does contributes to the well-being of local communities. Developing the strategic priority of understanding the human dimensions of wildlife and other natural resource conservation efforts will enhance the collaborative work of the Service.

**Chesapeake WILD Program (-\$8,000,000/+ 0 FTE)**— The 2024 budget submission does not request the dedicated additional funding for Chesapeake WILD provided in the 2023 appropriation.

**Activity: Science Support**  
**Sub-activity: Service Science**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Change from 2023 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Service Science	(\$000)	6,833	8,972	109	0	+6,471	15,552	+6,580
	FTE	16	22	0	0	+17	39	+17

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Service Science**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Conservation Science	+3,500	+9
Climate Science	+2,971	+8
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+6,471</b>	<b>+17</b>

**Program Overview**

Science is fundamental to the delivery of the Service’s mission. Management of the nation’s natural resources is dependent on scientific collaboration and innovation. In this period of rapid change and new threats related to climate change and other stressors, our traditional science and historical knowledge may not be enough to ensure thriving plant and wildlife populations in the future. Given the uncertainty, there are many gaps in our science that need to be filled to help the Service and its partners maintain healthy plant and wildlife populations in sustainable ecosystems. Science Applications provides science support to ensure that Service programs can make decisions informed by the best available science, knowledge, data management and partnerships. Work supports regulatory decisions, biological opinions, landscape conservation designs, refuge planning, and species and habitat conservation recommendations.

Science Applications, through its Service Science sub-activity, serves as an innovation and coordination hub that supports the work of Service programs with cross-cutting, critical information and tools that improve decision-making and create efficiencies for refuge management, endangered species listing and recovery migratory birds, fisheries, and international conservation. For example, Science Applications has been instrumental in creating a dashboard to assist the Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation Program and their partners in targeting hundreds of thousands of dollars of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds to the most important sites to improve fish passage in this nation.

To accomplish work under the Service Science sub-activity, the Service coordinates with the U.S. Geological Survey, such as the Climate Adaptation Science Centers and the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units Program. We provide USGS with the science needs identified by our partners to obtain relevant, timely, best available science upon which to make decisions, and to ensure data and analyses are non-duplicative and accessible. The Service also partners with other Federal and State agencies, Tribes, universities, and scientific institutions to acquire scientific knowledge that informs imminent and important natural resource management questions and provides near-term solutions to address urgent and emerging issues. Service Science funding is used to advance research, develop models, and secure scientific expertise to help managers interpret and apply the best science available. Priorities in this area include:

- Climate adaptation and resilience
- North American pollinator conservation
- Emerging wildlife health issues

- Data management
- At-Risk and Endangered Species recovery
- Pre-listing conservation partnerships with States
- Refuge System Comprehensive Conservation Planning
- Prevention and mitigation of invasive grasses and wildfires in the sagebrush ecosystem
- White-Nose Syndrome research, monitoring and outreach to save imperiled bats

A priority of the Biden Administration, climate change is a foundational piece of the program's work and central to addressing many of today's ecosystem and habitat stressors. Science Applications provides capacity to support and coordinate the Service's response to climate adaptation and greenhouse gas mitigation by ensuring Service programs prioritize climate actions through strategic planning, expert consultation, and project implementation. In fiscal years 2022 and 2023, Science Applications coordinated implementation of the Service's Climate Change Action Program (CCAP), a unified approach to climate adaptation and mitigation across the Service. Implementation of the CCAP allows the Service to strengthen its capabilities to manage and direct the effects of climate change, to fulfill Congressional mandates, and contribute to the Administration priorities, especially those in Executive and Secretarial Orders such as Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful Initiative.

Underpinning all the Service's management work is the Service's ability to provide rigorous scientific evidence for making critical conservation decisions. This rests on the quality and availability of data generated by the Service and our partners. Statutory requirements for responsible data management include the Geospatial Data Act of 2018 and the Open, Public, Electronic, and Necessary (OPEN) Government Data Act of 2019 (also known as the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policy Making Act). These acts address the importance of sharing data, making it openly available and usable, and applying it to inform decision-making. The Science Support activity buttresses the Service's work of improving all aspects of data management to ensure the reliability, availability, and transparency of the agency's scientific information. Data stewardship and the monitoring of outcomes advances scientific understanding, helps adjust policies or operations, and ensures future decisions are evidence-based and made using the best available science. Science Applications coordinates critical underlying aspects of Service work relating to a robust data management and science approach as well as for scientific integrity policies contributing to science excellence in the Service.

Our ability to foster and maintain science excellence in the Service is tied to successfully recruiting the next generation of talented natural resource professionals. The program's current emphasis is on building a workforce for the future where diversity, equity and inclusion are central to how we approach staffing our science support work. Science Applications continues to create opportunities for students from underrepresented communities to explore careers in the natural resources and consider the Service as a future employer.

**Fostering Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Conservation**

Science Applications is committed to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in the conservation field and within the ranks of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A major emphasis in the program’s approach is to create opportunities for young adults to gain exposure to the work of the Service and related career tracks. Examples from across the country include:



*Science in the Service fellow.  
Photo by USFWS*

**Environmental Leadership Program:** Science Applications partnered with the Environmental Leadership Program’s (ELP) RAY Fellowship Program to create substantive pathways for recent college graduates from underrepresented backgrounds to enter careers in the natural resources. Science Applications has hosted four RAY fellows so far, beginning in fiscal year 2021. These fellows work for the Service for two years, gaining valuable experience and providing innovation to Science Applications. Fellows receive additional professional support and development through ELP's RAY Program content. Once they have completed the fellowship, fellows can be hired directly into available positions.

**Science in the Service Fellows:** Science Applications partnered with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) to expose Hispanic college students to careers in the Service. Science Applications annually funds the Science in the Service Fellowship for and coordinates with HACU to administer the fellowship program. Fellows complete 640 hours of part-time work over 32 weeks. SA leads a regional cross-programmatic working group that coordinates internally to develop and match fellows with priority science projects. In addition, the working group develops bi-monthly events to expose fellows to the diversity of career opportunities within the Service and prepares them to apply for federal jobs.

**Support for Native Students at the University of Montana:** Through U.S. Geological Survey’s Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units Program, Science Applications provided funding for three Native American students pursuing master’s degrees in a new program at the University of Montana. The program is designed to increase the participation of native students in graduate conservation programs through better supporting their cultural and educational needs. The students’ work will help identify key science gaps and pilot novel methodologies to inform on-the-ground conservation by the Service and its partners.

**Employee in Residence at the University of Texas at San Antonio:** Through an MOU with the University of Texas at San Antonio, Science Applications staff engage with university students and faculty to foster a shared understanding of each other, identify potential work and career development opportunities and strengthen relationships. The positive response from students and faculty has led to other universities exploring MOUs, including Tuskegee University, New Mexico State University, Fort Valley State University, Bowie State University, and Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University. As the effort matures, metrics will be established to track matriculation of students into conservation careers.

## Key Examples and Accomplishments

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### Climate Change Action Program

Coordinated by Science Applications, the Climate Change Action Program (CCAP) is a unified approach to climate adaptation and mitigation across programs and regions of the Service. The seven core elements of the CCAP – (1) Adaptation and Resilience; (2) Climate Science; (3) National Conservation Adaptation Strategy; (4) Partnerships; (5) Climate Mitigation; (6) Policy; and (7) Capacity – provide a foundation for the Service to respond agency wide to climate change. The CCAP organizes work with programs, regions and external partners to apply the best science and foster collaborations to address complex climate adaptation and mitigation challenges at multiple geographic scales.



*Brown bear captures salmon in Alaska. Photo by USFWS*

During fiscal year 2022, Science Applications ensured that significant progress was made by the Service on all seven elements of the CCAP. Accomplishments include finalization of the Climate Action Policy (056 FW 1) that describes the overall Service policy in response to climate change and establishes the Climate Change Action Program, completion of an assessment of formal and informal training climate change needs, a wide array of communication activities, and advancing the National Fish, Wildlife and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy with States and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Emphasis was placed on developing and institutionalizing the concepts of Nature-based Solutions and the Resist-Accept-Direct (RAD) Framework. Nature-based Solutions are a comprehensive approach to climate adaptation and mitigation that address natural resource management needs while simultaneously providing societal benefits. Science Applications has convened a NbS Working Group to develop an evaluation process that includes a set of project criteria, a roadmap for project development, and a toolbox of resources to assist resource managers in project planning and evaluation. The RAD Framework is a climate adaptation decision-making approach that informs adaptation decisions when the future ecological trajectory of the resource is uncertain because of rapid climate change. The RAD framework allows resource managers to explore plausible future socio-ecological trajectories and decide whether to resist change, accept change, or direct change to a more desired condition.

Science Applications also played a significant role helping DOI update several Manual Chapters related to climate change, including policy and planning and landscape conservation. In fiscal year 2023, nine cross-cutting themes were identified that further promoted the Service's proactive and coordinated response to climate change. Highlights include further socialization of the RAD Framework including development of a RAD Implementation Guidebook, the creation of communications tools and resources to meet internal and external climate communication needs, and the ongoing development of climate-related guidance and tools for use by biologists, planners and managers. In fiscal year 2024, Science Applications will continue to lead the development and implementation of the CCAP to ensure collaboration across Service programs and that climate change is considered in all Service planning, decision making, and on-the-ground management.

### Social Science Support

Science Applications has taken recent steps in fiscal years 2022 and 2023 to more than double critical social science capacity in the Service. Working in close coordination with the National Wildlife Refuge System's Human Dimensions Branch, Science Applications is now better able to improve how the Service connects with, listens to and understands the people we work with to conserve fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats. To date, Science Applications' social science work has positively impacted numerous regional and

national efforts to advance the program's top conservation priorities. Work accomplished includes enhanced collaborative landscape conservation efforts such as the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Investments in Landscape Design, and the Cascades to Coast Landscape Collaborative in the coastal Pacific Northwest. Regional social scientists also conducted a social network analysis to advance the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy's leadership role as a regional forum and decision support hub and helped guide voluntary conservation efforts in consideration of local communities. The program's social science support continues to contribute and guide forward-thinking efforts and wellbeing of the Service's current workforce including co-leading an Institutional Change Community of Practice, implementing the Climate Change Action Program and the Employee Wellbeing Action Plan, providing recommendations to the Service's Guiding Coalition, and the formation of the Center for Pollinator Conservation. In fiscal year 2024, Science Applications' social science work will continue to focus on enhancing collaboration and integrating social-ecological considerations into the bureau's work related to climate change, invasive species, habitat degradation and fragmentation, and non-regulatory approaches to at-risk species conservation. The program will also continue to work across Service programs to build and activate the bureau's burgeoning network of social science practitioners.

### **New Geospatial Tool Coordinates Landscape Conservation Designs Nationwide**

How can we ensure that conservation is being done collaboratively, effectively and efficiently, and in the most important places for our nation? To answer these questions, Science Applications has become a pioneer in landscape conservation design (LCD). LCD is an iterative, collaborative, and cross-programmatic process resulting in spatially explicit products and adaptation strategies that provide information, tools, maps and strategies to achieve landscape goals collectively held among partners. Members of the Service's America the Beautiful spatial sub-team worked with Science Applications to develop a comprehensive spatial layer and dashboard of all LCDs that were created with partners. This collaborative approach incorporated climate change information and has an explicit spatial layer of conservation priorities, among other characteristics and features. The landscape conservation design process is one of ongoing collaboration, development, and maintenance, resulting in an authoritative and data driven methodology to strategically target and manage landscape conservation and ecosystem restoration. The creation of this holistic geospatial tool will allow the National Wildlife Refuge System and other Service programs to better plan their conservation efforts around priorities developed in collaboration with other sovereigns and important partners and sets a new precedent for coordinated landscape-level management nationwide.

## Making Data Management Easy for the Alaska Region

Data are a critical tenet of sound science-based, data driven conservation. In the past, data collected by individuals were organized and managed individually and did not necessarily connect to other information being collected elsewhere in the Service and by partners. Better data management allows staff to share data more effectively with the public and reuse data across programs to answer complex questions about the Service's trust resources – all of which results in better conservation outcomes that demonstratively meet the Service's mission. Science Applications provides funding, technical expertise, and leadership support to help Service programs adopt data management best practices. For example, with Science Applications' support, data managers in the Alaska Region developed automated workflows and standardized approaches to metadata. As a result, regional staff now seamlessly create data management plans and metadata, rapidly improving access to project information and scientific data on a cross-programmatic and multi-regional scale. These advances represent critically needed steps to identify data management needs and develop plans for staff to meet those needs. Science Application provided leadership and invaluable support with communicating data management needs to other regional leaders and gaining broad cross-programmatic support for regional data management efforts. By providing technical expertise and funding to build tools necessary for proper data management, Science Applications has made it easier for all staff to produce documented data that are stored securely and can be accessed in a timely manner.



*Alaska Region staff member holds a female Common Eider to collect data measurement. Photo by USFWS*

### 2024 Program Activities:

The 2024 budget will:

- Support specific resource management decision-making of Service programs (e.g., listing under the Endangered Species Act, National Wildlife Refuge land acquisition, and climate adaptation best management practices);
- Continue linking and integrating independent management actions into a coordinated whole for species and ecosystem sustainability;
- Establish science-based tools for at-risk species conservation and their habitats in a non-regulatory context;
- Support students and graduates of minority serving institutions to encourage their participation in natural resource careers; and,
- Provide coordination and support for data management.

### Proposed Program Changes

The 2024 budget request for Service Science is \$15,552,000 and 39 FTE, a program change of +\$6,471,000 and +17 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

#### Conservation Science (+\$3,500,000/+9 FTE)

This budget increase provides funding to obtain the best available scientific research and innovation needed assist in management decisions. Science Applications will work with Service programs responsible for implementing regulatory mandates to identify specific science needs that will aid in decision making and will then identify whether that information is currently available. In instances where science gaps exist, the Service will partner with the U.S. Geological Survey, universities, and others to acquire this priority science. Furthermore, Science Applications will develop or refine LCDs that: (1) support the revision of the Refuge System's Comprehensive Conservation Plans, and (2) provide scientific support for improved integration of Service lands and programs into shared landscape conservation priorities. Science Applications will provide science, geospatial technical capacity, and perform surveys to quantify abundance

and distribution for at-risk species conservation efforts. This includes providing biological and data assistance for Species Status Assessments and convening innovative partnerships to address shared management challenges. Working with the Migratory Birds Program and external partners, Science Applications will support grassland conservation efforts and identify priority science and conservation needs to support the collaborative effort to bring back the 3 billion birds lost over the last half century. Working collaboratively within Service programs, Science Applications will weave together efforts with external partners and continue to build on collaborative conservation successes. Science Applications will also continue to model data excellence for the Service by improving our Science Catalog to provide collaborative conservation project and product data in a form that is discoverable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable for all users. This includes developing a centralized, secure, metadata file storage system.

### **Climate Science (+\$2,971,000/+8 FTE)**

With an increase in funding, Science Applications will work with Service programs to develop climate change science that will be incorporated into management decisions to achieve long-term conservation objectives for ESA-listed and at-risk species and their habitats. The Program will work closely with the National Wildlife Refuge System and Fish Hatchery Program to assess the climate vulnerability and risk associated with Service infrastructure and habitat management.

In this science support role, Science Applications will continue to work seamlessly with the U.S. Geological Survey's Climate Adaptation Science Centers (CASCs) and other Interior and science agencies to ensure climate science needs are addressed. Science Applications will distill climate research produced by the CASCs and others for natural resource managers to ensure the latest science and decision support tools are incorporated into Service management and conservation decisions. Additional funding will allow Science Applications to continue working with other Service programs to use the Resist-Accept-Direct framework that incorporates consideration of future climate and social drivers. In partnership with others, Science Applications will develop and deliver training and technical assistance for climate adaptation and resilience projects. Additional funding allows the Service to develop crucial climate science communications capacity. In coordination with the Office of Communications, Science Applications will co-lead related strategic climate change communication efforts to (1) identify current and emerging climate change communication needs and opportunities across the Service, (2) provide Service staff and partners with tangible information about their role in addressing climate change, (3) create and implement a proactive national climate change communications strategy for the Service and a corresponding toolkit for Service partners usage, and (4) coordinate climate change communication efforts with other bureaus and partners, as appropriate.

# General Operations



# General Operations

## Activity: General Operations

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change from 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Central Office Operations	(\$000) FTE	26,766 217	31,077 217	+2,258 0	0 0	+4,069 +17	37,404 234	+6,327 +17
Management and Administration	(\$000) FTE	47,484 611	51,249 611	+5,564 0	0 0	+17,961 +55	74,774 666	+23,525 +55
Servicewide Bill Paying	(\$000) FTE	44,667 6	46,581 6	+2,503 0	0 0	-357 +0	48,727 6	+2,146 0
Aviation	(\$000) FTE	3,255 7	3,296 7	+72 0	0 0	+4 +0	3,372 7	+76 +0
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	(\$000) FTE	7,022 1	7,032 1	+10 0	0 0	+2,000 +0	9,042 1	+2,010 +0
National Conservation Training Center	(\$000) FTE	26,455 102	27,015 102	+992 0	0 0	+4,845 +7	32,852 109	+5,837 +7
<b>Total, General Operations</b>	<b>(\$000) FTE</b>	<b>155,649 944</b>	<b>166,250 944</b>	<b>+11,399 0</b>	<b>+0 +0</b>	<b>+28,522 +79</b>	<b>206,171 1,023</b>	<b>+39,921 +79</b>

### Summary of 2024 Program Changes for General Operations

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Diversity Office - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Accessibility	+1,276	+3
Office of Communications	+1,245	+9
Native American Coordination Office	+805	+3
Regional Directors	+662	+2
Office of the Director	+81	+0
Information Resources and Technology Management	+8,195	+25
Joint Administrative Operations	+5,340	+30
Zero-emission vehicles	+4,426	+0
Servicewide Bill Paying	-357	+0
Aviation Management	+4	+0
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	+2,000	+0
NCTC Annual Maintenance	+2,801	+3
NCTC Operations	+2,044	+4
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+28,522</b>	<b>+79</b>

### Program Mission

The General Operations Program provides the management and support that allows the Service’s programmatic activities and organizations to accomplish their mission. Primarily, it provides headquarters, regions, and field offices with the resources and support services (e.g., human resources, finance, leadership, information management, etc.) needed to carry out the work of the Service to benefit the American people. General Operations also ensures that the Service is in compliance with legal, regulatory, and Departmental policies for all administrative functions.

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## Program Elements

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Five subactivities comprise the General Operations Program:

Central Office Operations – Headquarters offices provide the Service with the leadership, strategic direction, and necessary resources to accomplish mission priorities and goals. The offices included in this sub-activity include the following: Office of the Director, Office of Diversity and Inclusive Workforce Management, Office of Communications, Native American Coordination Office; Regional Directors Offices; and Document Tracking/Controlled Correspondence.

Management and Administration –The Assistant Director for Management and Administration is responsible for the Joint Administrative Operations function which oversees Budget and Performance; Finance; Human Resources; Acquisition Management; Safety; and Economics, Analytics, and Risk Management. The Service centralizes its administrative operations such that functions requiring extensive training, certification (e.g., contracting warrants), or specialized knowledge (e.g., personnel policies and authorities) are centralized for cost and operational efficiencies. Also funded in this subactivity, the Agency Chief Information Officer (ACIO) supervises Information Resources and Technology Management (IRTM), which includes cybersecurity.

Servicewide Bill Paying – This subactivity funds Service bills, largely bills for services purchased from DOI, including Information Technology (IT), communications, and security. Servicewide Bill Paying also funds Workers' Compensation and Unemployment Compensation, and mail printing services.

Aviation Management – This subactivity provides the safety and training oversight of the Fish and Wildlife Service's fleet of planes and pilots, develops aviation policy, and administers the Service's Aviation Fire program, Unmanned Aircraft System Program, and Emergency Management for Aviation incidents.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) – NFWF runs a competitive challenge grant program with a statutory non-Federal matching requirement of 1:1 for all awards of federally appropriated funds. However, in recent years the non-Federal match has been closer to 3:1, multiplying the impact of the Service's funding for on-the-ground conservation projects.

National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) – Opened in 1997 and located on 533 acres along the Potomac River in Shepherdstown, WV, NCTC is FWS's primary training facility and, as such, is considered the "Home" of the Service. NCTC also provides training, on a reimbursable basis, to conservation professionals from DOI, Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments, nonprofit conservation organizations, private landowners, and the business community. NCTC consists of state-of-the-art training classrooms, an auditorium, a museum and archive, and a high-definition studio for video and broadcasting services.

**Activity: General Operations**  
**Subactivity: Central Office Operations**

	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change from 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Central Office (\$000)	26,766	31,077	+2,258	0	+4,069	37,404	+6,327
Operations FTE	217	217	0	0	+17	234	+17

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Central Office Operations**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Diversity Office - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Accessibility	+1,276	+3
Office of Communications	+1,245	+9
Native American Programs Coordination	+805	+3
Regional Directors	+662	+2
Office of the Director	+81	+0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+4,069</b>	<b>+17</b>

**Program Overview**

The Service’s Central Office Operations provide leadership, strategic direction, and the organizational management required to accomplish mission priorities and goals. These functions include policy provision from Administration-appointed officials, implementation of equal employment opportunity, coordination of Service contact with Native American Tribes, and communications and outreach.

**Office of the Director** includes the Director, Deputy Director, and staff specialists, provides policy direction and support for program and management activities of the Service.

**Office of Diversity and Inclusive Workforce Management (ODIWM)** In support of recently published Executive Orders, **ODIWM** ensures that FWS programs, policies, activities, facilities, and services meet the needs of the American public. **ODIWM** mission support elements are Diversity & Inclusion, Reasonable Accommodation & Personal Assistance Services, Targeted Recruitment, Workforce Training & Awareness, Equal Employment Opportunity Complaints, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Policy Development, Federally Conducted/Assisted Programs, Affirmative Employment, Special Emphasis Observances, Limited English Proficiency, Congressional Correspondence & Special Requests, Diversity Joint Venture, and Environmental Justice. **Office of Communications** oversees and coordinates the communications activities of the Service, including internal communications, public affairs, media services, congressional and legislative affairs, partnerships, webpage development, policy and compliance, printing and publishing, and multimedia communications.

**Native American Programs Coordination** serves as a key point of contact for Native American Tribes and works to expand the Service’s capacity to work cooperatively with Tribes to further the Service’s conservation mission.

**Regional Directors (RDs)** advise the Service Director, lead the Service's field staff, manage the conservation of our lands and the administration of our programs in the field, and develop recommendations on national and regional policies, plans, and procedures. In addition, the RDs serve as liaisons to State, local and Tribal governments, civic and interest groups, and the public within their geographic jurisdictions.

**Correspondence/Document Tracking.** The Department uses DTS to assign correspondence for action, route correspondence to officials for their review and concurrence, and track correspondence and other packages. Developed by the Service, DTS is used across all bureaus of the Department.

### **2024 Program Activities**

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- Provide the Service with the leadership, strategic direction, and technical expertise to accomplish mission priorities and goals.
- Provide policy direction and implementation guidance for the entire Service.
- Support the Administration's priorities for public civil rights, diversity, equity, and inclusion and implementing equal employment opportunity laws and directives; and the implementation of the Service's Diversity and Inclusion Implementation Plan.
- Coordinate Service consultation with Native American Tribes.
- Coordinate communications and outreach efforts across the organization, highlighting the Administration's priorities to include climate challenges and building resilience; strengthening tribal nations; advancing and incorporating science across the Service; Promoting Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion of underserved communities; and building agency capacity.
- Develop and implement communications policies and guidelines for Service employees.
- Provide strategic direction on significant, complex, and controversial issues.

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**Proposed Program Changes**

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The 2024 budget request for Central Office Operations is \$37,404,000 and 236 FTE, a program change of +\$4,069,000 and +19 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Diversity Office - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (+\$1,276,000/+3 FTE)** —The budget includes an additional \$1.276 million as part of a Department wide Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility budget initiative to address identified high-priority needs. These needs support several Executive Orders, including:

- Executive Orders 14050 and 14041, Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans – Through Historically Black Colleges and Universities;
- EO 14049 Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities;
- EO 14045, Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics; 14035, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce;
- EO 14031, Advancing Equity, Justice, and Opportunity for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders; 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government;
- EO 13988, Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation; and supporting the Department on EO 14020, advancing gender equity and equality in the workplace.

**Office of Communications (+\$1,245,000/+9 FTE)** The budget increase will enhance the Service’s ability to communicate with the public and partner organizations as additional funding will be used to enhance digital communications capacity across the organization. The Office of Communications is adapting to new digital modes of communication (i.e., social media, use of video, enhanced graphics) to better engage the current generation of Americans on priority wildlife conservation issues. A modest increase will accelerate the Service’s ongoing transition to digital communications, including improving the Service’s web presence

**Native American Coordination Office (+\$805,000/+3 FTE)** — With the requested funding in this scenario, the Service will hire two full-time and two part-time employees to expand outreach and deepen partnerships with Tribal organizations, to advance and amplify the Administration’s and Service’s conservation and Tribal trust goals. This investment represents a continuation of the work described in the FY 2023 President’s Budget where the Service is looking externally to enhance government-to-government interactions. Here, the focus will be on enhancing the relationships between the Service and Tribal organizations to cultivate a community where the Service can exchange information with Tribal organizations and seek opportunities to leverage their additional capacity.

**Regional Directors Offices (+662,000/+2 FTE)** —The Service’s eight Regional Directors oversee the day-to-day field operations of the Service, leading more than 7,000 highly-skilled biologists, maintenance workers, law enforcement officers, and an array of additional talented personnel. They are the means through which the Service advances conservation and engages the public and partners, and implements the Administration’s priorities. This increase will provide \$125,000 per Regional Director to cover additional costs of leading a workforce with almost 1,000 new members, and increased challenges presented by increasing threats to our resources from climate change and other factors.

**Office of the Director (+81,000/+0 FTE)** —this increase will partially offset cost increases relating to supporting the Director’s office.

**Activity: General Operations**

**Subactivity: Management and Administration**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Budget Request	Change from 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Management and Administration	(\$000)	47,484	51,249	+5,564	+0	+17,961	74,774	+23,525
	FTE	611	611	0	+0	+55	666	+55

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Management and Administration**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Information Resources and Technology Management	+8,195	+25
Joint Administrative Operations	+5,340	+30
Zero-emission vehicles	+4,426	+0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+17,961</b>	<b>+55</b>

**Program Overview**

**Joint Administrative Operations (JAO)**

The JAO provides administrative support essential to achieving conservation outcomes on the ground. JAO includes:

- Budget and Performance, which formulates, justifies, coordinates, and executes the Service’s \$3.6+ billion budget.
- Acquisition Management, which includes contracting, manages personal property and fleet, and office space.
- Economics, Analytics, and Risk Management, which coordinates OIG/GAO audits, creates Federal Register notices, performs enterprise risk management, economic analysis; and enterprise analytics.
- Finance, which oversees travel and charge cards, processes payments & collections, provides financial statements, and manages real property.
- Human Resources, which hires new employees, administers compensation and benefits, and facilitates employee relations and personnel security.
- The Safety Office, which ensures safety and occupational health and processes workers compensation and tort claims.

**Information Resources and Technology Management (IRTM)**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS or Service), Assistant Director for IRTM (AD-IRTM) is responsible for partnering with all parts of the Service to ensure that the technology requirements of the FWS conservation program are met. To that end, IRTM is responsible for the development of policy and Service-wide guidance on information management and information technology practices impacting a myriad of business management and operational activities within the Service. IRTM develops, plans, and manages Service-wide Information Management and Technology functions and resources that enable all programs and regions in the Service to perform their mission.

The AD-IRTM also serves as the Bureau Associate Chief Information (ACIO) and represents the Service as an active member of the DOI Chief Information Officer's Information Management and Technology Leadership Team. The components of IRTM include Operations, Policy/Planning, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Data Management, Cybersecurity and Privacy. These components cut across the full spectrum of information management and technology services to include customer support, infrastructure management, requirements processing, governance, strategic planning, geospatial services, application development and records management. The ACIO also manages the IT Investment Portfolio on behalf of the Service and oversees all IT acquisitions and complies with the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA).

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### 2024 Program Activities

- Provide human resources support;
- Provide safety and occupational health guidance and support;
- Coordinate budget formulation, presentation, and execution;
- Provide finance, acquisition, and contracting management;
- Support the Administration's priorities across all areas of JAO;
- Provide IT leadership, resources, and support for Headquarters and the regions;
- Enable state-of-the-art tools, hardware, software, and cloud services to ensure Service programs have access to specialized technologies to meet mission requirements;
- Coordinate IT policy development, capital planning, records management, and FOIA responsibilities; and
- Strengthen cybersecurity operations, risk management, and compliance.

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### Proposed Program Changes

The 2024 budget request for Management and Administration is \$74,774,000 and 657 FTE, a program change of +\$17,961,000 and +55 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Information Resources and Technology Management (+\$8,195,000/ +25 FTE)** Effectively achieving the mission of the Service requires a foundational, state-of-the-art information technology and telecommunications infrastructure. This foundation consists of hardware, software, networks, cybersecurity, and a well-trained array of specialists to effectively meet the mission requirements of the Service. This infrastructure includes up-to-date servers, specialized software, network connectivity, fiber optics, switches, and cybersecurity tools that enable scientists, analysts, and supporting personnel to communicate effectively with each other, exchange data, and use computational resources. A modern, well-maintained information technology foundation also enables collaboration and outreach with peers and the public, domestically and worldwide, through virtual meetings, collaborative workspaces, and shared data. This technological foundation serves an integral role in enabling the success of the Service in meeting its mission.

Significant advances in the development and deployment of technological needs including infrastructure, allow Service employees and the public to create, process, store, access, and utilize data in secure, user-friendly way. IRTM works to identify technology gaps and data needs, develop new data management systems, and provide secure and reliable connections for Service employees and the public in support of the FWS conservation mission priorities. The proposed additional staff will allow IRTM to undertake new

initiatives such as modernizing the network infrastructure and architecture to enable more secure and user-friendly network connectivity. IRTM will also provide enhanced levels of customer support to meet specialized technology requirements of the Service. In addition, IRTM will support the following principal objectives:

- Leverage Enterprise Infrastructure Services to enhance and improve the connectivity across Service facilities and obtain the minimum connectivity thresholds for all Service locations.
- Provide efficiency and enhancements for data management and for the consumption and storage of data through identifying Cloud solutions, such as DOI Major Tiered Data Centers and providers of Software as a Service, Infrastructure as a Service, and Platform as a Service.
- Invest in the technological infrastructure, such as network, telecom, and other IT equipment at levels adequate to support and enhance the Service's mission.
- Support the Presidential order to implement Zero Trust Architecture within systems operation and governance, particularly in the areas of network implementation and support, data management, software development, and identity management.
- Work closely with Migratory Birds Program and Nation Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) to develop the ePermits system beyond its original scope to include work on Secure Paperless CITES Permitting and transitioning from development to operations and maintenance.
- Provide an information technology foundation to support priorities including climate change, America the Beautiful, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and conservation initiatives throughout the Service

**Joint Administrative Operations (+\$5,340,000/+30 FTE)** — The Assistant Director for Management and Administration (M&A) leads the Joint Administrative Operations (JAO), a national organization that provides standardized administrative support services for the Service. Increases for M&A will support expedited services by our human resources, contracting and safety divisions, to allow for timelier provision of assistance to programs. Providing personnel to programs through the HR function, and letting contracts for priority conservation projects through the acquisition program contribute directly to meeting the Service's mission. With the growth of Service function and responsibilities over the years, the administrative functions have lagged behind, causing backlogs in contracting, hiring and other functions essential to mission success. This increase recognizes that the Service needs the behind-the-scenes support of staff in these essential functions to effectively deliver conservation, customer service, and collaborate with partners around the country. To successfully achieve the Administration goals to address climate change and create good-paying jobs in conservation, accompanying increases to necessary administrative functions are also requested. With additional resources across the Service, ensuring there is adequate

support to meet mission needs is critical and will ensure success in delivering the Administration's priorities.

**Vehicle AFE Premium (+\$4,426,000/+0 FTE)** The request includes a total of \$15.5 million in this activity and in Construction to support the transition of the Department's light duty fleet acquisitions to zero emission vehicles. This funding will provide critical planning and coordination capabilities, utility build-out and charging infrastructure, and zero emission vehicles. The planning includes prioritizing locations for deployment, determining infrastructure needs such as increased electrical supply and access for electric vehicle supply equipment, and coordinating installation to ensure Interior can maximize the use of these charging stations. By leveraging the buying power of the Federal Government and transforming its fleet of more than 600,000 cars and trucks to an all-electric fleet, the Administration can both save money for American taxpayers and accelerate the Nation's industrial capacity to supply domestically produced zero emission vehicles and electric batteries to create new good-paying jobs and address the climate crisis.

**Activity: General Operations**

**Subactivity: Servicewide Bill Paying**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change from 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Servicewide (\$000)		44,667	46,581	+2,503	0	-357	48,727	+2,146
Bill Paying FTE		0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Servicewide Bill Paying**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Communications, Information Technology and Security	-357	+0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>-357</b>	<b>+0</b>

**Program Overview**

Servicewide Bill Paying processes bills received by the Service for charges by the Department or other outside entities. These are fixed costs that the Service must cover.

**Communications, Information Technology, and Security**

Expenses in this category include payments for domestic and international network services; costs associated with land, wireless, radio, and satellite communications; Certification and Accreditation (C&A) costs for IT systems; providing security for IT systems; and improving compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements. The funds in this subactivity are exclusively for bills required to keep our IT operations secure and modern.

**DOI Working Capital Fund (WCF)**

The Department of the Interior provides centralized administrative and business services and systems to Interior bureaus and offices and to other customers. The Service request includes funding for its portion of the WCF bill.

**Servicewide Workers' Compensation and Unemployment Compensation Costs**

Workers' compensation includes costs of compensating injured employees and dependents of employees who suffer accidental deaths while on duty. Unemployment compensation costs represent the estimated annual costs of paying unemployment compensation claims.

**Postage**

Expenses in this category include contract charges for intra-agency and Departmental courier and mailroom services.

**Printing**

Despite having reduced printing costs through the use of electronic media, printing is still required for certain documents during the course of business. The Service incurs the cost for printing these documents.

**Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks (AS-FWP)**

The Service contributes funding to cover costs of salary, benefits, and travel for certain personnel under the Assistant Secretary for activities directly related to the Service.

**Reimbursable Support Agreements**

Expenses in this category relate to support services provided by the Department and external agencies. Examples include the Employee Assistance Program, administration of the Flexible Spending Plan, and storage services provided by the National Archives and Records Administration.

**Memberships**

Organizations sharing the Service's priorities may share membership and participation in professional, scientific, and conservation organizations.

**2024 Program Activities**

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- Provide IT leadership, resources, and to support FWS program priorities.
- Maintain effective cybersecurity operations, risk management, and compliance.
- Provide effective and efficient management of IT operations throughout the Service.
- Support worker's compensation and unemployment compensation payments.
- Manage payments for DOI Working Capital Fund and other DOI bills.

**Proposed Program Changes**

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The 2024 budget request for Servicewide Bill Paying is \$48,727,000 and 0 FTE, a program change of -357,000 and +0 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Communications, Information Technology and Security (-\$357,000 / -0 FTE)**—This change is a result of Information Technology adjustments across multiple budgetary baselines.

**Activity: General Operations**  
**Subactivity: Aviation Management**

	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change from 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Aviation (\$000)	3,255	3,296	+72	0	+4	3,372	+76
Management FTE	7	7	0	0	0	7	0

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Aviation**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Aviation Management	+4	0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>+0</b>

**Program Overview**

The safety and training oversight of the Fish and Wildlife Service’s fleet of planes and pilots is the responsibility of the National Aviation Management Branch, previously managed within the Migratory Bird program. The Assistant Director of the Migratory Bird Program serves the agency’s Aviation Executive overseeing this Branch and represents the Service as a voting member of the DOI’s Executive Aviation Committee, which is responsible for developing the aviation policy. Additionally, the Branch is responsible for the Service’s Aviation Fire program, Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) program development within DOI, and the Service’s Emergency Management for aviation incidents.

The Branch administers all Service aircraft acquisitions and vendor contracts. The Service has identified and is implementing six priorities that will immediately improve the Service’s Aviation Enterprise: Automated Flight Following, Crew Resource Management, Improved Pilot Training Program, Standardized Risk Assessment Processes, Aviation Management Communications, and a Kodiak Aircraft Training Plan.

**2024 Program Activities**

**Aviation Management** – The 2024 request for the Service-wide Aviation Management Program supports the Service’s continued efforts to improve aviation safety, training for pilots and aerial observers, and provide critical oversight of aviation operations at the national level. Funding enables Service Fleet Pilots to transport staff and materials to remote sites in the National Wildlife Refuge System, conduct biological monitoring and surveys critical to informing conservation efforts, and participate in prescribed fires that help prevent or mitigate wildland fires on Federal land. The Aviation Management Program is also the Service’s lead on developing policy and procedures on the use of UAS.

**Justification of 2024 Program Changes**

The 2024 budget request for Aviation is \$3,372,000 and 7 FTE, a program change of +\$4,000 and 0 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Aviation Management (+4,000 / +0 FTE)**— This change is a result of Aviation fixed costs adjustments across multiple budgetary baselines.

**Activity: General Operations****Subactivity: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation**

	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change from 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	7,022	7,032	+10	0	+2,000	9,042	+2,010
(\$000)							
FTE	1	1	0	0	0	1	0

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for National Fish and Wildlife Foundation**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	+2,000	0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+2,000</b>	<b>0</b>

**Program Overview**

Created by Congress in 1984, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) serves as the official foundation for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. NFWF is the nation's largest private conservation grant-maker supporting more than 20,400 projects in all 50 states. NFWF is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization lead by a Board of Directors approved by the Secretary of Interior.

The *NFWF-USFWS Conservation Partnership* typically delivers around \$7 million in FWS funding annually to a wide variety of grant recipients to implement projects that further the conservation and management of fish, wildlife, plants, and other natural resources. All of the funding is directed to on-the-ground conservation and no funds are used to support NFWF's administrative costs.

The NFWF runs a competitive challenge grant program with a statutory non-Federal matching requirement of 1:1 for all federally-appropriated dollars that NFWF awards. In recent years NFWF has averaged a 3:1 match. All grantee matching funds are non-Federal funds provided in cash or as in-kind services. NFWF uses the funding to leverage additional commitments of resources from corporations, foundations, and conservation partners. The funds are invested through outcome-focused grant programs guided by conservation business plans developed in partnership with the Service. Individual projects are reviewed by diverse outside reviewers (e.g., Federal, State, non-profit, educational and private sector), NFWF, and the Service.

**2024 Program Activities**

- Provide funding to State, Tribal, local, non-profit, and private organizations for conservation and management of fish, wildlife, and plant resources through the following grant programs:
  - Alaska Fish and Wildlife Fund
  - Atlantic Flyway Shorebirds
  - Bring Back the Natives (focused on native fish restoration)
  - California Forests and Watersheds
  - Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship

Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund  
ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Conservation  
Cumberland Plateau Stewardship Fund  
Hawaii Conservation Program  
Killer Whale Research and Conservation Program  
Longleaf Forests and Rivers  
Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley Restoration Fund  
Monarch Butterfly and Pollinators Conservation Fund  
New England Forests and Rivers Fund  
Northern Great Plains Program  
Rocky Mountain Rangelands Program  
RESTORE Colorado  
Sea Turtles Program  
Seabird Conservation Program  
Southern Great Plains Program  
Southeast Aquatics Fund  
Southwest Rivers Fund  
Sustain Our Great Lakes Partnership  
Western Big Game Seasonal Habitat and Migration Corridors Fund

- Provide funding to State and Tribal agencies to support the America the Beautiful Initiative.

### **Proposed Program Changes**

The 2024 budget request for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is \$9,042,000 and 1 FTE, a program change of +\$2,000,000 and 0 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (+\$2,000,000/ +0 FTE)**— The 2024 funding increase is requested to enable NFWF to approve and fund additional projects through its established conservation grant programs listed above. NFWF annually receives more grant applications that have important conservation value than current award levels can fund. This increased funding will allow the project reach (in scale and geographic impact) to be enhanced in communities around the country. The funds will also ensure covering increased environmental compliance costs that grant recipients are required to meet as part of the award requirements. The increased funding will also be used to leverage additional resources from corporations, foundations, and conservation partners to invest in outcome-focused grant programs guided by conservation business plans developed in partnership with the Service.

**Activity: General Operations****Subactivity: National Conservation Training Center**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Budget Request	Change from 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
National Conservation Training Center	(\$000)	26,455	27,015	+992	0	+4,845	32,852	+5,837
	FTE	102	102	0	0	+7	109	+7

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for National Conservation Training Center**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
NCTC Operations	+2,044	+4
NCTC Annual Maintenance	+2,801	+3
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+4,845</b>	<b>+7</b>

**Program Overview**

The National Conservation Training Center is the Service's primary training facility and is the "Home" of the Service. It opened in 1997 and is located on 533 acres along the Potomac River in Shepherdstown, WV. In addition to training Service employees, NCTC provides training on a reimbursable basis to conservation professionals from DOI, other Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments, not-for-profit conservation organizations, private landowners, and the business community. NCTC is a state-of-the-art training facility with multiple classroom buildings, a wage grade training facility, auditorium, the USFWS Museum and Archive, and a high-definition studio for video and broadcasting services.

The NCTC delivers training in person and in virtual environments, along with outdoor safety courses that reach 5,717 course students and 10,591 webinar participants through more than 309 programs. Courses include a wide range of mission-critical topics including leadership, program academies, biology, climate change, conservation policy, safety, and wage grade training. The NCTC's innovative training is also adapted from classroom sessions to remote learning training videos and webinars to support virtual courses. Training is delivered in collaboration with other Federal and State agencies and other partners to ensure students learn from a wide variety of viewpoints and perspectives and thus expand collaborative partnerships for conservation. The USFWS Library supports this training through its online literature search services and 10,000 volume physical collection.

The NCTC collaborates with Federal, State, Tribal, and NGO partners to implement and support targeted training and recruitment programs for youth and young adults, such as the Directorate Fellows Program (DFP), and the Native Youth Climate Adaption and Leadership Congress (NYCALC). Annually, DFP provides 60+ training opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students that focus on conservation and climate science projects. These opportunities lead to a direct hire authority and placement into 50-60 permanent Service positions annually. The NYCALC reaches Tribal high school and college students representing over twenty tribes a year and serves as a targeted recruitment program for the Indian Youth Service Corps hiring authority. Both the DFP and NYCALC programs support the Civilian Climate Corps.

NCTC works to incorporate inclusion into its training curriculum. The Service is committed to developing and providing a science-based curriculum in support of a diverse and inclusive workforce that supports our conservation mission, addresses climate change, and supports cultural differences, generational changes, and racial equity.

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### 2024 Program Activities

- Provides training opportunities for the Service, DOI and other Federal and non-Federal partners in conservation policy and regulations, applied landscape conservation, climate science, leadership and management, maintenance professional skills, partnerships, and communications.
- Advances climate change partnerships, recruitment strategies, training programs, and career pathways to green jobs, supporting the Administration's goals to address climate change and Build Back Better (e.g., through the Indian Youth Services Corp).
- Provides leadership development and training in diversity and inclusion in support of cultural differences, generational changes, and racial equity aligned with the Administration's priority to advance racial equity.

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### Proposed Program Changes

The 2024 budget request for the National Conservation Training Center is \$32,852,000 and 109 FTE, a program change of +\$4,845,000 and +7 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Annual Maintenance (+\$2,801,000/+3 FTE)** — The budget increase will allow the NCTC to minimize maintenance project backlog, increase the level of preventive and restorative maintenance work, and allow for important upgrades to learning space, campus energy, mechanical, control systems and classroom technology. NCTC will hire three additional maintenance professionals to address projects and assist with Service maintenance professional training programs.

**NCTC Operations Activities & Youth and Careers in Nature (+\$2,044,000/+4 FTE)**— This funding will allow the Service to continue to provide training opportunities to internal as well as external partner audiences. NCTC will expand the infrastructure necessary to implement strategic training partnerships for youth corps and related programs such as the Directorate Fellowship Program and tribal collaboration related to the Indian Youth Service Corps (IYSC) and tribal training programs. Staffing, direct partnership support, training and systems for reporting and tracking will be executed. The DFP and IYSC will leverage existing partnerships and be coordinated at the highest level to build communities by providing participants with a livable wage and practice targeted recruitment strategies to advance racial equality to build the next generation of conservation stewards.

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# Construction



# Construction

## Appropriations Language

For construction, improvement, acquisition, or removal of buildings and other facilities required in the conservation, management, investigation, protection, and utilization of fish and wildlife resources, and the acquisition of lands and interests therein; [\$29,904,000] \$50,951,000, to remain available until expended: Provided, That such amounts are available for the modernization of field communication capabilities, in addition to amounts otherwise made available for such purposes. (Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023.)

[For an additional amount for "Construction", \$247,000,000, to remain available until expended, for necessary expenses related to the consequences of wildfires, hurricanes, and other natural disasters occurring in and prior to calendar year 2023, including winter storm damages at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge.] (Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023.)

The Service has the legal mandate and responsibility to ensure its inventory of assets, facilities, and infrastructure is safe and adequate to accomplish its conservation mission and that operations are conducted in compliance with applicable regulations. More than 19 laws, statutes, and executive orders govern what the Construction program must do with the funding it receives from Congress. Governing authorities are discussed below Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders

The Service has the legal mandate and responsibility to ensure its inventory of assets, facilities, and infrastructure is safe and adequate to accomplish its conservation mission and that operations are conducted in compliance with applicable regulations. More than 19 laws, statutes, and executive orders govern what the Construction program must do with the funding it receives from Congress. Governing authorities are discussed below.

*Refuge Recreation Act* (16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4). Authorizes development of fish and wildlife areas for recreational use, including land acquisition and facilities construction and management.

*National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act*, as amended (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee). Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to award contracts for the provision of public accommodations of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

*Migratory Bird Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 715-715d, 715e, 715f-715r). Provides for land acquisition, construction, maintenance, development, and administration for migratory bird reservations.

*Fish and Wildlife Act* (16 U.S.C. 742a-742f). Authorizes the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources, including the acquisition and development of existing facilities.

*Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act*, as amended (42 U.S.C. 9601-9675). Authorizes Federal agencies to conduct cleanup and/or recover costs associated with releases of hazardous substances on or from land under our jurisdiction, custody, or control.

*Federal Facilities Compliance Act* (42 U.S.C. 6961). Requires Federal agencies to comply with

Federal, State, and local solid and hazardous waste laws in the same manner as any private party.

*Pollution Prevention Act*, (42 U.S.C. 13101, 13101 note, 13102-13109), as amended by P.L. 101-508. Requires pollution that cannot be prevented at the source to be recycled in an environmentally sound manner and disposal as a last resort.

*Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act* (42 U.S.C. 7701 -7706). Establishes an earthquake hazards reduction program.

*National Dam Safety Program Act* (33 U.S.C. 467). Provides for Federal agencies to implement the Federal Guidelines for Dam Safety, which established management practices for dam safety at all Federal agencies.

*National Energy Conservation Policy Act* (42 U.S.C. 8152-8259). Establishes an energy management program in the Federal government and directs Federal agencies to perform energy surveys and implement energy conservation opportunities to reduce consumption of nonrenewable energy resources in buildings, vehicles, equipment, and general operations.

*Energy Policy Act (EPAct)* (P.L. 109-58). Extends previous Congressional direction to Federal facility managers with even greater goals of energy efficiency improvements in existing and new facilities, mandates increased use of renewable energy sources, sustainable building design and construction, metering of all Federal buildings, and procurement of Energy Star equipment. This legislation contains energy efficiency tax credits and new ways to retain energy savings.

*Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA)* (P.L. 110-140). Intends to move the United States toward greater energy independence and security; increase production of clean renewable fuels; protect consumers; increase the efficiency of products, buildings, and vehicles; promote research on and deploy greenhouse gas capture and storage options; and improve the energy performance of the Federal Government.

*Energy Act of 2020* (P.L. 116-260) – Expands energy and water investment requirements; expands energy auditing and reporting requirements; adds water metering to covered facilities; authorizes the Federal Energy Management Program (FEMP) and establishes program goals around energy and water resilience and environmental stewardship.

(16 U.S.C. 695k-695r). Provides for limitations on reduction of areas by diking or other construction in California and Oregon in the case of migratory waterfowl and other refuges, as well as other construction provisions.

(16 U.S.C. 760-760-12). Provides for the construction, equipping, maintenance, and operation of several named fish hatcheries.

(23 U.S.C. 144 and 151). Requires bridges on public highways and roads to be inspected.

### **Executive Orders**

Presidential Memorandum of October 4, 1979. Directs all Federal agencies to adopt and implement the Federal Guidelines for Dam Safety as prepared by the Federal Coordinating Council for Science, Engineering, and Technology. (Secretary of the Interior Order No. 3048, implements and assigns responsibility for a department-wide dam safety program in accordance with the President's memorandum.)

Executive Order 12088, Federal Compliance with Pollution Control Standards (October 13, 1978). Requires agencies to ensure that facilities comply with applicable pollution control standards; ensure that sufficient funds for environmental compliance are requested in their budgets; and include pollution control projects in an annual pollution abatement budget plan.

Executive Order 13717, Establishing a Federal Earthquake Risk Management Standard (February 2016). Updates performance goals to strengthen the security and resilience of the Nation against earthquakes, to promote public safety, economic strength, and national security. New Implementation Guidelines (January 2017) provide Federal agencies with clarifying guidance for implementing Executive Order 13717.

Executive Order 14008 *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*. Directs Federal agencies to have a whole of government approach to combat climate change, to achieve or facilitate a carbon pollution-free electricity sector no later than 2035 and procure and integrate clean and zero-emission vehicles into the fleet.

<b>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service</b> <b>Construction</b> <b>Justification of Fixed Costs Changes</b> <i>(Dollars In Thousands)</i>			
Fixed Cost Element	2023 Enacted Total or Change	2023 Enacted to 2024 Request Change	Description
Change in Number of Paid Days	-30	+34	This column reflects changes in pay associated with the change in the number of paid days between 2023 and 2024. 2024 has one day more than 2023.
Pay Raise	+314	+432	The President's Budget for 2024 includes one quarter of the 4.6% pay raise for 2023 and three quarters of a planned 5.2% pay raise for 2024.
Employer Share of Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS)	0	0	This column reflects no budgeted increase to the employer contribution to the Federal Employee Retirement System and a 0.6% increase to the employer contribution for the Law Enforcement
Departmental Working Capital Fund (WCF)	0	0	The change reflects the final 2024 Central Bill approved by the Working Capital Fund Consortium.
Workers' Compensation Payments	0	0	The amounts reflect final chargeback costs of compensating injured employees and dependents of employees who suffer accidental deaths while on duty. Costs for 2024 will reimburse the Department of Labor, Federal Employees Compensation Fund, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 8147(b) as amended by Public Law 94-273.
Unemployment Compensation Payments	0	0	The amounts reflect projected changes in the costs of unemployment compensation claims to be paid to the Department of Labor, Federal Employees Compensation Account, in the Unemployment Trust Fund, pursuant to Public Law 96-499.
Rental Payments	0	0	The amounts reflect changes in the costs payable to General Services Administration (GSA) and others for office and non-office space as estimated by GSA, as well as the rental costs of other currently occupied space. These costs include building security. Costs of mandatory office relocations, i.e. relocations in cases where due to external events there is no alternative but to vacate the currently occupied space, are also included.
Baseline Adjustments for O&M Increases	0	0	In accordance with space maximization efforts across the Federal Government, this adjustment captures the associated increase to baseline operations and maintenance requirements resulting from movement out of GSA or direct-leased (commercial) space and into Bureau-owned space. While the GSA portion of fixed costs will go down as a result of these moves, Bureaus often encounter an increase to baseline O&M costs not otherwise captured in fixed costs. This category of funding properly adjusts the baseline fixed cost amount to maintain steady-state funding for these requirements.
<b>Account Total Fixed Cost</b>		<b>+466</b>	

**Appropriation: Construction**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Budget Request	Changes from 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Nationwide Engineering Services	(\$000) FTE	5,537 64	5,821 64	+446 0	0 0	+235 +0	6,522 64	+701 +0
Dam, Bridge, and Seismic Safety	(\$000)	2,427	2,427	0	0	0	2,427	0
Construction Projects	(\$000)	4,883	21,656	0	0	+20,346	42,002	+20,346
<b>Total, Construction</b>	<b>(\$000) FTE</b>	<b>12,847 64</b>	<b>29,904 64</b>	<b>+446 0</b>	<b>0 0</b>	<b>+20,581 0</b>	<b>50,951 64</b>	<b>+21,047 +0</b>

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Construction**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure	+11,047	+0
Field Communication Modernization	+9,299	+0
Core Engineering Services	+235	+0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+20,581</b>	<b>+0</b>

**Program Overview**

The Service’s Construction program accomplishes its mission in accordance with applicable laws, statutes, and executive orders, directly supports the Administration’s priorities by increasing the resilience of ecosystems and communities across the Nation through implementation of climate resilient and nature-based solutions and reduces racial inequities to the access of public lands and facilities by improving access to facilities.

The Service’s life-cycle management approach to infrastructure management will allow the Service to pursue these opportunities as well as deliver high quality, timely, cost-effective, and code-compliant construction projects in support of the Service’s wildlife and public use mission objectives. Construction funding supports engineering and technical program management for the Service’s entire inventory of assets, including 568 National Wildlife Refuges, 38 Wetland Management Districts, 40 Conservation areas, seven National Monuments, 70 National Fish Hatcheries and one historic fish hatchery, 51 Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices, Office of Law Enforcement Regional Area Offices, Field Officers, the Forensics Lab and Eagle Repository, and Ecological Field Offices, including Puerto Rican parrot recovery program and Black Footed Ferret recovery facility, as well as encouraging and expanding consolidation and colocation across Service programs. The Service’s infrastructure projects support the Administration’s goals to build back better, increasing resiliency in facilities and operations by pursuing disaster resilient stations and energy efficiencies or alternative energy in new construction and rehabilitation projects, using American made materials. The Construction program delivers exceptional engineering design and construction, resiliency, facility maintenance, and regulatory compliance to provide these benefits

and deliver the Service mission to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The Construction program provides for the major maintenance, modernization, renewal, and improved resiliency of Service facilities and is integral to the overall management of the Service's portfolio.

### **Program Elements**

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The Construction appropriations consists of the following activities and program elements:

- Nationwide Engineering Services (NES) – This activity manages the numerous construction and maintenance projects undertaken each year; protects employees, visitors, and volunteers by ensuring that operations comply with safety, resiliency and environmental laws and regulations; supports access to Service lands; and guides energy conservation. Current funding levels are inadequate to support the staff required to fulfill these services and requirements, so project billing for the necessary supplies, services, etc., will continue.
- Dam, Bridge, and Seismic Safety – This activity supports the safety and security of the Service's dams, bridges, and buildings. This primarily is accomplished for the most critical structures through inspections, assessments, and monitoring. Many of the functions carried out in this activity are prescribed by law.
- Line-Item Construction – This activity contains the specific construction projects requesting funding each year. These projects reconstruct, repair, rehabilitate, and replace existing buildings or other structures/facilities, including dams and bridges. Projects for resiliency, modernization, alteration, and new buildings, structures and nature based engineered solutions may be included. Funding covers project-specific planning, design, and construction management; construction, demolition, site work, and land acquisition; and the purchase of associated fixtures, and equipment. Completed individual projects from Line-Item Construction with authority remaining may transfer unspent balances of less than \$1,000,000 for unforeseen reconstruction, replacement, or repair of facilities or equipment damaged or destroyed by storms, floods, fires, and similarly unanticipated events. With inflation, supply and labor shortages pushing construction contract costs up 30 percent to 50 percent over the past few years, construction, maintenance, and resiliency investments must increase to offset these costs, and to fully support climate resiliency, protecting federal lands and neighboring communities, and life-cycle investments required to maximize the return on investment and maintain infrastructure in good condition.

**Appropriation: Construction**  
**Activity: Nationwide Engineering Services**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Budget Request	Change from 2023(+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Core Engineering Services	(\$000)	4,850	5,134	+466	0	+235	5,835	+701
	FTE	64	64			+0	64	+0
Waste Prevention and Recycling	(\$000)	63	63	0	0	0	63	0
Environmental Compliance	(\$000)	624	624	0		0	624	0
<b>Total, Nationwide Engineering Services</b>	<b>(\$000)</b>	<b>5,537</b>	<b>5,821</b>	<b>+466</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+235</b>	<b>6,522</b>	<b>+701</b>
	<b>FTE</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>+0</b>

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Construction**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Core Engineering Services	+235	+0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+235</b>	<b>+0</b>

**Program Overview**

The Nationwide Engineering Services activity supports the implementation of safe resilient construction and maintenance projects, regardless of funding source, and provides the guidance needed to comply with environmental and energy laws. The three program elements that comprise this activity are discussed below.

Core Engineering Services – Funding in this program element provides technical oversight for construction and maintenance projects throughout the Service, regardless of funding source. Engineers provide technical expertise and assistance to the field for the entire construction life cycle for Line-Item projects, Deferred Maintenance, and Federal Highways projects. Accomplishing these varied projects requires Headquarters’ policy development, budget formulation and execution, coordination for efficiency, and national technical consistency, as well as day-to-day supervision and technical guidance from regional managers.

Environmental Compliance – This program supports natural resource conservation and protects the health and safety of employees, visitors, and volunteers. On-site environmental compliance audits protect our natural resources by ensuring proper management of hazardous wastes and hazardous materials and by making certain that wastewater discharges entering rivers and streams are below EPA thresholds. Audits also ensure that drinking water provided by on-site systems is safe and in compliance with monitoring requirements. The program provides oversight, technical assistance, and training for more than 700 field stations to help ensure compliance with complex environmental laws and regulations at federal, state, local, and tribal levels. The program also restores natural resources by providing project oversight and technical assistance for the clean-up of large-scale environmental contamination of air, water and soil pollution that may adversely affect human health

and the environment. Recently completed clean-ups demonstrate the positive impact on wildlife and benefit to the local community associated with beneficial reuse of formerly contaminated areas.

Waste Prevention, Recycling and Environmental Management Systems –This program support mitigation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with Service operations by supporting implementation of Service-wide sustainability practices. Examples include identifying and implementing energy and water conservation measures, initiating, and completing renewable energy projects, improving efficiencies in fleet management, reducing carbon dioxide emissions, adopting sustainable operations and work practices, planning, and reducing the use of toxic/hazardous chemicals and materials, and decreasing wastes that can leach into the environment. This program is the Service’s mechanism for accomplishing two of the Administration’s key priorities: (1) reducing the Service’s overall carbon footprint, and (2) increasing energy and water conservation. While these goals will be accomplished by implementing energy and water conservation measures at our facilities, ensuring facilities meet sustainable building standards, and implementing renewable energy projects, additional resources of approximately 0.25% of the Current Replacement Value (CRV) are required to meet the Administration’s priorities.

### **Proposed Program Changes**

The 2024 budget request for the Nationwide Engineering Services activity is \$6,522,000 and 64 FTE: an increase of \$235,000 which includes:

**Core Engineering Services (+\$235,000/ +0 FTE):** This increase enhances the Service’s ability to provide technical expertise and assistance for projects across the entire infrastructure portfolio. This support ensures safe, welcoming, and accessible facilities for staff and visitors and will also support building clean energy projects, remediation of abandoned mines and wells, and improvement of critical water infrastructure. This funding also enables the Service to strengthen its ability to support proactive maintenance of its assets by investing in performance-based requirements, design templates, and management tools that evaluate investments and remove nonessential costs.

**Appropriation: Construction**  
**Activity: Dam, Bridge, and Seismic Safety**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change from 2023(+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Dam Safety and Security	(\$000)	1,113	1,113	0	0	0	1,113	0
Bridge Safety	(\$000)	1,239	1,239	0	0	0	1,239	0
Seismic Safety	(\$000)	75	75	0	0	0	75	0
<b>Total, Dam, Bridge, and Seismic Safety</b>	<b>(\$000)</b> <b>FTE</b>	<b>2,427</b> <b>0</b>	<b>2,427</b> <b>0</b>	<b>0</b> <b>0</b>	<b>0</b> <b>0</b>	<b>0</b> <b>0</b>	<b>2,427</b> <b>0</b>	<b>0</b> <b>0</b>

**Program Overview**

The Dam, Bridge, and Seismic Safety activity provides information needed for engineers to assess the safety and security of the Service’s dams, bridges, and buildings. The three program elements that comprise this activity are discussed below.

Dam Safety and Security – This program element supports the safety and security of 18 high hazard dams, part of the Service’s inventory of 300 dams. Located on refuges and hatcheries for the purpose of resource or facility management, these dams provide vital benefits such as recreation, habitat, flood risk reduction, irrigation, wetland creation, water supply for hatcheries, nesting habitat for waterfowl, and fishing. Funding supports the most critical activities to ensure existing dams are inspected, maintained, identified for rehabilitation, and properly operated to protect human life, property, and the valuable natural resources on Service lands.

Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) provide site-specific guidance for on-site detection and mitigation of conditions that may cause dam failures and communication protocols for notifying and evacuating downstream populations. Periodic Safety Evaluation of Existing Dams (SEED) inspections identify dam deficiencies at the earliest stages that when addressed, may stave off more serious repairs, consequences, or interventions, and avoid increasing the maintenance backlog.

SEED inspections include performing and reassessing hazard classifications, which are based upon estimates of loss of life and property damage should a dam fail. This program element also funds engineering analyses of the response and safety impacts of a dam because of increased magnitude of flood and earthquake predictions. The Service uses the hazard classification, a risk assessment, Risk-Informed Decision Making (RIDM), and the overall condition of the dam to identify and prioritize dam repair and rehabilitation projects.

Management of major rehabilitation or construction work is accomplished under the supervision of the Service’s Dam Safety Officer. Consistent with practice from past years, unobligated funds from dam safety projects may be used to address ongoing Dam Safety and Security needs (e.g., additional SEED inspections, minor dam safety repairs, low hazard dam inspections and inspections/classifications and analyses of Newly Acquired Dams) or used for emergency construction projects. The inspection, analyses, and rehabilitation of low hazard dams are the lowest priority, though conducting these inspections would help ensure compliance with state dam safety programs.

Bridge Safety – This funding supports work to improve the safety and integrity of the Service’s approximately 700 bridges that serve essential administrative functions or provide primary public access. The Service accomplishes this work through the application of technically current design guidelines and a comprehensive inspection, appraisal, and inventory program. Bridge inspections are conducted at time intervals required by statute. During bridge inspections, Service staff determine and verify safe load-carrying capacity; identify and recommend mitigation of unsafe conditions; and identify maintenance, rehabilitation, or reconstruction needs. Like dam safety projects, funding for bridge safety projects is requested as part of the Line-Item Construction activity.

During FY 2023, the Bridge Safety Program will pursue completion of bridge inspections required by law. The inspections will prioritize in the following order: public use bridges in less than satisfactory condition; non-public use bridges in less than satisfactory condition; public use bridges in satisfactory condition or better; and non-public use bridges in satisfactory condition or better. Consideration also will be given, on a case-by-case basis, to approximately 30 bridges recommended for scour inspection, because of a 2015 Program Review recommendation.

By prioritizing inspections as described, the Service will maximize staff and public safety and access. Safety remains the top priority for the Service; if safe conditions cannot be verified, the Service will remove a bridge from service to preserve safety.

Seismic Safety – This program element funds planning and analysis of the seismic safety of the Service’s approximately 6,500 buildings. The work fulfills the requirements of Executive Order 13717 (Establishing a Federal Earthquake Risk Management Standard, February 2016) and allows the Service to identify buildings that present a substantial risk to the safety of Service personnel, volunteers, and visitors in the event of a significant earthquake. Program staff screen Service-owned buildings to identify those that are *exceptionally high risk* (EHR). Any building found to meet EHR criteria undergoes a rigorous engineering analysis, which includes development of a cost estimate to mitigate seismic deficiencies. Engineering analysis and mitigation projects are funded via the Line-Item Construction activity.

#### **Justification of 2024 Program Changes**

The 2024 budget request for the Dam, Bridge, and Seismic Safety activity is \$2,427,000 and 0 FTE. There are no changes to this activity for FY 2024.

**Appropriation: Construction**  
**Activity: Line-Item Construction**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Budget Request	Change from 2023(+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Line-Item Construction Projects	(\$000)	4,883	21,656	0	0	+0	21,656	+0
Zero-Emission Vehicle Infrastructure	(\$000)	0	0	0	0	+11,047	11,047	+11,047
Field Communications Modernization	(\$000)	0	0	0	0	+9,299	9,299	+9,299
<b>Total, Dam, Bridge, and Seismic Safety</b>	<b>(\$000)</b> <b>FTE</b>	<b>4,883</b> <b>0</b>	<b>21,656</b> <b>0</b>	<b>0</b> <b>0</b>	<b>0</b> <b>0</b>	<b>+20,346</b> <b>0</b>	<b>42,002</b> <b>0</b>	<b>+20,346</b> <b>0</b>

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Construction**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Zero-Emission Vehicle Infrastructure	+11,047	0
Field Communications Modernization	+9,299	0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+20,346</b>	<b>0</b>

**Program Overview**

The Service has committed to completing Line-Item Construction funded projects in a timely manner. In FY 2022, several projects were completed after COVID imposed restrictions were lifted allowing work to continue or begin, despite the increased costs for materials and labor. These projects incorporated all Service programs and met the Administration’s Priorities for addressing climate change and building resiliency, strengthening tribal nations, and promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion of underserved communities through several public use focused projects. The National Eagle Repository in Colorado received construction funds to repair and upgrade the HVAC system in the building to improve ventilation, protecting not only the visiting public and employees, but also the stored artifacts, evidence and eagle feathers. The repository receives deceased bald and golden eagles to process and return to Native Americans and Alaska Natives who request the feathers and parts to be used for religious and cultural purposes. This facility also maintains evidence confiscated from trade in illegal products made from protected species.



*The new HVAC system outside and in the storage area of the National Eagle Repository.*

Arrowwood NWR received funding to replace a failed levee structure and culverts and completed the project in FY 2022, reopening access road. This project also provided erosion control upstream and downstream to increase resiliency for the refuge in the James River Valley that protects nearly 16,000 acres for nesting and feeding habitat for migrating waterfowl.



*The levee and culvert before repairs.*



*The levee and culvert after repairs.*

Ouray NFH and Gavins Point NFH each received construction funding to replace the linings of a total of eleven ponds and to modify their internal kettles to improve operation efficiency during harvesting, resulting in less stress and lower mortality rates for the endangered razorback suckers, bonytail chubs and threatened American paddlefish.



*Completed pond kettle modification*



*Newly lined ponds and access stairs*

The Service was also able to complete several public use projects, improving deteriorating or failing structures, allowing public use to begin again at several stations including, the Observation Tower at Medicine Lake NWR and a public use shelter at Waubay NWR.

The Service is requesting a total of \$42,002,000 in the FY 2024 President’s Budget for Construction funding. A list of the proposed Line-Item projects for FY 2024 is provided below. A Project Data Sheet (PDS) for each project is included and provides key information about the project description, justification, cost, and schedule. Additionally, after the individual PDSs, a Summary PDS for FYs 2024-2028 presents the Service’s five-year construction plan and reflects funding directed to the most critical needs (i.e., health, safety, natural resources, and access). The Service selects and ranks projects in accordance with Department of Interior and Service guidance and priorities.

**Justification of 2024 Program Changes**

**Zero Emission Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (+\$11,047,000/+0 FTE)**

The request includes a total of \$15.5 million in this activity and in Resource Management to support the transition of the Department’s light duty fleet acquisitions to zero emission vehicles. This funding will provide critical planning and coordination capabilities, utility build-out and charging infrastructure, and zero emission vehicles. The planning includes prioritizing locations for deployment, determining infrastructure needs such as increased electrical supply and access for electric vehicle supply equipment, and coordinating installation to ensure Interior can maximize the use of these charging stations. By leveraging the buying power of the Federal Government and transforming its fleet of more than 600,000 cars and trucks to an all-electric fleet, the Administration can both save money for American taxpayers and accelerate the Nation’s industrial capacity to supply domestically produced zero emission vehicles and electric batteries to create new good-paying jobs and address the climate crisis.

**DIFCOM- DOI Field Communication Modernization (+\$9,299,000/+0 FTE)**

This coordinated request across multiple bureaus includes \$9.3 million for the Service and builds on funding included in the 2023 appropriation for DOI. With the 2024 requested funding, FWS will participate in communications modernization in Alaska, Hawaii and the insular areas, and the Southeastern contiguous United States. Modernization enhances capabilities being implemented across DOI communities of practice. Across the geography targeted for modernization in 2024, initial planning and design work will identify solutions that are standardized and consistent by

**CONSTRUCTION****FY 2024 BUDGET JUSTIFICATION**

leveraging existing systems such as the FirstNet network, including identification of potential sites for infrastructure-sharing with commercial entities and partners where it would be beneficial to all parties. The assessments will identify where Interior can consolidate sites or replace obsolete land mobile radio sites with lower cost options where it makes sense.

**Line-Item Construction (+\$0/+0 FTE)**

At the requested funding level of \$21,656,000 with no changes, the Service will fund the projects shown in the project list below.

<b>2024 Construction Project Listing by Program</b>					
<b>DOI Rank Score</b>	<b>Interior Region</b>	<b>Station</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Project Title/Description</b>	<b>Request (\$000)</b>
<b>National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS)</b>					
100	North Atlantic-Appalachian	E.B Forsythe NWR	NJ	Replace Co-located Field Office Building [cc]	5,326
95	California-Great Basin	Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR	CA	South Bay Levee Restoration, Phase V of V	2,939
80	Alaska	Tiglax	AK	Tiglax Vessel Rehabilitation	3,000
80	Missouri Basin	Western Montana NWR Complex	MT	Construct replacement facilities for NBR within Western Montana Complex, Phase III of III	6,268
70	Great Lakes	Sherburne NWR	MN	Office and Visitor Center Construction	919
40	North Atlantic-Appalachian	Assabet NWR	MA	Replace Admin Addition to Assabet Design	745
<b>Subtotal, NWRS</b>					<b>19,197</b>
<b>National Fish Hatchery System (NFHS)</b>					
90	South Atlantic-Gulf	Bears Bluff NFH	SC	Replace and Relocate Laboratory	1,404
<b>Subtotal, NFHS</b>					<b>1,404</b>
<b>Other</b>					
80	Headquarters	Dam Safety Program	N/A	Evaluations of Newly Acquired Dams and Existing Dam Deficiencies Phase I of V	350
60	Headquarters	Seismic Safety Program	N/A	Nationwide Seismic Safety Investigations Phase V of V	200
60	Headquarters	Energy Management Program	N/A	Administer the National Energy Management Program	255
60	Headquarters	Information Resources & Technology Management	N/A	Nationwide Radio Site Safety Investigations	250
<b>Subtotal, Other</b>					<b>1,055</b>
<b>TOTAL, CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS</b>					<b>\$21,656</b>

**Notes:** p = planning, d = design, ic = initiate construction, cc = complete construction

**Construction Project Data Sheets**

**U.S Fish and Wildlife Service  
Project Data Sheet**

Total Project Score/Ranking: 100  
 Planned Funding FY 2024 \$5,326,000  
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

**Project Identification**

Project Title: Replace Co-located Field Office Building [cc]  
 Project No: 2017291156  
 Unit/Facility Name: Edwin B. Forsythe NWR  
 Region: NORTHEAST/North Atlantic-Appalachian  
 Congressional District: 02  
 State: NJ

**Project Justification**

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id #	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
35800400	10068036	BLDG MULTI-PURPOSE, EB FORSYTHE ADMIN FACILITY	100	1.0

**Project Description (PD):**

Replace Co-Located Field Office Building (cc) by constructing a 7,244 SF addition to the administrative headquarters for co-located Service staff in New Jersey. The existing administrative facility at the refuge was replaced in February, 2017. This new addition will meet future needs for the 19 employees from the New Jersey Field Office (NJFO) and 2 officers from the Service's South New Jersey Division, Office of Law Enforcement (OLE). New Jersey's 46,000 acre Edwin B. Forsythe NWR is located in one of the Atlantic Flyway's most active flight paths, a spectacular place to view large concentrations of migratory water birds. This facility allows staff to effectively promote the mission of the Service and educate the public about the importance of protecting wetlands and managing trust resources for the benefit of present and future generations. Sustainable and energy efficient features will be incorporated where possible and will lower operational costs and maintenance costs over time in the new addition. The additional space will consist of office facilities and laboratory space, and eliminating leased space rental costs of \$164,000/yr. (7,500SF for NJFO staff), and \$46,562 (2,070SF for OLE staff), for an estimated payback period of 15 years. The new addition will include a shared conference room, break room, restrooms, and law enforcement storage/evidence/ and interview rooms. The overall building footprint will use less space than the previous leased space, meeting the requirement of 180 SF/person.

Phased Project? N                      Number of Phases: 1

**Scope of Benefits (SB):**

The addition to the newly constructed administration building will meet current and future needs for the Refuge, NJFO and OLE staff while eliminating GSA leases for Service personnel in the State of New Jersey. Management efficiencies will be gained through a shared fleet, shared expenses, and by distributing duties more evenly and to more staff (i.e. program staff will share responsibilities for emergency plowing, shoveling sidewalks and O&M); an elimination of duplication of effort on management documents (i.e. outreach, reduction of administrative redundancies such as hurricane plans, safety plans, emergency action plans, etc.).

**Investment Strategy (IS):**

Construction of a replacement energy efficient sustainable facility supports Executive Order 13693, the Energy Independence and Security Act and the Energy Policy Act. Sustainable and energy efficient features will be incorporated into standard designs where possible, resulting in lower operational costs and maintenance costs will become over time. This project supports the goals of the DOI Real Property Cost Savings and Innovation Plan by designing our administrative wing to replace a high-cost lease for New Jersey Field Office and the South New Jersey Division of Law Enforcement staff.

**Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):**

If this project is not completed, the Service will continue to incur GSA lease costs for office space for the persons listed above. Additionally, the management efficiency of the Refuge will be decreased due to a lack of these persons being co-located with other Refuge staff.

**Ranking Categories:**

**Category**

FCI Rating:  
 API Rating:  
 API/FCI Score:  
 SB Score:  
 IS Score:  
 CFA Score:

**Total Score:**

Combined ranking factors = (0.20 x API/FCI score) + (0.40 x SB score) + (0.20 x IS score) + (0.20 x CFA score)

**Capital Asset Planning**

Capital Plan Business Case Required: No

VE Study: Scheduled      TBD                              Completed                      TBD

**Project Costs and Status**

**Project Cost Estimate (this PDS):**

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Maintenance Work:	\$0	0
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$5,326	100
Divestiture Work:	\$0	0
Total:	\$5,326	100

**Project Funding History (entire project):**

<u>History</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>
Funded to Date:	\$0
FY2024-CONSTRUCTFunding (this PDS):	\$5,326
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation Funding:	\$0
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation Funding:	\$0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$0
Total:	\$5,326

**Class of Estimate: A,B,C, D**                      C  
 Estimate Escalated to FY:                      09/20

**Planning and Design Funds:**

Planning Funds Received in FY                      \$0  
 Design Funds Received in FY                      \$0

\*These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated to the FY2024 budget on this project data sheet.

**Major Milestones**

Construction Award/Start  
 - Scheduled:                      1/24  
 - Actual:                              TBD  
 Project Complete:  
 - Scheduled:                      04/25  
 - Actual:                              TBD

**Project Data Sheet**

Prepared/Last Updated:                      08/22  
 DOI Approved:                              No

**Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$**

Current:                              3,697  
 Projected:                              0  
 Net Change:                              -3,697

U.S Fish and Wildlife Service
Project Data Sheet

Total Project Score/Ranking: 95
Planned Funding FY 2024 | \$2,939,000
Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

Project Identification

Project Title: South Bay Levee Restoration, Phase V of V
Project No: 2022425906
Unit/Facility Name: Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR PACIFIC
Region: SOUTHWEST/California-Great Basin
Congressional District: 17
State: CA

Project Justification

Table with 5 columns: DOI Asset Code, FRPP Unique Id #, Description, API, FCI-Before. Row 1: 40162300, 10000810, LEVEE ALVISO EXTERIOR PONDS A9 TO A17, 100, 0.28

Project Description (PD):

The refuge’s Mountain View and Aviso Ponds provide critical flood protection for Silicon Valley businesses and the 4.6 million people across the South Bay who call this community home. These funds will be leveraged by partnering with the other federal agencies, local communities, businesses and non-profit organizations to address the full \$55,000,000 in Deferred Maintenance needed for levees and water control structures across the refuge. Multiple unforeseen site conditions have occurred over the course of construction and have exceeded the available construction contingency funding, this phase will provide funding to complete the remaining work needed. These repairs will also lead to better public access, the refuge welcomes more than 750,000 people each year and offers a range of wildlife recreation that serves families with young children as well as first-time recreationists, veterans, people with disabilities and the full array of citizens in this bustling community.

Phases:

(2018) Phase I, South Bay Levee Restoration, at \$5,033,210; (2019) Phase II, South Bay Levee Restoration, at \$7,125,000; (2020) Phase III, South Bay Levee Restoration, at \$5,875,000; (2022) Phase IV, South Bay Levee Restoration, at \$1,200,000; (2024) Phase V, South Bay Levee Restoration, at \$2,939,000.

Phased Project? Y Number of Phases 5

Scope of Benefits (SB):

The project supports the South San Francisco Bay Ecosystem, Tidal Marsh Ecosystem Recovery Plan and will help ensure the safety of the local communities, as well as supporting the success of the local businesses, industries and economy.

Investment Strategy (IS):

The project has \$2 million in non-federal matching funds, and this funding is expected to enable our partners to continue to expand these public-private partnerships.

Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):

Failure to act would result in further deterioration of the levee system, which could lead to levee breaches and flooding of adjacent infrastructure and communities. The levees provide a level of flood protection for vulnerable communities including many tech industry businesses adjacent to the Refuge. Failure of the levee system would also reduce or close waterfowl hunting and other recreational opportunities currently offered due to unsafe conditions.

**Ranking Categories:**

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
FCI Rating:	N/A	0.28
API Rating:	N/A	TBD
API/FCI Score:	20%	15
SB Score:	40%	40
IS Score:	20%	20
CFA Score:	20%	20
<b>Total Score:</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>100</b>

Combined ranking factors = (0.20 x API/FCI score) + (0.40 x SB score) + (0.20 x IS score) + (0.20 x CFA score)

**Capital Asset Planning**

Capital Plan Business Case Required: No

VE Study: Scheduled      TBD                                      Completed                                      TBD

**Project Costs and Status**

**Project Cost Estimate (this PDS):**

<b><u>Activity</u></b>	<b><u>Dollars in thousands</u></b>	<b><u>Percent</u></b>
Maintenance Work:	\$2,939	0
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$0	0
Divestiture Work:	\$0	100
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$2,939</b>	<b>100</b>

**Project Funding History (entire project):**

<b><u>History</u></b>	<b><u>Dollars in thousands</u></b>
Funded to Date:	\$19,233
FY2024-CONSTRUCTFunding (this PDS):	\$2,939
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation Funding:	\$0
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation Funding:	\$0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$22,172</b>

**Class of Estimate: A,B,C, D**                      C

Estimate Escalated to FY:

**Planning and Design Funds:**

Planning Funds Received in FY                      \$0  
 Design Funds Received in FY                      \$0

\*These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated to the FY2024 budget on this project data sheet.

**Major Milestones**

Construction Award/Start

- Scheduled: 1/24
- Actual: TBD

Project Complete:

- Scheduled: 04/26
- Actual: TBD

**Project Data Sheet**

Prepared/Last Updated: 06/22  
DOI Approved: No

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**Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$**

Current: 380  
Projected: 0  
Net Change: -380

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**U.S Fish and Wildlife Service  
Project Data Sheet**

Total Project Score/Ranking: 90  
 Planned Funding FY 2024 \$1,404,000  
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

**Project Identification**

Project Title: Replace and Relocate Laboratory Phase II of II [cc]  
 Project No: 2018307268  
 Unit/Facility Name: Bears Bluff NFH  
 Region: SOUTHEAST/South Atlantic-Gulf  
 Congressional District: 06  
 State: SC

**Project Justification**

<b>DOI Asset Code</b>	<b>FRPP Unique Id #</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>API:</b>	<b>FCI-Before:</b>
35740100	10014324	BLDG LAB, LABORATORY & DORMITORY (IQMIS #2)	100	1.0

**Project Description (PD):**

Replace and relocate 3,432 sqft storm damaged fish laboratory to higher elevation to avoid loss of irreplaceable scientific samples and expensive lab equipment. Current building is located in a coastal flood zone immediately adjacent to coastal river and exposed to frequent hurricane and flooding conditions. Additionally, the building is located in a moderate seismic zone, but the unsupported masonry cannot be efficiently rehabbed to protect the building and employees. Walls are already substantially cracked from settlement and other environmental forces such as hurricanes. The building is also very energy inefficient.

Total Project cost is \$2,404,000. Phase I was planned for 2021 at \$1,000,000 and Phase II is planned for 2024 at \$1,404,000.

Phased Project? Y                      Number of Phases: 2

**Scope of Benefits (SB):**

This project will make a significant contribution to reducing the FCI of NFHS mission critical water management assets. Completion of this project will retire the deferred maintenance for this asset and ensure appropriate science can be conducted to support recovery and restoration activities for Atlantic coast species by moving the facility to a less vulnerable location.

**Investment Strategy (IS):**

There are currently no partners contributing to this project. The replacement of the fish laboratory building will reduce current corrective maintenance needs, but the new asset is not expected to have a major reduced overall O&M. However, energy efficiencies will be gained with a new asset.

**Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):**

Failure to act will allow further deterioration of the asset and expose staff to unstable structures during extreme weather events and will potentially require frequent replacement of laboratory equipment due to vulnerability to weather events. Exposure to salt water greatly deteriorate building components. This building exhibits seismic impacts as outer walls show cracks and separation in the cinder blocks. The potential loss of scientific samples due to flooding erodes the Hatchery’s ability to fulfill the conservation mission around preserving these species of fish.

**Ranking Categories:**

**FY 2024 BUDGET JUSTIFICATION**

**CONSTRUCTION**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Score</u>
FCI Rating:	N/A	1.00
API Rating:	N/A	100
API/FCI Score:	20%	20
SB Score:	40%	40
IS Score:	20%	10
CFA Score:	20%	20
<b>Total Score:</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>90</b>

Combined ranking factors = (0.20 x API/FCI score) + (0.40 x SB score) + (0.20 x IS score) + (0.20 x CFA score)

**Capital Asset Planning**

Capital Plan Business Case Required: No

VE Study: Scheduled      TBD                              Completed                      TBD

**Project Costs and Status**

**Project Cost Estimate (this PDS):**

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Maintenance Work :	\$912.6	65
Modernization/Renewal Work:	491.4	35
Divestiture Work:	\$0	0
Total:	\$1,404	100

**Project Funding History (entire project):**

<u>History</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>
Funded to Date:	\$1,000
FY2024-CONSTRUCTFunding (this PDS):	\$1,404
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation Funding:	\$0
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation Funding:	\$0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$0
Total:	2,404

**Class of Estimate: A,B,C, D**                      C

Estimate Escalated to FY:

**Planning and Design Funds:**

Planning Funds Received in FY                      \$0

Design Funds Received in FY                      \$0

\*These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated to the FY2024 budget on this project data sheet.

**Major Milestones**

Construction Award/Start

- Scheduled:                      1/24
- Actual:                              TBD

Project Complete:

- Scheduled:                      04/26
- Actual:                              TBD

**Project Data Sheet**

Prepared/Last Updated:                      06/21

DOI Approved:                              No

**Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$**

Current:	1,630
Projected:	1,400
Net Change:	-230

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**U.S Fish and Wildlife Service  
Project Data Sheet**

Total Project Score/Ranking: 80  
 Planned Funding FY 2024 \$3,000,000  
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

**Project Identification**

Project Title: Rehabilitate Tiglax Ocean Vessel [cc] FY 2024  
 Project No: 2022429444  
 Unit/Facility Name: Motor Vessel Tiglax  
 Region: Alaska/Alaska  
 Congressional District: All  
 State: All

**Project Justification**

<b>DOI Asset Code</b>	<b>FRPP Unique Id #</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>API: 100</b>	<b>FCI-Before:</b>
	74501	Rehabilitate Tiglax Ocean Vessel [cc] FY 2024		

**Project Description (PD):**

Rehabilitate the 120-foot research vessel "Tiglax"(pronounced TEKH-lah). The Tiglax launched in 1987 and has sailed over 500,000 nautical miles in her 30-years life-span in sea conditions. The ship is the primary means the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge manages and monitors the vast reaches of Alaska's Aleutian and other islands covering almost 5,000 miles of Alaska's coast. The ship has reached its useful life of 30 years and should be replaced but under the current fiscal budget, it is not economically feasible to replace the ship at an estimated cost range of \$50 to 60 million, therefore, a major overhaul is required. Midlife Refurbishment includes a Masterplan and design effort to develop a plan, scope, schedule, budget, value engineering and contract documents for the midlife refurbishment of the Tiglax which includes replacement of major components including Main Engines and Reduction Gears, Shafting, Generator Sets, Navigation Electronics, Fire Suppression, and the Articulated A-Frame as well as many other auxiliary systems needing updating and 4-yr maintenance work that is due. Estimated cost is \$3 million.

Phased Project? N                      Number of Phases

**Scope of Benefits (SB):**

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 established the refuge purposes including seabird monitoring, international marine research, and fulfilling International Treaties such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. The ship has been the primary tool in satisfying these legal requirements by implementing a sophisticated seabird monitoring program, conducting research, and eradicating invasive species, such as non-native foxes from islands containing nesting bird species protected by international law.

**Investment Strategy (IS):**

The typical operating costs average \$300,000-\$350,000 per year. The less polluting, modern engines, generators, and modern electronics will cost less to maintain and perform better for the environment. Chartering private vessels to conduct comparable work would cost the USFWS an estimated \$2 million per year.

**Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):**

Critical life-safety systems on this vessel are beyond life expectancy and need to be replaced or rehabilitated to ensure the safety of the crew and research passengers. These life safety systems include the fire control module and ballast tanks. The environmentally sound mechanical systems being installed during this project will ensure the marine ecosystem is not harmed by this vessel.

**Ranking Categories:**

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
FCI Rating:	N/A	N/A
API Rating:	N/A	100
API/FCI Score:	20%	N/A
SB Score:	40%	40
IS Score:	20%	20
CFA Score:	20%	20
<b>Total Score:</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>80</b>

Combined ranking factors = (0.20 x API/FCI score) + (0.40 x SB score) + (0.20 x IS score) + (0.20 x CFA score)



U.S Fish and Wildlife Service  
Project Data Sheet

Total Project Score/Ranking: 80  
 Planned Funding FY 2024 \$6,268,000  
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

**Project Identification**

Project Title: Construct replacement facilities for NBR within Western Montana Complex, Phase III of III  
 Project No: 2021356697  
 Unit/Facility Name: Western Montana NWR Complex  
 Region: MOUNTAIN PRAIRIE/Missouri Basin  
 Congressional District: 00  
 State: MT

**Project Justification**

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id #	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
	69013	Western Montana NWR Complex	100	N/A

**Project Description (PD):**

On December 27, 2020, the President signed into law the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. Division DD of the law contains the Montana Water Rights Protection Act, Section 12, which restored the National Bison Range (NBR) to federal trust ownership for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). The law establishes a two-year period during which the Bison Range will transition to full Tribal management; however, Tribal Council has set a goal of full management by January 2022. Once the transition is complete, the NBR will no longer be managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). FWS will continue to have management responsibilities within Western Montana and will need to replace select facilities staff are responsible for operations and management of not only the NBR, but three additional refuges (Ninepipe, Pablo, and Swan River), nine WPAs (Kicking Horse, Crow, Anderson, Duck Haven, Ereaux, Johnson, Montgomery, Sandmark, and Herak), one WMD (Northwest Montana) and one conservation area (Swan River) in Northwest Montana. Easement oversight includes working with over 100 landowners to oversee thousands of easements acres; this does not include the newly authorized Lost Trail Conservation Area, which would potentially add 100,000 acres of additional easements once established.

To continue to fulfill the long-term management responsibilities in Northwest Montana, the FWS will need to maintain staff in the area. Since NBR real property facilities, equipment and supplies will no longer be available, replacement facilities are needed to replace the existing base operations. The region will construct a new headquarters facility, including an office and shop to accommodate 5 full time employees and 3 seasonals. This large construction/acquisition will be completed in phases, with the first priorities to include site investigations, planning and A/E design services to prepare plans.

Phased Project? Y Number of Phases: 3

**Scope of Benefits (SB):**

Supports Build Back Better Jobs and Economic Recovery Plan by procuring competitively and will provide opportunities for local and/or regional contractors to participate. Prioritizes Climate Resilient Infrastructure by incorporating energy efficient design to improve efficiency, performance, and reduction of the footprint of the Refuge Complex. Conserves or Protects Against Threats to Resources by the transfer of the National Bison Range to the CSKT tribes. Utilizes Clean Energy, new buildings will be designed to maximize clean energy usage. Benefits Underserved or At-Risk Communities - The areas around this Refuge Complex are rural in nature. Where possible, materials, supplies, and equipment rentals will all benefit the local economy and the populations nearby with increased recreational, educational, and sportsman access.

**Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):**

NBR staff are responsible for operations and management of not only the NBR, but three additional refuges (Ninepipe, Pablo, and Swan River), nine WPAs (Kicking Horse, Crow, Anderson, Duck Haven, Ereaux, Johnson, Montgomery, Sandmark, and Herak), one WMDs (Northwest Montana) and one conservation areas (Swan River)in Northwest Montana. Easement oversight includes working with over 100 landowners to oversee thousands of easements acres. Without this project, FWS will be unable to continue to fulfill long-term management responsibilities in NW Montana.

**Ranking Categories:**

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
FCI Rating:	N/A	N/A
API Rating:	N/A	100
API/FCI Score:	20%	N/A
SB Score:	40%	40
IS Score:	20%	20
CFA Score:	20%	20
<b>Total Score:</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>80</b>

Combined ranking factors = (0.20 x API/FCI score) + (0.40 x SB score) + (0.20 x IS score) + (0.20 x CFA score)

**Capital Asset Planning**

Capital Plan Business Case Required: No  
 VE Study: Scheduled      TBD                              Completed      TBD

**Project Costs and Status**

**Project Cost Estimate (this PDS):**

<b><u>Activity</u></b>	<b><u>Dollars in thousands</u></b>	<b><u>Percent</u></b>
Maintenance Work :	\$0	0
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$6,268	100
Divestiture Work:	\$0	0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$6,268</b>	<b>100</b>

**Project Funding History (entire project):**

<b><u>History</u></b>	<b><u>Dollars in thousands</u></b>
Funded to Date:	\$5,265
FY2024-CONSTRUCTFunding (this PDS):	\$6,268
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$0
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$11,533</b>

**Class of Estimate: A,B,C, D**      C

Estimate Escalated to FY:

**Planning and Design Funds:**

Planning Funds Received in FY      \$0  
 Design Funds Received in FY      \$0

\*These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated to the FY2024 budget on this project data sheet.

**Major Milestones**

Construction

Award/Start

- Scheduled: 1/22
- Actual: TBD

Project Complete:

- Scheduled: 04/27
- Actual: TBD

**Project Data Sheet**

Prepared/Last 04/21

Updated:

DOI Approved: No

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**Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$**

Current: 0

Projected: 0

Net Change: 0

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**U.S Fish and Wildlife Service  
Project Data Sheet**

Total Project Score/Ranking: 70  
 Planned Funding FY 2024 \$350,000  
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

**Project Identification**

Project Title: Evaluations of Newly Acquired Dams and Existing Dam Deficiencies for Rehabilitation. – Phase I of V  
 Project No:  
 Unit/Facility Name: Nationwide  
 Region: Headquarters  
 Congressional District: All  
 State: All

**Project Justification**

<b>DOI Asset Code</b>	<b>FRPP Unique Id #</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>API: 100</b>	<b>FCI-Before:</b>
		Dam Safety Program		N/A

**Project Description (PD):**

The Service Dam Inventory continues to expand as more dams are identified through field investigations at Service facilities under new real property acquisitions, new memoranda of understanding/agreements and cross checks with the real property inventory and review of existing dams. Many of these dams have not been evaluated for hazard classification potential, dam failure consequences, or compliance with Service dam safety standards. This program provides needed engineering evaluations of newly acquired and existing dams within the Service inventory in order to identify the impacts of climate change, any unsafe structures, assess the hazard classification potential, structural deficiencies, and response to potential dam failure modes and reduces the risk to public safety and the Service. This information will enable the FWS Infrastructure Management Division-Headquarters Dam Safety Program to effectively manage the portfolio of new and existing dams, prioritize additional remedial actions, build in resiliency, prepare Emergency Action Plans and Standard Operating Procedures and provide accurate estimates future funding needs for operation, maintenance and inspections.

Phased Project? Y                      Number of Phases 5

**Scope of Benefits (SB):**

This project provides required evaluations and risk analyses of dams within and added to the inventory to identify any unsafe structures, impacts of climate change and to assess the hazard classification potential, structural deficiencies, and response to potential dam failure modes. This information will be used to categorize the dam, prioritize remedial actions, determine resiliency needs, prepare conceptual remediation alternatives and designs for deficiencies, prepare emergency action plans and standard operating procedures, and estimate future funding needs for operation, maintenance and inspections. Reducing the risks for FWS dam failures to the public will help to provide justice, equity, diversity and inclusion for all communities.

**Investment Strategy (IS):**

This is a necessary investment that provides net savings to FWS when including the potential loss of valuable wildlife and public resources, the potential costs of dam failures, environmental and social impacts and increased expensive repairs if this work is delayed.

**Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):**

The public in local communities are at increased unacceptable risk levels when dams deteriorate and need repairs. Safe dams provide invaluable habitat for wildlife, equitable, inclusive public recreational opportunities and provide significant downstream flood control benefits.

**Ranking Categories:**

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
FCI Rating:	N/A	N/A
API Rating:	N/A	100
API/FCI Score:	20%	N/A
SB Score:	40%	40

**FY 2024 BUDGET JUSTIFICATION****CONSTRUCTION**

IS Score:	20%	10
CFA Score:	20%	20
<b>Total Score:</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>70</b>

Combined ranking factors = (0.20 x API/FCI score) + (0.40 x SB score) + (0.20 x IS score) + (0.20 x CFA score)

**Capital Asset Planning**

Capital Plan Business Case Required: No

VE Study: Scheduled      N      Completed

**Project Costs and Status****Project Cost Estimate (this PDS):**

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Maintenance Work :	\$350	100
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$0	0
Divestiture Work:	\$0	0
Total:	\$350	100

**Project Funding History (entire project):**

<u>History</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>
Funded to Date:	\$0
FY2024-CONSTRUCTFunding (this PDS):	\$350
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$0
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$1,400
Total:	\$1,750

**Class of Estimate: A,B,C, D**      C  
 Estimate Escalated to FY:      05/22

**Planning and Design Funds:**

Planning Funds Received in FY      \$0  
 Design Funds Received in FY      \$0

\*These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated to the FY2024 budget on this project data sheet.

**Major Milestones**

Construction Award/Start  
 - Scheduled:      01/24  
 - Actual:      TBD  
 Project Complete:  
 - Scheduled:      04/26  
 - Actual:      TBD

**Project Data Sheet**

Prepared/Last Updated:  
 DOI Approved:      No

**Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$**

Current:      0  
 Projected:      0  
 Net Change:      0

**U.S Fish and Wildlife Service  
Project Data Sheet**

Total Project Score/Ranking: 70  
 Planned Funding FY \$919,000  
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

**Project Identification**

Project Title: Office and Visitor Center Construction [P/D/C] Phase I of II  
 Project No: 2006389614  
 Unit/Facility Name: Sherburne NWR  
 Region: MIDWEST/Great Lakes  
 Congressional District: 08  
 State: MN

**Project Justification**

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id #	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
	32550	Sherburne NWR	100	N/A

**Project Description (PD):**

This project will construct a Visitor Center and Office Building at Sherburne NWR and will be allowing colocation for the Minnesota Private Lands Office, eliminating annual lease costs. This project will provide the Refuge with a facility that will allow them to provide quality environmental education to a growing population area. It will be energy efficient and provide an accessible space that will be available to all. The current office has no visitor facilities and environmental education programs, interpretation and special events are held in a deteriorating schoolhouse. That facility is not accessible, lacks potable water, has pest infestations, and can only hold small groups. The septic system is inadequate for large events.

The new facility will include a visitor information center, exhibit space, multipurpose rooms, public restrooms, sales area, and staff offices. The site overlooks several different habitats and will offer outstanding wildlife observation opportunities. The new facility will require an entrance road, parking lots, and utility services. Work will also include interior exhibits, accessible trails and overlooks, and exterior interpretation. The Refuge has a very active and engaged Friends group that is eager to promote environmental education, special events, and community outreach and they have already committed funding to the project.

Phased Project? Y                      Number of Phases: 2

**Scope of Benefits (SB):**

This project will construct a Visitor Center and Office Building at Sherburne NWR. Sherburne NWR is located in one of the fastest growing counties in Minnesota and within an hour drive of more than 2.5 million people in the Twin Cities and St. Cloud, MN. It is located near I-94 and State Highway 169, both of which are major travel corridors. It was identified for construction in the stations CCP.

**Investment Strategy (IS):**

The schoolhouse building previously used by the station environmental education and interpretation was over 100 years old. The insulation, windows, and HVAC systems were all old and had exceeded their useful life. The new building will be constructed using current DOI energy and sustainability requirements.

**Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):**

The condition of the old building was so poor that it had to be demolished so the station has been left with no safe place to conduct programs.

**Ranking Categories:**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Score</u>
FCI Rating:	N/A	N/A
API Rating:	N/A	100
API/FCI Score:	20%	N/A
SB Score:	40%	40
IS Score:	20%	10
CFA Score:	20%	20
<b>Total Score:</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>70</b>

**FY 2024 BUDGET JUSTIFICATION**

**CONSTRUCTION**

Combined ranking factors = (0.20 x API/FCI score) + (0.40 x SB score) + (0.20 x IS score) + (0.20 x CFA score)

**Capital Asset Planning**

Capital Plan Business Case Required: No

VE Study: Scheduled      TBD                              Completed                      TBD

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**Project Costs and Status**

**Project Cost Estimate (this PDS):**

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Maintenance Work :	\$0	0
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$919	100
Divestiture Work:	\$0	0
Total:	\$919	100

**Project Funding History (entire project):**

<u>History</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>
Funded to Date:	\$0
FY2024-CONSTRUCT Funding (this PDS):	\$919
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation Funding:	\$0
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation Funding:	\$0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$6,981
Total:	\$7,900

**Class of Estimate: A,B,C, D**              C  
Estimate Escalated to FY:              09/22

**Planning and Design Funds:**

Planning Funds Received in FY

Design Funds Received in FY

\*These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated to the FY2024 budget on this project data sheet.

**Major Milestones**

Construction Award/Start

- Scheduled:              1/24
- Actual:                      TBD

Project Complete:

- Scheduled:              04/26
- Actual:                      TBD

**Project Data Sheet**

Prepared/Last Updated:              08/22

DOI Approved:                      No

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**Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$**

Current:	0
Projected:	3,600
Net Change:	3,600

**U.S Fish and Wildlife Service  
Project Data Sheet**

Total Project Score/Ranking: 60  
 Planned Funding FY 2024 | \$255,000  
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

**Project Identification**

Project Title: Administer the National Energy Management Program  
 Project No:  
 Unit/Facility Name: Infrastructure Management Division  
 Region: HEADQUARTERS  
 Congressional District: XX  
 State: VA

**Project Justification**

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id #	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
		Infrastructure Management Division		

**Project Description (PD):**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (Service) National Energy Management Program supports the Administration’s goal of mitigating the effects of climate change. The President signed Executive Order 14057 Catalyzing Clean Energy Industries and Jobs Through Federal Sustainability on December 8, 2021, which established several ambitious energy and water conservation goals. The Service will meet these performance goals through implementation of the National Energy Management Program, which includes:

- Approximately 35 energy audits performed annually at select covered facilities on a 4-year cycle;
- Energy audit findings captured and implementation progress tracked in SAMMS;
- Identified energy conservation measures implemented within 2 years of discovery;
- Sustainable building evaluations conducted on Service buildings 10,000 SF or greater (approximately 1 per Region per year); and
- 0.5 FTE dedicated to the Regional Energy Manager role in each Region

Phased Project?N      Number of Phases      0

**Scope of Benefits (SB):**

The reinvigorated Energy Management Program will enhance the Service’s ability to achieve the Administration’s ambitious energy and water conservation goals, further reduce greenhouse gas emissions from facility operations, and support our resource conservation mission.

**Investment Strategy (IS):**

A significant return on investment will result from implementation of the program because replacing old, worn equipment with energy efficient models, or installing energy conservation measures pre-emptively will result in real savings on energy and water utility bills, which will be realized by the field stations.

**Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):**

The Biden Administration’s focus on climate change and mitigation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions has resulted in new requirements and increased accountability. A key element of the Administration’s policy to combat the climate crisis is to align the management of Federal real property to support robust climate action. The Service will not meet the Administration’s priorities without this program.

**Ranking Categories:**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Score</u>
FCI Rating:	N/A	N/A
API Rating:	N/A	TBD

**FY 2024 BUDGET JUSTIFICATION**

**CONSTRUCTION**

API/FCI Score:	20%	0
SB Score:	40%	40
IS Score:	20%	0
CFA Score:	20%	20
<b>Total Score:</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>60</b>

Combined ranking factors = (0.20 x API/FCI score) + (0.40 x SB score) + (0.20 x IS score) + (0.20 x CFA score)

**Capital Asset Planning**

Capital Plan Business Case Required: No  
 VE Study: Scheduled      TBD                      Completed      TBD

**Project Costs and Status**

**Project Cost Estimate (this PDS):**

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Maintenance Work :	\$255	100
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$0	0
Divestiture Work:	\$0	0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$255</b>	<b>100</b>

**Project Funding History (entire project):**

<u>History</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>
Funded to Date:	\$0
FY2024-CONSTRUCTFunding (this PDS):	\$255
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etcFunding:	\$0
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etcFunding:	\$0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$255</b>

**Class of Estimate: A,B,C, D**                      C

Estimate Escalated to FY:                      FY22  
 \$0

**Planning and Design Funds:**

Planning Funds Received in FY  
 Design Funds Received in FY                      \$0

\*These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated to the FY2024 budget on this project data sheet.

**Major Milestones**

Construction Award/Start  
 - Scheduled:                      1/24  
 - Actual:                              TBD

Project Complete:  
 - Scheduled:                      04/26  
 - Actual:                              TBD

**Project Data Sheet**

Prepared/Last Updated: 05/22

DOI Approved: No

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**Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$**

Current: 0

Projected: 0

Net Change: 0

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U.S Fish and Wildlife Service  
Project Data Sheet

Total Project Score/Ranking: 60  
 Planned Funding FY 2024 \$200,000  
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

**Project Identification**

Project Title: Nationwide Seismic Safety Investigations 2024  
 Project No: 2017293674  
 Unit/Facility Name: Dam Bridge and Seismic Safety Branch  
 Region: HEADQUARTERS  
 Congressional District: ALL  
 State: ALL

**Project Justification**

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id #	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
	98510	Dam Bridge and Seismic Safety	100	N/A

**Project Description (PD):**

These funds will be used to perform seismic engineering evaluations of select Service buildings. Preliminary screening level assessments have identified over 50 Service building as having significant seismic risks of collapse. More detailed investigations, beyond the screening level, are necessary and the engineering evaluations are the next required analysis to confirm the seismic hazard and to propose potential mitigation options based on the analysis. The engineering evaluations may also provide technical evidence, not available through the simplified screening process that the seismic risk is low and no mitigation efforts are required. This project supports necessary and continuing efforts to identify Service buildings that are at risk of collapse due to an earthquake and to provide mitigation options and preliminary cost estimates to reduce the risk to acceptable levels.

Phased Project? N                      Number of Phases: 0

**Scope of Benefits (SB):**

This project supports necessary efforts to identify buildings that are at risk of collapse due to an earthquake and identify mitigation options and preliminary cost estimates to reduce the risk. The project supports Service policy 363 FW 1 and Executive Order 13717 ("Establishing a Federal Earthquake Risk Management Standard") by conducting evaluations and recommending investment options that seek to enhance resilience by reducing risk to the lives of building occupants and improving continued performance of essential functions following future earthquakes.

**Investment Strategy (IS):**

The project will evaluate risk from earthquakes and identify retrofit strategies that will result in earthquake-resistant buildings that withstand small earthquakes with reduced damage.

**Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):**

The project will evaluate risk from earthquakes and identify retrofit strategies that will result in earthquake-resistant buildings that withstand small earthquakes with reduced damage.

**Ranking Categories:**

Category	Percentage	Score
FCI Rating:	N/A	N/A
API Rating:	N/A	TBD
API/FCI Score:	20%	N/A
SB Score:	40%	40
IS Score:	20%	0
CFA Score:	20%	20
<b>Total Score:</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>60</b>

Combined ranking factors = (0.20 x API/FCI score) + (0.40 x SB score) + (0.20 x IS score) + (0.20 x CFA score)

**Capital Asset Planning**

Capital Plan Business Case Required: No

VE Study: Scheduled      TBD                              Completed      TBD

**Project Costs and Status**

**Project Cost Estimate (this PDS):**

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Maintenance Work :	\$200	100
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$0	0
Divestiture Work:	\$0	0
Total:	\$200	100

**Project Funding History (entire project):**

<u>History</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>
Funded to Date:	\$0
FY2024-CONSTRUCTFunding (this PDS):	\$200
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$0
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$0
Total:	\$200

**Class of Estimate: A,B,C, D**                      C  
 Estimate Escalated to FY:                      2021

**Planning and Design Funds:**

Planning Funds Received in FY                      \$0  
 Design Funds Received in FY                      \$0

\*These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated to the FY2024 budget on this project data sheet.

**Major Milestones**

Construction Award/Start  
 - Scheduled:                      1/24  
 - Actual:                              TBD  
 Project Complete:  
 - Scheduled:                      04/26  
 - Actual:                              TBD

**Project Data Sheet**

Prepared/Last Updated:                      04/21  
 DOI Approved:                              No

**Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$**

Current:                                      0  
 Projected:                                      0  
 Net Change:                                      0

U.S Fish and Wildlife Service  
Project Data Sheet

Total Project Score/Ranking: 60  
 Planned Funding FY 2024 \$250,000  
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

**Project Identification**

Project Title: Nationwide Radio Tower Safety Investigations  
 Project No: 2016278920  
 Unit/Facility Name: Assistant Director-Information Resources and Technology Management  
 Region: Nationwide  
 Congressional District: All  
 State: All

**Project Justification**

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id #	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
	90200	Assistant Director-Information Resources and Technology Management	N/A	N/A

**Project Description (PD):**

These funds will be used to perform required radio tower evaluations of USFWS buildings per DOI policy. Preliminary screening has identified over 150 USFWS-owned and leased radio system that lack sufficient initial safety and structural inspection. Detailed investigations are necessary and the engineering evaluations are the next required analysis to confirm the systems are safe for operational use, develop a comprehensive maintenance and repair plan and to expand options for shared use of USFWS and other federal agency or bureau tower sites. The engineering evaluations will provide technical evidence to determine risk, mitigation efforts are required and locations where towers should be removed from operations and demolished.

Phased Project? Y Number of Phases 8

**Scope of Benefits (SB):**

The project supports Department strategic goal 4.1 (Protect Lives, Resources, and Property) by identifying radio facilities conditions, risks, mitigation options, and preliminary cost estimates to reduce the risk or remove the systems from operations.

**Investment Strategy (IS):**

The project will evaluate risk and identify retrofit strategies that will result in expanded opportunities to share radio related facilities. This project will not change annual operations and maintenance costs or leverage non-DOI resources.

**Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):**

The USFWS has not yet evaluated radio facilities as required by DOI policy, leaving unknown levels of risk associated with current operations. Failure to fulfill our responsibilities could endanger the life and health of USFWS employees and visitors.

**Ranking Categories:**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Score</u>
FCI Rating:	N/A	N/A
API Rating:	N/A	TBD
API/FCI Score:	20%	
SB Score:	40%	40
IS Score:	20%	0
CFA Score:	20%	20
<b>Total Score:</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>60</b>

Combined ranking factors = (0.20 x API/FCI score) + (0.40 x SB score) + (0.20 x IS score) + (0.20 x CFA score)

**Capital Asset Planning**

Capital Plan Business Case Required: Yes  
VE Study: Scheduled      TBD                              Completed      TBD

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**Project Costs and Status**

**Project Cost Estimate (this PDS):**

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Maintenance Work:	\$250	100
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$0	0
Divestiture Work:	\$0	0
Total:	\$250	100

**Project Funding History (entire project):**

<u>History</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>
Funded to Date:	\$1,000
FY2024-CONSTRUCTFunding (this PDS):	\$250
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etcFunding:	\$0
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etcFunding:	\$0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$750
Total:	\$2,000

**Class of Estimate: A,B,C, D**      C  
Estimate Escalated to FY:      22

**Planning and Design Funds:**

Planning Funds Received in FY      \$0  
Design Funds Received in FY      \$0

\*These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated to the FY2024 budget on this project data sheet.

**Major Milestones**

Construction Award/Start  
- Scheduled:      1/24  
- Actual:      TBD  
Project Complete:  
- Scheduled:      04/28  
- Actual:      TBD

**Project Data Sheet**

Prepared/Last Updated:      04/21  
DOI Approved:      Yes

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**Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$**

Current:      0  
Projected:      0  
Net Change:      0

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**U.S Fish and Wildlife Service  
Project Data Sheet**

Total Project Score/Ranking: 40  
 Planned Funding FY 2024 | \$745,000  
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

**Project Identification**

Project Title: Replace Admin Addition to Asssabet Design  
 Project No: 2022464099  
 Unit/Facility Name: Assabet River NWR  
 Region: NORTHEAST/North Atlantic-Appalachian  
 Congressional District: 03  
 State: MA

**Project Justification**

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id #	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
35800400	10076964	MULTI-PURPOSE ASSABET BUILDING		

**Project Description (PD):**

The purpose of this project is to demolish the multi-purpose Administration building at Great Meadows NWR and relocate staff to an Administration wing addition at the Assabet River NWR visitor facility. This project involves removing the existing 12,642 square foot multi-purpose building (RPI#10023463) at Great Meadows NWR built in 1965 with a 2,000 square foot addition to the Assabet NWR visitor facility (RPI#10052769) built in 2010. The rehabilitation work needed on the Great Meadows headquarters building to improve functionality and energy efficiency is substantial. The new 2,000 square foot replacement facility will be designed to relocate and accommodate up to 10 administrative staff in the new facility. This results in a 10,642 square foot reduction (84%). This project will provide office space for up to 10 permanent staff, 8 seasonal staff and volunteers. Comprehensive Condition Assessments (WO #2019328432) completed in August, 2019. The deficiencies noted in this assessment support replacement stating - "Asset has reached its life expectancy." Recommendation is to move all occupants to Assabet NWR with just an administrative wing". A Comprehensive Condition Assessment (WO #2019328537) completed in August 2019 for the Assabet visitor facility. HVAC system has reached its useful life. It is old and inefficient. Replace with new efficient HVAC system as part of this project. The design of the addition to the new facility will use the standards in the Service's "Space Management Handbook," dated September 2012, and will not exceed 180 usable square feet (USF) per person. A memorandum requesting approval from the Chief required for projects over \$1.5 million was approved on July 12, 2019. With reductions in staffing and budget, it is becoming more and more costly to maintain and operate such a large building. Having the staff spread out over 3 floors is also not conducive to a productive work environment and space usage is inefficient. By relocating all of our staff to Assabet NWR near the existing visitor facility we will be more engaged with the public and provide for greater opportunities to interact with the community. Constructing a new facility that is more energy efficient will greatly reduce our operating costs.

Phased Project? N                      Number of Phases 0

**Scope of Benefits (SB):**

The current Headquarters multi-purpose building is located off a dead-end narrow road in Sudbury MA and due to its hidden location receives very few visitors. The Assabet visitor facility is currently only open on weekends due to reduced staffing. The refuge itself receives an estimated 80,000 visitors annually to hunt, fish, hike, bike, ski, snowshoe, attend education events, and see the visitor facility. Relocating the entire staff to the same location will enable us to open the visitor center more days during the week and allow more staff to be engaged with the public visiting Assabet River NWR.

**Investment Strategy (IS):**

Existing O&M is \$22,257 at the current headquarters with projected O&M to be about \$5,000 added to the visitor facility. Replacing this building with a new facility that meets modern standards for energy efficiency and the significant reduction in its footprint should result in a major annual cost savings.

**Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):**

Failure to complete this project will cause the service to continue to incur significantly inflated cost to operate and maintain the 70+ year old building. The fire suppression system needs replacement, a cost of \$9,000 and the entire building is in need of a new roof. The current location of headquarters and our staff does not allow many opportunities for outdoor recreation or engagement with the public.

**Ranking Categories:**

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
FCI Rating:	N/A	N/A
API Rating:	N/A	TBD
API/FCI Score:	20%	N/A
SB Score:	40%	0
IS Score:	20%	20
CFA Score:	20%	20
<b>Total Score:</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>40</b>

Combined ranking factors = (0.20 x API/FCI score) + (0.40 x SB score) + (0.20 x IS score) + (0.20 x CFA score)

**Capital Asset Planning**

Capital Plan Business Case Required: No  
VE Study: Scheduled      TBD

Completed      TBD

**Project Costs and Status**

**Project Cost Estimate (this PDS):**

<b><u>Activity</u></b>	<b><u>Dollars in thousands</u></b>	<b><u>Percent</u></b>
Maintenance Work:	\$0	0
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$745	100
Divestiture Work:	\$0	0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$745</b>	<b>100</b>

**Project Funding History (entire project):**

<b><u>History</u></b>	<b><u>Dollars in thousands</u></b>
Funded to Date:	\$0
FY2024-CONSTRUCTFunding (this PDS):	\$745
FY2022-FLREA/FLTP/Donation Funding:	\$0
FY2022-FLREA/FLTP/Donation Funding:	\$0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$745</b>

**Class of Estimate: A,B,C, D**      C

Estimate Escalated to FY:

**Planning and Design Funds:**

Planning Funds Received in FY	\$0
Design Funds Received in FY	\$0

\*These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated to the FY2024 budget on this project data sheet.

**Major Milestones**

Construction Award/Start	
- Scheduled:	1/24
- Actual:	TBD
Project Complete:	
- Scheduled:	04/26
- Actual:	TBD

**Project Data Sheet**

Prepared/Last Updated:	08/22
DOI Approved:	No

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**Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$**

Current:	22,257
Projected:	5,000
Net Change:	-17,257

**U.S Fish and Wildlife Service Project Data Sheet**

Total Project Score/Ranking: 75  
 Planned Funding FY 2024 | \$11,047,000  
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

**Project Identification**

Project Title: Develop a DOI-wide ZEV Infrastructure Plan  
 Project No: 2021366770  
 Unit/Facility Name: Infrastructure Management Division  
 Region: HEADQUARTERS  
 Congressional District: XX  
 State: VA

**Project Justification**

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id #	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
	93230	Infrastructure Management Division	100	

**Project Description (PD):**

The Department’s ZEV charging infrastructure is not mature nor is it presently right sized to support a total ZEV fleet. An investment is required across the bureaus to develop a DOI-wide ZEV fueling network plan to optimize ZEV fueling station locations, develop needed infrastructure and plan for right sized equipment. This investment will support maximizing operational use of ZEVs in addition to the current and future demand for a complete nationwide public ZEV fueling network. Planning will include coordination with site, local, bureau/office, Department, Regional, State, internal and external stakeholders, including utilities, local governments, Tribes, and commercial ZEV refueling businesses to support development and implementation of a comprehensive ZEV refueling plan for DOI mission areas. FWS will work with the Department of Transportation’s VOLPE center and other DOI land management bureaus to identify operation demand, gaps in the national public ZEV fueling network, and create a plan to ensure investments are made in the areas with the highest demand where there are gaps in the public ZEV fueling infrastructure network.

Phased Project? N      Number of Phases      0

**Scope of Benefits (SB):**

With this investment, DOI could research, analyze, and plan a DOI-wide ZEV fueling infrastructure network plan that optimizes location, type, and installation of ZEV fueling and support infrastructure needed for federal and public use. The plan will include evaluating local site conditions (i.e., environmental, accessibility, traffic flow, parking load, etc.), utility service (capacity, location, meter installation, etc.), and accessibility (i.e. ADA compliance, site security, public & Federal use, etc.) considerations for ZEV fueling infrastructure installation. Plan will analyze existing and planned ZEV range capabilities, DOI geographic mission coverage areas, existing commercial charging infrastructure locations and determine near, mid, and long-term ZEV refueling gaps and suggest a phased approach to close those gaps to meet ZEV refueling demand increases over time.

**Investment Strategy (IS):**

The current financial climate for installing ZEVs is favorable, there are many grants and incentives that Service duty stations are eligible to apply. Development of the DOI-wide plan and coordination across the bureaus will ensure a well thought out plan for ZEV charging stations and electric vehicles to be placed throughout the Service, expanding the alternative fuels network.

**Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):**

There are many grants and incentives that Service duty stations are eligible to apply. Not being an early adaptor, Service duty stations will lose out on cost savings from these programs.

**Ranking Categories:**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Score</u>
FCI Rating:	N/A	
API Rating:	N/A	TBD

**FY 2024 BUDGET JUSTIFICATION**

**CONSTRUCTION**

API/FCI Score:	20%	15
SB Score:	40%	40
IS Score:	20%	20
CFA Score:	20%	0
<b>Total Score:</b>	<b>(100%)</b>	<b>75</b>

Combined ranking factors = (0.20 x API/FCI score) + (0.40 x SB score) + (0.20 x IS score) + (0.20 x CFA score)

**Capital Asset Planning**

Capital Plan Business Case Required: No  
 VE Study: Scheduled      TBD                      Completed                      TBD

**Project Costs and Status**

**Project Cost Estimate (this PDS):**

<b><u>Activity</u></b>	<b><u>Dollars in thousands</u></b>	<b><u>Percent</u></b>
Maintenance Work:	\$0	0
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$11,047	100
Divestiture Work:	\$0	0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Project Funding History (entire project):**

<b><u>History</u></b>	<b><u>Dollars in thousands</u></b>
Funded to Date:	\$150
FY2024-CONSTRUCTFunding (this PDS):	\$11,047
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etcFunding:	\$0
FY2024-FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etcFunding:	\$0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$11,197</b>

**Class of Estimate: A,B,C, D**                      C

Estimate Escalated to FY:

**Planning and Design Funds:**

Planning Funds Received in FY                      \$0  
 Design Funds Received in FY                      \$0

\*These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated to the FY2024 budget on this project data sheet.

**Major Milestones**

Construction Award/Start

- Scheduled:                      1/24
- Actual:                              TBD

Project Complete:

- Scheduled:                      04/26
- Actual:                              TBD

**Project Data Sheet**

Prepared/Last Updated:                      05/22  
 DOI Approved:                              No

**Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$**

**CONSTRUCTION**

**FY 2024 BUDGET JUSTIFICATION**

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Current:	0
Projected:	0
Net Change:	0

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### FY24-28 CI Plan President's Budget Submission

Plan Fund Year	Priority	Facility or Unit Name	Project Title	State	Cong. District	DOI Score	Project Cost Information (\$000)					Remaining to be Funded	Future Years of Funding for Other	Change in Annual O&M (actual \$/yr)
							Total Project	Funded to Date	Budget Year Funding					
									DM	CI	Total			
2024	1	E.B Forsythe NWR	Replace Co-located Field Office Building [cc]	NJ	02	100	\$5,326	\$0	\$0	\$5,326	\$5,326	\$0		\$0
2024	2	Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR	South Levee Rehabilitation Phase V of V	CA	17	95	\$2,939	\$0	\$2,939	\$0	\$2,939	\$0		\$1,813
2024	3	Bears Bluff NFW	Replace and Relocate Laboratory Phase II of II [cc]	SC	06	90	\$2,404	\$1,000	\$913	\$491	\$1,404	\$0		\$5,170
2024	4	Tiglax	Tiglax Vessel Rehabilitation	AK	AL	80	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$0	\$3,000	\$0		\$0
2024	5	North West Montana Complex	Replace Operational Infrastructure to Support Field Stations Formally Supported at the National Bison Range Phase III of III	MT	AL	80	\$11,533	\$5,265	\$0	\$6,268	\$6,268	\$0		\$0
2024	6	Dam Safety Program	Evaluations of Newly Acquired Dams and Existing Dam Deficiencies Phase I of V	*	*	70	\$1,750	\$0	\$350	\$0	\$350	\$1,400	2025-2028	
2024	7	Sherburne NWR	Office and Visitor Center Construction Phase I of II	MN	06	70	\$7,900	\$0	\$0	\$919	\$919	\$6,981	2025	\$0
2024	8	Energy Management Program	Administer the National Energy Management Program	*	*	60	\$255	\$0	\$0	\$255	\$255	\$0		\$0
2024	9	Seismic Safety Program	Nationwide Seismic Safety Investigations and Mitigation Phase V of V	*	*	60	\$1,000	\$800	\$200	\$0	\$200	\$0		\$0
2024	10	Information Resources & Technology Management	Nationwide Radio Site Safety Investigations	*	*	60	\$2,000	\$1,000	\$250	\$0	\$250	\$750	2024-2026	\$0
2024	11	Assabet River NWR	Replace Admin Addition to Assabet Design	NJ	11	40	\$745	\$0	\$0	\$745	\$745	\$0		\$0
<b>Total for Fiscal Year 2024</b>											<b>21,656</b>			

Plan Fund Year	Priority	Facility or Unit Name	Project Title	State	Cong. District	DOI Score	Project Cost Information (\$000)				Remaining to be Funded	Future Years of Funding for Other	Change in Annual O&M (actual \$/yr)	
							Total Project	Funded to Date	Budget Year Funding					
									DM	CI				Total
2025	12	Baldhill Dam NFH	Rehabilitate Ponds Kettles and Drainage (Ponds 1 to 20) [cc] Phase I of II	ND	AL	90	\$3,625	\$0	\$3,482	\$0	\$3,482	\$143		\$1,365
2025	13	Sherburne NWR	Completion of Visitor Center and HQ Phase II of II	MN	06	70	\$7,900	\$919	\$0	\$6,981	\$6,981	\$0		\$0
2025	14	Dam Safety Program	Evaluations of Newly Acquired Dams and Existing Dam Deficiencies Phase II of V	*	*	70	\$1,750	\$350	\$350	\$0	\$350	\$1,050	2026-2028	
2025	15	Information Resources & Technology Management	Nationwide Radio Site Safety Remediation	*	*	70	\$1,600	\$0	\$400	\$0	\$400	\$1,200	2026-2028	\$0
2025	16	Erwin NFH	Construct Building Over Lower Raceways	TN	01	70	\$2,250	\$0	\$445	\$1,805	\$2,250	\$0		\$0
2025	17	Harrison Lake NFH	Construct Mussel Rearing Building	VA	04	70	\$275	\$0	\$0	\$275	\$275	\$0		
2025	18	San Marcos FTC	San Marcos Co-Location ES	TX	25	65	\$5,238	\$0	\$0	\$5,238	\$5,238	\$0		\$0
2025	19	Jordon River NFH	Construct 5-Bay Vehicle Storage Building	MI	01	62	\$750	\$0	\$0	\$750	\$750	\$0		\$0
2025	20	Pendills Creek NFH	Construct 5-Bay Vehicle Storage Building	MI	01	62	\$750	\$0	\$0	\$750	\$750	\$0		\$0
2025	21	Energy Management Program	Administer the National Energy Management Program, Conducting Energy Audits.	*	*	60	\$255	\$0	\$0	\$255	\$255	\$0		\$0
2025	22	Information Resources & Technology Management	Nationwide Radio Site Safety Investigations	*	*	60	\$2,000	\$1,250	\$250	\$0	\$250	\$500	2026-2027	\$0
2025	23	Patuxent NWR	Demolition 4 quarters, 2 offices and 2 storage facilities	MD	5	32	\$675	\$0	\$675	\$0	\$675	\$0		\$0
<b>Total for Fiscal Year 2025</b>											<b>\$21,656</b>			

Plan Fund Year	Priority	Facility or Unit Name	Project Title	State	Cong. District	DOI Score	Project Cost Information (\$000)					Remaining to be Funded	Future Years of Funding for Other	Change in Annual O&M (actual \$/yr)
							Total Project	Funded to Date	Budget Year Funding					
									DM	CI	Total			
2026	24	Patuxent NWR	Chesapeake Bay colocation ES/LE/FWCO	MD	5	90	\$4,863	\$0	\$4,863	\$0	\$4,863	\$0		\$0
2026	25	Dam Safety Program	Evaluations of Newly Acquired Dams and Existing Dam Deficiencies Phase III of V	*	*	70	\$1,750	\$700	\$350	\$0	\$350	\$700	2027-2028	
2026	26	Silvio Conte NFWR	Administration/Visitor Facility - (Co-Location at Ft. River) Phase I of II	MA	01	70	\$5,300	\$0	\$0	\$3,288	\$3,288	\$2,012	2027	\$0
2026	27	Selawik NWR	Replace the Bunkhouse	AK	00	70	\$2,088	\$0	\$2,088	\$0	\$2,088	\$0		\$0
2026	28	Information Resources & Technology Management	Nationwide Radio Site Safety Remediation	*	*	70	\$1,600	\$400	\$400	\$0	\$400	\$800	2027-2028	\$0
2026	29	Abernathy FTC	Construction of Fish & Egg Isolation/Quarantine Building	WA	3	70	\$1,800	\$0	\$1,000	\$800	\$1,800	\$0		\$0
2026	30	Hotchkiss NFH	Construct Raceway Covers	CO	03	60	\$450	\$0	\$0	\$450	\$450	\$0		\$0
2026	31	D.D. Eisenhower NFH	Fish Rearing Infrastructure Upgrades([p,d,ic]	VT	AL	60	\$7,252	\$0	\$0	\$7,252	\$7,252	\$0		\$0
2026	32	Information Resources & Technology Management	Nationwide Radio Site Safety Investigations	*	*	60	\$2,000	\$1,750	\$250	\$0	\$250	\$0		\$0
2026	33	Energy Management Program	Administer the National Energy Management Program, Conducting Energy Audits.	*	*	60	\$255	\$0	\$0	\$255	\$255	\$0		\$0
2026	34	Long Island NWR	Demolition 4 quarters, 1 office and 4 storage facilities	NY	01	42	\$660	\$0	\$660	\$0	\$660	\$0		\$0
<b>Total for Fiscal Year 2026</b>											<b>\$20,996</b>			

Plan Fund Year	Priority	Facility or Unit Name	Project Title	State	Cong. District	DOI Score	Project Cost Information (\$000)				Remaining to be Funded	Future Years of Funding for Other	Change in Annual O&M (actual \$/yr)	
							Total Project	Funded to Date	Budget Year Funding					
									DM	CI				Total
2027	35	Gavins Point NFH	Replace Office Building	SD	AL	100	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,000	\$0	\$0	
2027	36	Eagle Creek NFH	Electric Weir Replacement	OR	05	80	\$2,800	\$0	\$1,400	\$1,400	\$2,800	\$0	\$2,000	
2027	37	Dam Safety Program	Evaluations of Newly Acquired Dams and Existing Dam Deficiencies Phase IV of V	*	*	70	\$1,750	\$1,050	\$350	\$0	\$350	\$350	2028	
2027	38	Silvio Conte NFWR	Administration/Visitor Facility - (Co-Location at Ft. River) Phase II of II	MA	01	70	\$5,300	\$3,288	\$0	\$2,012	\$2,012	\$0	\$0	
2027	39	National Black-Footed Ferret Conservation Center	Expand Operational and Rearing Facility Infrastructure.	CO	07	70	\$3,495	\$0	\$0	\$3,495	\$3,495	\$0	\$0	
2027	40	Information Resources & Technology Management	Nationwide Radio Site Safety Remediation	*	*	70	\$1,600	\$800	\$400	\$0	\$400	\$400	2028	\$0
2027	41	Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR	Replace and Relocate Environmental Education Center due to USACE flood protection levee construction project Phase I of II	CA	17	65	\$19,500	\$0	\$0	\$5,218	\$5,218	\$14,282	2028	\$0
2027	42	Energy Management Program	Administer the National Energy Management Program, Conducting Energy Audits.	*	*	60	\$255	\$0	\$0	\$255	\$255	\$0	2028	\$0
2027	43	Wertheim NWR, Silvio Conte NWR, Ninigret NWR, Eastern Massachusetts NWR	Demolish Bunkhouse and Construct Safer, Energy Efficient New Bunkhouse at each station	*	*	52	\$5,126	\$0	\$5,126	\$0	\$5,126	\$0		\$0
<b>Total for Fiscal Year 2027</b>														

Plan Fund Year	Priority	Facility or Unit Name	Project Title	State	Cong. District	DOI Score	Project Cost Information (\$000)				Remaining to be Funded	Future Years of Funding for Other	Change in Annual O&M (actual \$/yr)	
							Total Project	Funded to Date	Budget Year Funding					
									DM	CI				Total
2028	44	Dam Safety Program	Evaluations of Newly Acquired Dams and Existing Dam Deficiencies Phase V of V	*	*	70	\$1,750	\$1,400	\$350	\$0	\$350	\$0		
2028	45	Information Resources & Technology Management	Nationwide Radio Site Safety Remediation	*	*	70	\$1,600	\$1,200	\$400	\$0	\$400	\$0	\$0	
2028	46	Lahontan NFH	Replace Main Water Supply Lines from Wells (p/d, cc)	NV	01	70	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,000	
2028	47	Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR	Replace and Relocate Environmental Education Center due to USACE flood protection levee construction project Phase II of II	CA	17	65	\$19,500	\$5,218	\$0	\$14,282	\$14,282	\$0	\$0	
2028	48	Leadville NFH	Construct Tank Building with Circular Tanks	CO	03	60	\$650	\$0	\$100	\$550	\$650	\$0	\$0	
2028	49	E.B Forsythe NWR	Rehabilitate/Replace East Pool Water Control Structures and Culverts including Dike and Salt Marsh for aquatic connectivity improvements	NJ	02	60	\$1,569	\$0	\$1,569	\$0	\$1,569	\$0	\$0	
2028	50	Energy Management Program	Administer the National Energy Management Program, Conducting Energy Audits.	*	*	60	\$255	\$0	\$0	\$255	\$255	\$0	\$0	
2028	51	Tishomingo NFH	Replace Administration Building and Visitors Center	OK	03	55	\$2,000	\$0	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$0	\$0	
2028	52	Gavins Point NFH	Replace Hatchery Building/Tank Room and Demo Existing Hatchery Building	SD	AL	40	\$150	\$0	\$150	\$0	\$150	\$0	\$2,000	
<b>Total for Fiscal Year 2028</b>											<b>\$21,656</b>			

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# Land Acquisition



# Land Acquisition

## Appropriations Language

*This account does not require appropriation language due to permanent appropriation authorized by the Great American Outdoors Act, P.L. 116-152 (GAOA). However, Section 200303(c)(1) of GAOA includes a statutory requirement for the Department to submit an allocation of Land and Water Conservation Fund funding to Congress as part of the annual budget process.*

## Authorizing Statutes

*The Fish and Wildlife Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 742a-742j). Authorizes acquisition of additions to the National Wildlife Refuge System for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources by purchase or exchange of land and water or interests therein.*

*Refuge Recreation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460-460k-4). Authorizes acquisition of areas that are adjacent to or within existing fish and wildlife Conservation Areas administered by the Department of the Interior, and suitable for (1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreation development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of listed, threatened, or endangered species, or (4) carrying out two or more of the above.*

*Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 4601-4608). Authorizes appropriations to the Fish and Wildlife Service to acquire land for National Wildlife Refuges as otherwise authorized by law.*

*National Wildlife Refuge Administration Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee). Establishes overall policy guidance, places restrictions on the transfer, exchange, or other disposal of refuge lands, and authorizes the Secretary to accept donations of land.*

*Endangered Species Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1534-1544). Authorizes the acquisition of land, waters, or interests therein for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, including those that are listed as endangered or threatened species, with Land and Water Conservation Fund Act appropriations.*

*Emergency Wetlands Resources Act (P.L. 99-645; 100 Stat. 3582). Authorizes the purchase of wetlands, or interests in wetlands, consistent with the wetlands priority conservation plan established under the Act.*

*Highlands Conservation Act (P.L. 108-421). Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to work in partnership with the Secretary of Agriculture to provide financial assistance to the Highlands States to preserve and protect high priority conservation land in the Highland region.*

*John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (P.L. 116-9). Permanently authorizes the Land and Water Conservation Fund.*

*The Great American Outdoors Act, National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (P.L. 116-152). Authorizes a permanent appropriation of \$900,000,000 per year from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The LWCF funds the four main Federal land acquisition programs (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management) and provides grants to State and local governments to acquire land for recreation and conservation. Funding is subject to Congressional allocation; the Act also mandated that account allocations and detailed project information be submitted by the Administration each year through the President's annual budget submission, and that such allocations, following review by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees may be modified through an alternate allocation.*

**Land and Water Conservation Fund Programs for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Net Budget Authority <sup>(1)</sup>**  
 (Dollars in Thousands)

Activity/Subactivity/Program Element	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024 Request	2024 vs. 2023	2023 FTE	2024 FTE	2024 v. 2023 FTE
<b>State and Local Grant Programs</b>							
<b>Coop. Endangered Species Conservation Fund <sup>(2)</sup></b>	<b>30,930</b>	<b>32,800</b>	<b>40,162</b>	<b>+7,362</b>			
Recovery Land Acquisition Grants	10,526	11,162	14,162	+3,000			
HCP Land Acquisition Grants	20,404	21,638	26,000	+4,362	-	-	-
Sequester Adjustments	1,870	-	445	+445	-	-	-
<b>Subtotal, LWCF CESCFC Funding (New Budget Authority)</b>	<b>32,800</b>	<b>32,800</b>	<b>40,607</b>	<b>+7,807</b>	-	-	-
<b>Highlands Conservation Act <sup>(3)</sup></b>	<b>9,430</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>10,000</b>	-	3	3	-
<b>Land Acquisition</b>							
Acquisition Management	16,031	17,970	18,028	+58	-	-	-
Sportsmen/Recreational Access	14,616	15,500	15,500	-	-	-	-
Inholdings/Emergencies/Hardships	9,430	10,000	11,000	+1,000	-	-	-
Exchanges	943	1,557	1,591	+34	-	-	-
Land Protection Planning	438	491	493	+2	-	-	-
Projects	57,817	58,499	62,340	+3,841	-	-	-
<b>Subtotal, Land Acquisition</b>	<b>99,275</b>	<b>104,017</b>	<b>108,952</b>	<b>+4,935</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>	-
<b>Subtotal, Highlands Conservation Act and Land Acquisition <sup>(4)</sup></b>	<b>108,705</b>	<b>114,017</b>	<b>118,952</b>	<b>4,935</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>73</b>	
Sequester Adjustments	6,571	-76	303	+379			
<b>Total, LWCF Bureau Funding (New Budget Authority)</b>	<b>148,076</b>	<b>146,741</b>	<b>159,862</b>	<b>13,121</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>73</b>	-

(1) Bureau line item funding amounts are Net Budget Authority, the amount available to execute after sequester and Pop-up adjustments. All mandatory LWCF funding is subject to a sequestration reduction of -5.7% across all programs. After FY 2022, amounts sequestered from LWCF programs become available for obligation ("Pop-Up") in subsequent years.

(2) For more information, please see Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund chapter.

(3) Highlands Conservation Act is a grant program that is funded from the Land Acquisition Treasury Account.

(4) Subtotals may not appear to add correctly due to rounding of sequester adjustments.

<b>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service</b> <b>Allocation of LWCF Land Acquisition Account FY 2024</b> <i>Dollars (Net Budget Authority)</i>		
Account/Activity/Project	State	Amount
<b>State and Local Grant Program</b>		
FWS Highlands Conservation Act		10,000,000
<b>Subtotal, State and Local Grants</b>		<b>10,000,000</b>
<b>Federal Land Acquisition</b>		
Acquisition Management		18,028,000
Sportsmen/Recreational Access		15,500,000
Inholdings/Emergencies/Hardships		11,000,000
Exchanges		1,591,000
Land Protection Planning		493,000
<b>Land Acquisition Projects</b>		
Everglades Headwaters NWR & CA	FL	10,000,000
Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR	TX	4,500,000
Dakota Grassland CA	ND/SD	6,000,000
Great Thicket NWR	CT/ MA/ ME/ NH/ NY/ RI	1,000,000
Rachel Carson NWR	ME	1,500,000
Silvio O. Conte NFWR	CT/MA/ NH/VT	500,000
Willamette Valley CA	OR	3,500,000
Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR	CA	4,690,000
Cache River NWR	AR	500,000
Dakota Tallgrass Prairie WMA	ND/SD	2,000,000
Northern Tallgrass Prairie NWR	IA/MN	500,000
Laguna Atascosa NWR	TX	2,000,000
Cherry Valley NWR	PA	1,000,000
Grasslands WMA	CA	1,000,000
Stone Lakes NWR	CA	3,000,000
Willapa NWR	WA	6,000,000
Rappahannock River Valley NWR	VA	500,000
Patoka River NWR	IN	2,000,000
Bear River Watershed CA	ID/MT/UT	950,000
Cypress Creek NWR	IL	500,000
Flint Hills Legacy CA	KS	500,000
Alaska Peninsula NWR	AK	2,200,000
Wyoming Toad CA	WY	1,500,000
Green River NWR	KY	1,000,000
Tulare Basin WMA	CA	1,000,000
St. Marks NWR	FL	1,000,000
Upper Mississippi River NWFR	IA/IL/ MN/WI	500,000
Lower Rio Grande NWR	TX	2,000,000
Middle Mississippi River NWR	IL/MO	500,000
Nestucca Bay NWR	OR	500,000
<b>Land Acquisition Projects, Subtotal</b>		<b>62,340,000</b>
<b>Land Acquisition Account Total</b> (includes Highlands Conservation Act)		<b>118,952,000</b>

<b>Total, New Budget Authority, FWS Land Acquisition Account</b>	<b>119,254,892</b>
Estimated Sequester Return based on 2023 Enacted*	6,494,637
2024 Sequestration	-6,797,529
<b>Total, Net Budget Authority, FWS Land Acquisition Account</b>	<b>118,952,000</b>

## Appropriation: Land Acquisition

### Program Overview

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The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was established by Congress in 1964 to support the protection of Federal public lands and waters – including national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and public lands recreation areas – and to provide recreation opportunities to all Americans. The LWCF also provides for grants to State and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities.

Through a variety of programs, LWCF supports our nationwide legacy of high-quality recreation and conservation areas. The Fund receives revenue from offshore oil and gas leasing to support outdoor recreation and conservation of natural, cultural, and historic resources across the country. Every State and most counties in the Nation have benefited from the LWCF since its establishment.

The 2024 budget submission for LWCF directly supports the Administration’s America the Beautiful conservation objectives and advances other key priorities at the same time, including migration corridors, species protection, and supporting underserved communities. Federal land acquisition projects were competitively selected according to established criteria which considers land and species conservation values, the risk of development, historical or cultural resources, increased recreation access for all, economic benefits, and partnership engagement.

The Department of the Interior is responsible for administering and implementing these important programs, in concert with the U.S. Forest Service. The Great American Outdoors Acts (GAOA) amended the LWCF Act to make \$900 million in permanent LWCF funding available annually. GAOA requires the President’s annual budget submission to Congress include an allocation of LWCF funding by account, program and project for consideration as part of the annual budget process. Mandatory LWCF funding is subject to a sequestration reduction of 5.7%. Beginning in FY 2022, the sequestered amount becomes available or “pops up” in the following year. Unless otherwise indicated, amounts referenced in this section reflect the Net Budget Authority that would be available for programs to execute after sequestration adjustments.

The Land Acquisition appropriation includes the Service’s Federal land acquisition program and the Highlands Conservation Act grants to States program. LWCF also funds the land acquisition portion of Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund grants to States program (described in the CESCO chapter).

**Appropriation: Land Acquisition**  
**LWCF Category: Federal Land Acquisition**

	2022 Actual <sup>1</sup>	2023 Enacted	2024 Request				Change from 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Allocation Request <sup>1</sup>	
<b>Federal Land Acquisition</b>							
Land Acquisition Management (\$000)	16,031	18,028	0	0	+58	18,028	0
Land Protection Planning (\$000)	438	491	0	0	+2	493	0
Exchanges (\$000)	943	1,591	0	0	+34	1,591	0
Inholdings, Emergencies, and Hardships (\$000)	9,430	10,000	0	0	+1,000	11,000	0
Recreational Access (\$000)	14,616	15,500	0	0	0	15,500	0
Line-Item Projects (\$000)	57,817	58,329	0	0	+3,841	62,340	0
<b>Subtotal, Federal Land Acquisition (\$000)</b>	<b>99,275</b>	<b>104,017</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+58</b>	<b>108,952</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>FTE</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>71</b>			<b>+4,935</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>0</b>

<sup>1</sup> All FY 2022, 2023 and 2024 LWCF funding is subject to a sequestration reduction of -5.7% which by law, is applied during the year of execution uniformly across all programs. Amounts for FY 2023 and 2024 include the return of prior year sequestration.

**Program Overview**

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was established by Congress in 1964 to fulfill a bipartisan commitment to safeguard our natural areas, water resources, and cultural heritage, and to provide recreation opportunities to all Americans. In 1972, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) authorized using LWCF funding for the acquisition of land, waters, or interests therein for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, including those that are listed as endangered or threatened species. Acquired lands and waters become part of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) or National Fish Hatchery System (NFHS). When acquired in fee title, these lands and waters provide the public opportunities to hunt, fish, observe and photograph wildlife, and enjoy environmental education and interpretation. The Service purchases the minimum interest in land that is necessary to meet the Service’s conservation mission. Therefore, if conservation easements



In December 2021, the Service acquired 1,866 acres for Everglades Headwaters NWR and CA. The State of Florida purchased the remaining 4,385 acres of the ranch. This partnership promotes groundwater recharge and watershed protection, protects habitat for wildlife, and expands public recreational opportunities. Photo by Justin Dewey, FWS.

will meet biological objectives, then typically the Service will pursue those rather than buying the land in fee.

Each new refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System is strategically planned to give migrating birds safe havens on their journeys, provide fish with clean waters, and ensure that our children and grandchildren have wild places to explore. The Service's Strategic Growth Policy directs the Service to focus on acquiring lands and waters that support three conservation priorities: 1) Recovery of threatened and endangered species; 2) Implementing the North American Waterfowl Management Plan; and 3) Conserving migratory birds of conservation concern. These priorities are consistent with the objectives of the Administration's America the Beautiful initiative and will allow the Service to contribute greatly towards the goal of protecting 30% of land and waters by 2030.

Using these three priorities, a Service interdisciplinary team developed the Targeted Resource Acquisition Comparison Tool (TRACT). The TRACT provides a biological, spatially explicit, science-based, transparent process for evaluating proposed Refuge System land acquisitions based on each of these three conservation priorities. The TRACT does not assign weights to the three priorities and does not produce a single numerical ranking that combines the Service's priorities. The TRACT's rankings are instead intended to provide decision makers with an objective analysis that is grounded in the best available science; it is a decision support tool to inform the decision maker but does not make the decision. Consideration is also given to how an acquisition supports DOI and Service goals and priorities to provide connectivity for wildlife corridors and habitat, especially for climate change mitigation and adaptation and to increase public access, especially for underserved areas that would benefit from increased access to the outdoors.

The Service acquires land and interests in land from willing sellers only. For every project for which the Service requests LWCF funding, the Service has an approved Land Protection Plan (LPP) and has gone through the required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process. The LPP and NEPA processes include opportunities for public input from local communities, businesses, landowners, non-governmental organizations, Tribes, local governments, and other interested parties. Many land acquisition projects reflect on-going and new collaboration with conservation partners and complement local efforts to conserve and restore habitats, expand public outdoor opportunities, and enhance climate change resilience.



*In July 2022, the Service received a donation of 285 acres for San Joaquin NWR, California. Partners are restoring agricultural lands to riparian habitat to benefit endangered species, such as riparian brush rabbit, riparian wood-rat, and least Bell's vireo and to improve public recreation on the river. Photo by Kristi Sandberg, FWS.*

### **Land Acquisition Management**

This activity supports efforts directly related to the acquisition of lands within approved acquisition boundaries of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The funding supports all costs for staff and the administration, implementation, coordination, and evaluation of the Service's Federal land acquisition program in our Headquarters, Regional, and field offices. The land acquisition staff maintains the maps and property records for Service-managed lands, and prepares right-of-way permits for oil, gas, and other pipelines, electrical transmission lines, and other infrastructure. This budget activity also includes approximately \$2 million for the land acquisition program's share of Servicewide infrastructure needs and assessments, including leased space and information technology investments. Land acquisition management also funds contracts for boundary surveys, title work, and appraisals when the specific project

appropriation is insufficient to fund these costs in addition to land costs, as well as limited DOI Office of the Solicitor preliminary and final title reviews and approvals.

Land acquisition staff provides specialized support for several realty-based functions, including:

- Working with willing sellers, from initial explanations of Federal acquisition options to the final acquisition, including processing and accepting donations.
- Preparing right-of-way permits for oil and gas and other pipelines, electrical transmission lines, telecommunications, and other infrastructure that crosses Service-managed lands.
- Developing and maintaining spatial and other tools that inform the decision-making process.
- Working collaboratively with Tribes, States, local governments, landowners, non-governmental organizations, and other land management agencies to acquire land for wildlife corridors and public recreation.
- Creating, maintaining, and updating geospatial data, and property records for Service-managed lands. This information supports the Service's GIS/mapping capacity for land use and the Service's contributions to the Protected Areas Database of the United States (PAD-US), which is a single, continuously updated geospatial database/official national inventory of Federal and State protected areas. PAD-US includes all conservation areas managed by Federal and State agencies; conservation areas owned by nonprofits; and private lands protected by conservation easements. PAD-US serves many users, and is developed through partnerships with Tribes, States, Federal agencies, and non-profit organizations.
- Preparing responses to information requests from a variety of sources.

### Land Protection Planning

This activity supports National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for land acquisition projects and the development of Land Protection Plans (LPPs), a key function in implementing the Service's Strategic Growth Policy.

The LPP process begins when refuge field stations, local governments, and other conservation partners suggest areas for the protection of endangered species, migratory birds and other important fish, wildlife, and plant species. If there is enough local support and interest, the Service may start the process for developing an LPP. In some cases, LPPs will be prepared to establish new refuges or, more likely, to expand existing refuges to address the needs of fish, wildlife, and plant communities. Specific activities include gathering background data; coordinating with State, Tribal and local entities; involving the public; analyzing ecological, legal, and financial issues; and printing and distributing draft and final plan documents. By using conservation planning aids such as models of species-habitat interaction, climate science and other decision support tools, Service staff can prioritize conservation and/or management actions needed to support or attain sustainable fish and wildlife populations at desired levels. Coordinating local actions with State and regional conservation goals improves the success of conserving large, connected natural areas. By working together, the Service and our conservation partners can accomplish much more than by working as separate entities.



*Several people walk along trails in the new acquisition for Great Thicket NWR. Located near Stonington, CT, the Service will manage for early successional habitat that will support New England Cottontail and other wildlife. Photo by Richard Freeda, Trust for Public Land.*

### Exchanges

Land exchanges provide unique opportunities to work in partnership with Tribes, other Federal agencies and State and local governments, private landowners and organizations, and local and national conservation groups and are pursued when the exchange is a net benefit for the Service. Land exchange projects leverage the collective expertise of these partners to conserve critical habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife, decrease habitat fragmentation, and provide the public with access to natural areas to hunt, fish, photograph, and observe wildlife, and enjoy environmental education and interpretation. Exchanges are a win-win alternative that helps the Service to meet conservation goals while allowing the Service to be a good neighbor to local landowners. However, they are more labor and cost intensive since the Service must do two sets of all required evaluations (two appraisals, two title opinions, two contaminant surveys, and other standard realty work) for the out-going exchange lands and the incoming exchange lands.

Below is the most up to date list of the Service's potential land exchange projects. These projects total at least 12,072 acres, and the Service estimates that \$2,475,000 will be needed for acquisition-related management costs to complete all of them, including salaries, appraisals, title work, contaminant surveys, and other expenses. Exchanges may involve on-going expenditures over a period of years.

### Potential Land Exchange Projects

State	Potential Exchanges	Acres to be Acquired	Management Costs
Alaska	Future Exchanges Plan	TBD	\$220,000
Alaska	Kenai NWR - CIRI	1,081	\$700,000
Alaska	Togiak NWR - Saguyak	120	\$30,000
Alaska	Yukon Delta NWR - Newtok	1,338	\$275,000
Arizona	Havasu NWR	10	\$10,000
Arizona	Kofa NWR (various)	372	\$85,000
Arkansas	Dale Bumpers White River NWR	25	\$25,000
Arkansas	Felsenthal NWR	2,168	\$35,000
California	Bitter Creek NWR	TBD	\$30,000
California	Sacramento River NWR	20	\$20,000
California	Stone Lakes NWR	2	\$30,000
California	Tule Lake NWR	70	\$30,000
Colorado	Arapaho NWR	280	\$25,000
Georgia	Harris Neck NWR	50	\$25,000
Hawaii	Hakalau Forest NWR	2131	\$40,000
Hawaii	Hanalei NWR	12	\$20,000
Indiana	Patoka River NWR	80	\$10,000
Iowa & Wisconsin	Upper MS River NWFR	36	\$8,000
Louisiana	Big Branch Marsh NWR	110	\$26,000
Louisiana	Laccasine/Sabine NWRs	1,900	\$25,000
Maine	Umbagog NWR	50	\$30,000
Massachusetts	Parker River NWR	2	\$25,000
Minnesota	Beltrami WMA	544	\$8,000
Minnesota	Big Stone County WPA	5	\$8,000
Minnesota	Carver County WPA	7	\$10,000
Minnesota	Douglas County WPA	3	\$8,000
Minnesota	Glacial Ridge NWR	200	\$8,000
Minnesota	Grant County WPA	3	\$8,000

State	Potential Exchanges	Acres to be Acquired	Management Costs
Minnesota	Meeker County WPA (various)	86	\$13,000
Minnesota	Pope County WPA	3	\$8,000
Montana	Various Montana WPAs and WMDs	40	\$50,000
New Hampshire	Umbagog NWR	2	\$15,000
New Jersey	EB Forsythe NWR	26	\$35,000
North Dakota	Audubon WMD	55	\$25,000
North Dakota	Various North Dakota WPA's & WMA's	500	\$200,000
Oregon	Bandon Marsh NWR	1	\$5,000
Oregon	Cold Springs NWR	14	\$40,000
Oregon	Tualatin River NWR	4.12	\$20,000
South Dakota	Various South Dakota WPA's & WMD's	500	\$200,000
Texas	Laguna Atascosa NWR	95	\$35,000
Texas	Lower Rio Grande Valley NWR	100	\$25,000
Texas	Trinity NWR	4	\$5,000
Washington	McNary NWR	2	\$5,000
Washington	Steigerwald Lake NWR	16	\$10,000
Wisconsin	Necedah WMA	5	\$10,000
<b>Total Exchange Acres and Management Costs</b>		<b>12,072</b>	<b>\$2,475,000</b>

**Inholdings, Emergencies, and Hardships (IEH)**

The Service uses funding in this activity to expedite purchases of tracts of land from willing sellers for three categories: inholdings, emergencies, and hardships. The Service defines any land within an approved acquisition boundary as an inholding. The Service frequently uses funding for inholdings to purchase lands that connect with private or State conserved lands, to create larger contiguous blocks of protected wildlife habitat, and to expand public recreational opportunities. The Service also uses funding for inholdings to acquire small tracts of land when doing so will improve refuge management effectiveness or efficiency, eliminate a costly management problem, or provide or expand public access to existing refuge lands for hunting, fishing, and other compatible wildlife-dependent recreation. An emergency that may be best addressed with land acquisition from a willing seller could be a proposed development or a conversion to other uses that would result in the permanent loss of wildlife habitat or detrimental impacts to the refuge. Funding is also used to purchase lands when the owner is experiencing financial hardship and must quickly sell his or her land that is within an approved refuge acquisition boundary. This funding allows the Service to capitalize on emergent once-in-a-generation opportunities to conserve fish and wildlife habitat and to be a good neighbor to local landowners.

*Use of Residual LWCF Funds*

Federal land acquisition projects sometimes have small amounts of funds remaining after land has been acquired. These residual funds are insufficient to acquire additional land. The Service reallocates residual project funds of less than \$50,000 to the Inholdings / Emergencies and Hardships line item to be used to protect other lands that do not have project funding. This shift enables the Service to acquire valuable wildlife habitat within approved refuge acquisition boundaries that becomes available for acquisition between appropriations cycles.

**Sportsmen/ Recreational Access**

This activity provides funding for acquisition of land to conserve important wildlife habitats that provide public recreational opportunities. Refuges that have willing sellers may request funds to acquire lands to

provide public access for wildlife-dependent recreation, such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation.

### **Line-Item Projects**

This activity funds individual land acquisition projects. Each year the Service acquires land or interests in land (water rights) in fee title or conservation easement through LWCF. The acquired lands provide habitat for wildlife and often enhance resource management capability. Fee title acquisitions generate economic benefits for local communities and provide the public with opportunities to hunt, fish, observe and photograph wildlife, and enjoy environmental education and interpretation. Conservation easements are an important tool to prevent habitat fragmentation and protect wildlife corridors while allowing ranching, farming, and forest operations to continue. Some conservation easements include public recreational access.

Recent acquisition highlights include:

#### ***Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge, Kentucky***

In July 2022, the Service acquired a 40-acre tract for Clarks River NWR. The tract consists of bottomland hardwood forest. The tract is surrounded by existing Refuge lands; acquisition resolves trespass and private access issues while providing continuity for public recreation and wildlife corridors.

#### ***Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska***

In September 2022, the Service acquired 678 acres of upland and coastal wetlands for Alaska Peninsula NWR. The acquisition expands the protected coastal corridor between the intertidal and marine habitat of Wide Bay and Refuge uplands, including approximately 4.75 miles of coastline. The parcels are within the National Audubon Society designated Wide Bay Important Bird Area and provide habitat important to waterfowl and waterbirds, including emperor goose and the Federally listed Steller's eider. The acquisition also includes a 112-acre spit that extends into Wide Bay and is one of ninety-seven unique Pacific barrier islands/spits identified as an Alaska Natural Heritage Program "Ecosystem of Conservation Concern" for its significance to bird and mammal species, sensitivity to oil spills, and rarity.



*Emperor geese feed along a tidal flat at Alaska Peninsula NWR. FWS photo.*

#### ***Bayou Sauvage Urban National Wildlife Refuge, Louisiana***

In December 2021, the Service acquired 2,539 acres for Bayou Sauvage Urban NWR. The property consists of freshwater marsh, scrub-shrub habitat, coastal hardwood forest and open water ponds providing habitat for birds, small mammals, freshwater turtles and other reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates. The property also includes a large wading bird rookery. Most of the Refuge, which is located within the City of New Orleans, is accessible only by boat. The acquisition provides public recreational access to non-boaters and reduces the distance of the Refuge from mass transit from two miles to 1,000 feet.



*Wading birds rookery at Bayou Sauvage Urban NWR. Photo by Pon Dixon, FWS.*

***Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, Oregon***

In December 2021, the Service acquired a 5.3-acre inholding at Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually NWR. The property includes emergent wetlands, undeveloped upland forest/shrub, and riparian habitats adjacent to Black River, supporting a diverse assemblage of migrating and nesting passerines, and waterbird species. The unique, aquifer-fed Black River watershed is critical habitat for the Federally-listed as threatened Oregon spotted frog.

***Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Refuge, Illinois***

In October 2022, the Service acquired a 182-acre island for Clarence Cannon NWR. McCoy Island provides a large, contiguous tract of land of mature over-story trees and a near complete interior forest canopy. Snag density provides important wood duck, prothonotary warbler, and woodpecker nesting sites. The island also provides stopover and breeding habitat for shorebirds, neotropical migrants, and passerines, and the Federally-listed as endangered Indiana bats. The acquisition increases public recreational access opportunities within the St. Louis, Missouri, metropolitan area.

***Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge, Alabama***

In December 2021, the Service acquired a 1,164-acre tract for Cahaba River NWR using Recreational Access funding. The Refuge is 30 miles from Birmingham and is easily accessed by the over 1.1 million people who live in the Greater Birmingham Metropolitan Area. The tract connects an isolated and inaccessible 1,700-acre Refuge-owned tract to the main unit. Therefore, the acquisition provides nearly 2,900 additional acres for public recreational access, including fishing, hunting, hiking, and birdwatching.



*A recently acquired mountain lake at Cahaba River NWR provides public fishing opportunities. Photo by Jim Wadsworth.*

***Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, Texas***

In September 2022, the Service acquired a 40-acre tract for the Laguna Atascosa NWR. This addition contributes to the Service's efforts to complete a wildlife corridor along the Laguna Madre. The property is comprised of native and regrowth vegetation consisting of huisache, honey mesquite, retama, bunchgrass, and camphor daisy. Habitat on the property supports cardinal, horned lark, mockingbird, red-tailed hawk, Harris' hawk, northern harrier, golden-fronted woodpecker, raccoon, deer, and nilgai.

***Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Texas***

In May 2022, the Service acquired a 19.7-acre tract and 50 acre-feet of water rights for the Lower Rio Grande Valley NWR. Vegetative species on the tract include Roosevelt weed, retama, castor bean, sunflowers, guinea grass, and Johnson grass. Native wildlife species that will benefit from this acquisition include eastern cottontail, coyote, raccoon, striped skunk, bobcat, green jay, golden-fronted woodpecker, and crested caracara.



*Crested caracara at Lower Rio Grande Valley NWR. FWS photo.*

***Lost Trail Conservation Area, Montana***

In July 2022, the Service established the Lost Trail CA with the acquisition of a 38,000-acre conservation easement on private timberland in northwest Montana. The landscape-scale easement provides public recreational access in perpetuity, prevents subdivision and development, and allows for continued sustainable timber harvests. The easement conserves the heart of two critical wildlife corridors for grizzly bear, Canada lynx, elk, mule deer, and many other species, protecting a wedge of private land between Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge and Flathead National Forest.



*A conservation easement at the recently established Lost Trail CA provides for public recreational access. Photo by David Allen, FWS.*

***Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, Iowa***

In March 2022, the Service acquired a 127-acre tract for Neal Smith NWR. Acquisition of the tract connects two existing parcels of Refuge land, increasing connectivity for public recreation and land management activities. The tract, previously used for agriculture, will be restored to native tallgrass prairie to benefit migratory and resident birds and wildlife. Restoration will also benefit regal flitillary butterflies, a species of concern, and will address runoff and erosion issues in local creeks. Acquisition will also expand public recreational access opportunities, such as wildlife viewing, hiking, and hunting.

***Neches River National Wildlife Refuge, Texas***

In June 2022, the Service acquired a 249-acre tract for Neches River NWR. The property is bordered by the Neches River for three miles and is comprised of oak and cypress hardwoods, pines, and wetlands. The property is entirely within the floodplain, providing stopover, wintering, and breeding habitat for mallard, blue-winged teal, northern shoveler, pintail, and resident wood ducks. The property also supports State-listed endangered species: the American alligator, Louisiana black bear, red-cockaded woodpecker, and earth fruit. The property is adjacent to U.S. highway 79 and a county road and contains a network of roads allowing for public access for recreational activities such as birdwatching, wildlife viewing, and hunting. There is also a public launch area along the US highway 79 frontage at the Neches River for access to the river and parts of the Refuge for canoeing, kayaking, and fishing.



*The Neches River floods hardwood forests, providing habitat for wood duck and other waterfowl. FWS photo.*

***Rappahannock River Valley NWR, Virginia***

On April 1, 2022, Service personnel joined the Rappahannock Tribe and many other partners to celebrate the conservation of 460 acres adjacent to the Rappahannock River in Virginia. This parcel, part of the Rappahannock Tribe's ancestral homeland, lies along Fones Cliffs, which has been identified as an Important Bird Area by Audubon for its support of landbirds, waterfowl, and one of the largest bald eagle concentration areas in eastern North America. The property is the likely location of Rappahannock village Pissacoac. The Service holds a donated conservation easement, while the Tribe owns the underlying fee, allowing for an on-going collaboration between the Tribe and Rappahannock River Valley NWR. The donation was made possible by the generosity of the family of Dr. William Dodge Angle.



*Secretary Haaland, Dr. Carol Angle, and Chief Anne Richardson celebrate the partnership that led to the conservation of Rappahannock Tribe ancestral lands. DOI photo.*

***Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Area, Montana***

In August 2022, the Service acquired a 7,760-acre conservation easement on a working ranch on the eastern front of the Rocky Mountains in Montana. The easement protects habitat for several species of migratory grassland birds, including long-billed curlews, McCown's longspur, grasshopper sparrow, and Sprague's pipits, and conserves a movement corridor for grizzly bear. By purchasing the easement, the Service was able to help a traditional ranching family transfer the underlying fee from one generation to the next. Protecting working lands like this property is a win-win for wildlife and the traditional ranching economy.

***San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge, Texas***

In October 2021, the Service acquired a 250-acre tract for the San Bernard NWR. The tract is within the Columbia Bottomlands ecosystem along the Texas Gulf Coast and contains old growth bottomland hardwood forest and swamp habitat. The Columbia Bottomlands ecosystem is critically important for millions of migratory birds, such as swallow-tailed kite, broad-winged hawk, whooping crane, Nashville warbler, wood thrush, and yellow-headed blackbird, that use it as a staging area between wintering habitat in the Caribbean and South America, and breeding habitat in North America. In addition, the Columbia Bottomlands habitat supports 95 species of reptiles and amphibians, and 130 species of butterflies and dragonflies. The landowners had



*Old growth forest on Oyster Creek at San Bernard NWR. FWS photo.*

donated a conservation easement on most of the tract in 2005. Fee ownership allows for the development of public recreational access, including foot and canoe trails and environmental education programs.

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**Justification of 2024 Program Changes**

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The 2024 budget allocation request for Land Acquisition is \$108,952 and 70 FTE, a program change of +\$5,011,000 and +0 FTEs from the 2023 Enacted.

**Land Protection Planning (+\$2,000/+0 FTE)**

The land protection planning funding supports National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for land acquisition projects and the development of Land Protection Plans (LPPs). This change reflects a sequester anomaly.

**Exchanges (+\$34,000/+0 FTE)**

Land exchanges provide unique opportunities to work in partnership with private landowners and organizations, local and national conservation groups, and other Federal agencies and State and local governments. Exchanges are an important alternative to buying land since very often landowners do not want to leave an area; exchanges are a win-win alternative that helps the Service align resource goals and decrease operations and management costs while also meeting the needs of private landowners. This change reflects a sequester anomaly.

**Land Acquisition Management (+\$58,000/+0 FTE)**

The acquisition management funding supports all costs for staff and the administration, implementation, coordination, and evaluation of the Service's Federal land acquisition program. This change reflects a sequester anomaly.

**Inholdings, Emergencies and Hardships (+\$1,000,000/ +0 FTE)**

Increased funding will enable the Service to acquire additional lands that become available sporadically. This funding allows the Service to acquire land within approved acquisition boundaries from willing sellers, often when time is of the essence, and as such, will allow the Service to capitalize on emergent opportunities to conserve habitat for the enjoyment of the American public. This funding is only used for land purchases, including contract appraisals and other related costs at refuges previously funded through Congressional action.

**Line-Item Projects for FY 2024 (+\$3,841,000/ +0 FTE)**

The Service uses several tools, including conservation design, to implement its 2014 Strategic Growth Policy. Conservation design combines geospatial data with biological information and models to create maps and other tools that evaluate a refuge's habitat potential to support fish, wildlife, or plant populations, including climate resiliency. The Service also works collaboratively with conservation partners to determine the kind, quality, and configuration of the needed habitat. With these tools and data, the Service can determine the current habitat capability and what is needed to achieve specific biological objectives or outcomes.

The land acquisition projects proposed for the FY 2024 Budget reflect additional important factors, including contribution of leveraged funds, conservation partner participation, opportunities for public recreation, and urgency of project completion to protect natural areas from development or other incompatible uses. The proposed projects support the Service's mission-oriented priorities.

Consistent with Congressional direction, the Service submits the following Federal land acquisition projects as part of the 2024 Budget process. Detailed final project data sheets for each identified project will be made available on the Department's LWCF website here: <https://www.doi.gov/lwcf>.

The projects listed below are in priority order and have identified willing sellers.

Federal Land Acquisition Lists

FY 2024 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service LWCF Land Acquisition Requested Project List

(Dollars)

Priority	Project	State(s)	Funding	Acres
1	Everglades Headwaters NWR & CA	FL	10,000,000	2,500
2	Attwater Chicken NWR	TX	4,500,000	346
3	Dakota Grassland CA	ND/SD	6,000,000	6,000
4	Great Thicket NWR	CT/MA/ME/ NH/NY/ RI	1,000,000	220
5	Rachel Carson NWR	ME	1,500,000	50
6	Silvio O. Conte NFWR	CT/MA/ NH/VT	500,000	100
7	Willamette Valley CA (proposed)	OR	3,500,000	525
8	Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR	CA	4,690,000	81
9	Cache River NWR	AR	500,000	140
10	Dakota Tallgrass Prairie WMA	ND/SD	2,000,000	2,000
11	Northern Tallgrass Prairie NWR	IA/MN	500,000	180
12	Laguna Atascosa NWR	TX	2,000,000	122
13	Cherry Valley NWR	PA	1,000,000	200
14	Grasslands WMA	CA	1,000,000	150
15	Stone Lakes NWR	CA	3,000,000	157
16	Willapa NWR	WA	6,000,000	1,929
17	Rappahannock River Valley NWR	VA	500,000	83
18	Patoka River NWR	IN	2,000,000	650
19	Bear River Watershed CA	ID/MT/UT	950,000	3,665
20	Cypress Creek NWR	IL	500,000	400
21	Flint Hills Legacy CA	KS	500,000	830
22	Alaska Peninsula NWR	AK	2,200,000	12,000
23	Wyoming Toad CA	WY	1,500,000	938
24	Green River NWR	KY	1,000,000	125
25	Tulare Basin WMA	CA	1,000,000	480
26	St. Marks NWR	FL	1,000,000	355
27	Upper Mississippi River NWFR	IA/IL/ MN/WI	500,000	125
28	Lower Rio Grande NWR	TX	2,000,000	240
29	Middle Mississippi River NWR	IL/MO	500,000	350
30	Nestucca Bay NWR	OR	500,000	4
	<b>FY 2024 Requested Project List</b>		<b>62,340,000</b>	<b>34,945</b>

Consistent with language in the FY 2023 Omnibus Appropriations Bill (P.L. 117-328), the Department submits a Supplemental list of Federal Land Acquisition projects. Project Data Sheets for supplemental projects and color maps for Request and Supplemental projects will also be provided separately.

**FY 2024 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service LWCF Land Acquisition Supplemental Project List**

*(Dollars)*

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>State(s)</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Acres</b>
S1	Hackmatack NWR	IL/WI	20,000,000	1,000
S2	Clarks River NWR	KY	2,000,000	625
S3	Balcones Canyonlands NWR	TX	4,000,000	210
S4	Okefenokee NWR	FL/GA	2,511,000	1,187
S5	Montana CAs	MT	3,000,000	5,000
	<b>FY 2024 Supplemental List</b>		<b>31,511,000</b>	<b>8,022</b>

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area

**Priority:** 1

**State(s):** FL

**Congressional District(s):** FL-9, FL-18

**Location:**

Approximately 50 miles south of Orlando and 75 miles east of Tampa, in Okeechobee, Osceola, Highlands and Polk Counties.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>2,500</b>	<b>\$10,000,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	12,174	\$33,125,885
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	137,402	\$406,062,521

**Project Description:**

Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area contains the headwaters of the greater Everglades ecosystem, protecting a combination of wetland and upland habitats supporting migratory birds, 143 Federal and State listed species, and regionally important wildlife and plant communities within the Kissimmee River Basin. Habitats include a mosaic of seasonally wet grasslands, longleaf pine savannas, sandhill and scrub, and forested wetlands that support numerous imperiled plants and animals and connect landscapes for a wide array of species including Florida panther, Florida black bear, Audubon’s crested caracara, and Florida grasshopper sparrow. Easements acquired within the Conservation Area protect Florida's cattle ranching heritage and fee acquisitions for the Refuge provide public outdoor recreational opportunities, including opportunities for underserved communities.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service is working with willing sellers to acquire 2,500 acres in fee and conservation easements. Refuge acquisitions are strongly supported by a variety of partners and stakeholders. Funding will be leveraged by the Avon Park Air Force Range Sentinel Landscape through the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program. Acquisitions will help the Everglades ecosystem become a more connected and functional conservation landscape that will provide effective habitat connections between existing conservation areas and allow habitats and species to shift in response to urban development pressures and climate change. Conservation easements help preserve one of Florida’s last working rural landscapes, protecting a unique regional landscape, trust resources, and the local economy. Acquisitions also contribute to safeguarding water supply for millions of Floridians and marine life by protecting groundwater recharge areas and holding and treating surface water runoff, which significantly contributes to efforts to protect and restore watersheds by reducing fresh and saltwater algae

blooms. Fee acquisitions provide public outdoor recreational opportunities, including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and hiking.

**Cooperator(s):**

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Sportsman's Trust, Florida Cattlemen's Association, National Wildlife Refuge Association, The Conservation Fund, Ducks Unlimited, U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Okeechobee, Osceola, Highlands, and Polk Counties, The Nature Conservancy.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$12,000	\$10,000

**O&M Description:**

Annual costs are for monitoring easements, and habitat management, including prescribed burning. Annual costs also include maintenance of infrastructure that supports public hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge

**Priority:** 2

**State(s):** TX

**Congressional District(s):** TX-10

**Location:**

60 miles west of Houston, Texas in Colorado County, Texas near the Community of Eagle Lake.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>\$4,500,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	10,541	\$6,459,560
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	13,113	\$65,795,000

**Project Description:**

Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1972 for the protection of the Attwater’s prairie-chicken, one of the most endangered birds in North America. It has an acquisition boundary of 24,000 acres. The recovery program for the endangered Attwater's prairie-chicken has focused on two primary areas: 1) developing a successful and sustainable captive breeding and release program; and 2) protecting and restoring enough native coastal prairie to support a self-sustaining population of birds. In partnership with a number of private and non-profit partners, the Service is releasing several hundred prairie-chickens on the core Refuge tract each year. As a birding destination, the Refuge contributes to the economy of nearby Eagle Lake, a small, rural, diverse city. The Refuge partners with schools to provide environmental education to students of all backgrounds. In 2022, the Refuge began a partnership with the Texas Challenge Academy to provide environmental education, community service and leadership development opportunities for at-risk teens.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will begin the phased acquisition of a 541-acre property. The property consists of approximately 352 acres of restored pastureland and 188 acres of irrigated farmland. Attwater's prairie chickens regularly use this land. The landowner has been approached to sell this property to a buyer who desires to build a housing development, partly due to its proximity to an established Interstate 10 exit. Acquisition would protect the existing Attwater's prairie chicken population and habitat. The Service will restore the irrigated farmland to native prairie, expanding available habitat for Attwater's prairie-chickens

and other grassland birds, including northern bobwhites. Acquisition will also expand public recreational access for environmental education, birding, photography, and hiking.

**Cooperator(s):**

The Nature Conservancy; Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; City of Eagle Lake; Houston Zoo; Fossil Rim Wildlife Center; the Caldwell Zoo (Tyler, TX); and the Sutton Avian Research Center (Bartlesville, OK).

**Operations & Maintenance**

<b>Savings/Cost</b>	<b>Start-up</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$7,000	\$20,000

**O&M Description:**

Startup costs include boundary posting, gates, and some road repair. Annual O&M costs include restoration of agricultural fields to native prairie and maintenance.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Dakota Grassland Conservation Area

**Priority:** 3

**State(s):** ND, SD

**Congressional District(s):** ND-AL, SD-AL

**Location:**

South Dakota and North Dakota, lying east of the Missouri River.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>6,000</b>	<b>\$6,000,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	103,278	\$52,100,656
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	1,830,722	\$1,739,186,900

**Project Description:**

The Prairie Pothole Region (PPR) ecosystem consists of large, unique grassland and wetland complexes that provide critical habitat for migratory birds, shorebirds, grassland birds, and other wildlife. Known as America’s “duck factory,” the PPR supports more than 50% of the total breeding population of North America’s migratory waterfowl. The prime breeding habitat for millions of ducks, the PPR includes parts of Iowa, the Dakotas, Minnesota, and Montana, and can support upwards of 100 breeding duck pairs per square mile. The Dakota Grassland Conservation Area is part of a large-scale habitat conservation effort to protect this highly diverse and endangered ecosystem across the North and South Dakota portions of the PPR. The Service has made significant progress in protecting priority waterfowl habitat in the PPR, but further habitat fragmentation and degradation continues at an alarming rate. Approximately 81% of the remaining grassland and 65% of wetlands in the PPR have no form of permanent protection. The Service’s conservation easement acquisition program offers landowners a non-regulatory, financial incentive to permanently protect wildlife habitat on private lands in the PPR. Landscape-scale preservation of the rich mosaic of native grasslands and functional wetlands will bolster the ecosystem’s resiliency to climate change.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will pursue the acquisition of wetland and grassland conservation easements from willing sellers on approximately 6,000 acres of grassland and wetland habitat in South Dakota and North Dakota. Easements conserve working landscapes and protect the integrity of native prairie and associated wetlands by preventing further habitat fragmentation. The ecological function of these habitats is preserved by providing for flood water retention, ground water recharge, carbon sequestration, improved

water quality and reduced soil erosion. Acquisitions will benefit migratory birds, plants, and wildlife including Federally listed species such as piping plover, whooping crane, and Dakota skipper.

The funding leverages additional funding from Ducks Unlimited and other conservation partners.

**Cooperator(s):**

North Dakota Game and Fish Department; North Dakota Natural Resources Trust; Ducks Unlimited, Inc.; The Nature Conservancy; and the South Dakota Grassland Coalition.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$0	\$0

**O&M Description:**

The Service is already monitoring existing easements in the area; the additional costs would be minimal.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge

**Priority:** 4

**State(s):** CT, MA, ME, NH, NY, RI

**Congressional District(s):** CT-2, CT-5; MA-9; ME-1; NH-1, NH-2; NY-18; RI-2

**Location:**

Spans 10 Focus Areas in six northeastern states.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	372	\$1,059,720
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	14,408	\$98,440,280

**Project Description:**

Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge was established in 2016 to manage and protect young forest and shrubland habitat for the New England cottontail rabbit, ruffed grouse, American woodcock, monarch butterfly, box turtle, and other species that depend on young forest and shrubland. The Refuge is part of a larger landscape effort with state wildlife agencies and other partners in Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, New York, and Rhode Island to protect and manage lands for young forest and shrubland habitats and the species that depend on them. The Service plans to conserve 15,000 acres in 10 focus areas. Habitat restoration also benefits Federally listed endangered bog turtles and at-risk migratory birds including prairie warbler, blue-winged warbler, field sparrow, American woodcock, and brown thrasher. The Refuge provides public wildlife-dependent recreation, including wildlife observation, nature interpretation, hunting, and fishing.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service is in negotiations with willing sellers at several focus areas. An example is a 39-acre property located within the Oyster-Dover-Bellamy focus area of NH. The property has a mix of wetlands and regenerating forest, which is ideal for New England cottontail conservation. The property is located within the Oyster River watershed and contains several brooks and areas of wetlands. This diversity of land cover types supports an array of species of concern including American woodcock, brook trout, American eel, wood turtle and spotted turtle. Acquisitions will expand public wildlife-dependent recreation, including wildlife observation, nature interpretation, hunting, and fishing.

**Cooperator(s):**

States of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New York; USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service; The Nature Conservancy; Trust for Public Land; Avalonia Land Conservancy (CT); Open Space Institute; Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire; Dutchess Land Conservancy (NY), Housatonic Valley Association; Harlem Valley Conservation Alliance (NY); Open

Space Institute (NY); Connecticut Audubon Society; York Land Trust (ME); Kittery Land Trust (ME); Great Works Regional Land Trust (ME); Maine Coast Heritage Trust; Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership (NH).

**Operations & Maintenance**

<b>Savings/Cost</b>	<b>Start-up</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$5,000	\$5,000

**O&M Description:**

Start-up cost would be used for boundary marking. Annual costs include habitat management.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge

**Priority:** 5

**State(s):** ME

**Congressional District(s):** ME-1

**Location:**

York and Cumberland Counties.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>\$1,500,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	5,776	\$27,769,190
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	9,058	\$90,440,000

**Project Description:**

Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1966 in cooperation with the State of Maine to protect valuable salt marshes and estuaries for migratory birds. Located along 50 miles of coastline in York and Cumberland Counties, the Refuge consists of eleven Divisions stretching from Kittery to Cape Elizabeth. The proximity of the Refuge to the coast and its location between the eastern deciduous forest and the boreal forest creates a biodiverse composition of plants and animals not found elsewhere in Maine. Major habitat types present on the Refuge include forested upland, barrier beach/dune, coastal meadows, tidal salt marsh, and the distinctive rocky coast. The Refuge provides public recreational opportunities, including wildlife observation, fishing, hunting, photography, and kayaking for the growing, and increasingly diverse and more urban, population of southern Maine and its summer visitors.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service is in negotiations with several landowners. One such example is a 110-acre property in Kennebunkport, Maine. The property is a mix of various wetland types and upland forest, providing habitat for saltmarsh sparrow, migratory waterfowl, and shorebirds. The property also supports spotted and wood turtles, which are under consideration for ESA listing. This area is included in the draft salt marsh sparrow conservation plan that the Service developed in consultation with the State of Maine. The acquisition is adjacent to existing Refuge lands and will provide an avenue for saltmarsh migration due to

anticipated sea level rise. Acquisitions will expand public wildlife-dependent recreation, including wildlife observation, nature interpretation, and fishing.

**Cooperator(s):**

Maine Coast Heritage Trust and the Mt. Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative (a partnership among national and local land trusts including the York, Kittery, and Great Works Regional Land Trusts).

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$10,000	\$2,500

**O&M Description:**

Startup costs include boundary marking. Annual costs include maintenance and law enforcement.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

**Priority:** 6

**State(s):** CT, MA, NH, VT

**Congressional District(s):** CT-1, CT-2, CT-3, CT-5; MA-1, MA-2, MA-3; NH-1, NH-2; VT-AL

**Location:**

Several focus areas within the Connecticut River Watershed.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	39,453	\$40,302,741
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	58,044	\$88,197,259

**Project Description:**

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge was authorized in 1991 as a landscape-scale, watershed-based, climate resilient, and partnership empowered land conservation collaboration to protect the Connecticut River Watershed. Land protection promotes ecological integrity and species diversity and reinforces ecosystem structure and function. The Refuge purpose is to conserve, protect, and enhance the Connecticut River Valley populations of Atlantic salmon, American shad, river herring, short-nosed sturgeon, bald eagles, peregrine falcons, osprey, black ducks, and other native species of plants, fish, and wildlife. Refuge Divisions span the rural-suburban-urban gradient creating opportunities to connect with underserved communities and economically depressed areas. The diverse array of compatible public access opportunities provided within the Watershed offer an array of avenues to connect people with nature.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service is in negotiations with many willing sellers in each of the refuge’s four states. Many of the targeted tracts are adjacent to existing Refuge lands and other conservation lands, thereby enhancing connectivity for wildlife corridors and public recreation. Two sample properties include a 329-acre conservation easement at the Mascoma River Division in New Hampshire and a 4-acre house lot at the Salmon River Division in Connecticut. The easement constitutes an additional phase of a much larger conservation project and will protect this extensive forest from development while promoting sound forest management practices and allowing for public recreation. The Connecticut property fronts the Salmon River and contains forested riparian habitat important to migratory birds. Acquisition of the tract

and removal of the house will eliminate a source of disturbance to wildlife both to this property and adjoining Refuge lands.

**Cooperator(s):**

States of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont, as well as local communities. The Friends of Conte, The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, The Trust for Public Land, Kestrel Land Trust, Middlesex Land Trust, and WildLandscapes International. The four-state congressional delegation provides letters of support annually.

**Operations & Maintenance**

<b>Savings/Cost</b>	<b>Start-up</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$7,000	\$5,000

**O&M Description:**

Start-up cost would be used for boundary marking. Annual costs include habitat management.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Willamette Valley Conservation Area

**Priority:** 7

**State(s):** OR

**Congressional District(s):** OR-01, OR-04, OR-05, OR-06

**Location:**

Willamette Valley, Oregon.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>\$3,500,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	0	\$0
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	22,065	\$151,000,000

**Project Description:**

The Service is proposing to establish the Willamette Valley Conservation Area for the preservation and restoration of oak and prairie ecosystems. The Service is a partner in the Willamette Valley Oak and Prairie Cooperative (Cooperative), which consists of more than three dozen nongovernmental organizations, Tribal, private business, university, local, State, and Federal partners. Oak and prairie habitats are home to a diverse array of wildlife and plant species. The Cooperative has designated 23 "strategy species" that are of high conservation value for the State of Oregon and include several Federally listed Threatened or Endangered species, including acorn woodpecker, Fender's blue butterfly (endangered), streaked horned lark (threatened), monarch butterfly, Bradshaw's desert parsley (endangered), and Willamette daisy (endangered). The Service plans to protect 22,650 acres of oak and grassland habitat. The Conservation Area will complement conservation and public recreation efforts of Ankeny, William L. Finley, and Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuges.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will acquire a 585-acre property that is one of the largest prairie restorations in the Willamette Valley. For over 15 years, multiple Federal, State, and other conservation partners have helped the landowner restore agricultural lands to oak and prairie ecosystems. The property now supports several focal species of concern, including western meadowlark, short-eared owl, and elk. It also supports thousands of wintering waterfowl and raptors. The property was the first place in Willamette Valley where short-eared owls were found nesting after an absence of more than eight decades. The property has the potential to contribute to recovery of multiple Federally listed species, such as the streaked horned lark, Fender's blue butterfly, Nelson's checkermallow, and the Willamette daisy. Acquisition will ensure

perpetual conservation of the property and public access for recreation such as wildlife observation, photography, and hiking.

**Cooperator(s):**

Willamette Valley Oak and Prairie Cooperative, which is composed of more than three dozen nongovernmental organizations, Tribal, private business, university, local, State, and Federal partners. Partners for this specific acquisition include USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service; Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife; Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board; Cascade Pacific Research, Conservation & Development Council; Oregon State University; the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, and the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde.

**Operations & Maintenance**

<b>Savings/Cost</b>	<b>Start-up</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$7,000	\$9,000

**O&M Description:**

Start-up cost would be used for boundary marking. Annual costs include habitat management.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge

**Priority:** 8

**State(s):** CA

**Congressional District(s):** CA-14, CA-15, CA-16, CA-17

**Location:**

On San Francisco Bay in the city of Newark in Alameda County.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>\$4,690,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	29,528	\$43,716,134
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	13,476	\$336,900,000

**Project Description:**

The Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge is located in south San Francisco Bay, California. One of the largest urban refuges in the United States, it is an island of wildlife habitat in an extensive metropolitan area of 7 million people. The Refuge consists primarily of tidal marsh, salt ponds, mud flats, and seasonal wetlands acting as a keystone to the preservation of the biological and physical integrity of San Francisco Bay. The Refuge provides habitat for nine species of Federally-listed threatened or endangered species and is home to 227 species of birds, including 8 percent of the world population of the western snowy plover. It protects 60 percent of the world's population of California clapper rail, as well as a substantial number of salt marsh harvest mouse, both found only in the remaining tidal marshes of San Francisco Bay. Wintering waterfowl make extensive use of the area, averaging 45,000-75,000 each winter. More than 500,000 shorebirds make use of the mud flats and salt ponds. The Refuge provides public wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, including hiking and fishing.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will begin phased acquisition of a 430-acre tract. Acquisition will allow the Service and partners to restore the land to tidal marsh for the benefit of the endangered Ridgeway's rail and salt marsh harvest mouse. Tidal marshes provide for sea level rise resiliency and marsh migration. The acquisition supports the goals of the San Francisco Estuary Partnership and the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture. As part of the acquisition, our conservation partner is having listening sessions with local Tribes to document

cultural resources and lore. Acquisition will expand public wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, such as hiking and fishing.

**Cooperator(s):**

Trust for Public Lands, California Coastal Commission, Wildlife Conservation Board, San Francisco Bay Joint Venture, and San Francisco Bay Estuary Partnership.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$20,000	\$5,000

**O&M Description:**

Start-up cost would be used for boundary marking and habitat restoration. Annual costs include habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2024

**Project / Unit: Cache River National Wildlife Refuge**

**Priority: 9**

**State(s): AR**

**Congressional District(s): AR-01**

**Location:**

Adjacent to the White and Cache Rivers and Bayou DeView, 75 miles northeast of Little Rock in Monroe, Prairie, Woodruff, Jackson, Cross, and Poinsett Counties.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>\$500</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	73,561	\$74,085,690
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	212,359	\$530,597,655

**Project Description:**

Cache River National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1986 to protect significant wetland habitats and provide critical feeding and resting areas for migrating and wintering waterfowl. As one of the few remaining areas in the Lower Mississippi River Valley not drastically altered by channelization and drainage, the Cache River basin contains a variety of wetland communities including some of the most intact and least disturbed bottomland hardwood forests in the Mississippi Valley region and is the most important wintering area for mallard ducks in North America. The exemplary quality and diversity of habitats attract a wide variety of fish and wildlife, including Federally listed and candidate species such as northern long-eared bat, eastern black rail, interior least tern, piping plover, and monarch butterfly. The wetlands have been designated by the Ramsar Convention as “Wetlands of International Importance.” The Refuge is a nationally renowned area for waterfowl hunting. The Refuge also provides other public wildlife dependent recreation, such as fishing, boating, wildlife observation, photography, and hiking. The Refuge is located within a very rural, economically depressed area of Arkansas, where communities depend on hunting and fishing opportunities provided by the Refuge.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will begin phased acquisition of a 760-acre tract adjacent to the Cache River and existing Refuge lands. Acquisition would greatly expand conservation of the floodplain of the Cache River and protect an important bottomland hardwoods ecosystem containing extant, seasonally flooded forest, permanent hardwood swamp, and moist-soil areas. Additionally, there are over 450 acres of agricultural land that, once restored to native hardwoods, will expand the floodplain forest and protection of soil and water resources even further. The tract contains high value foraging, migrating, and wintering habitat resources for waterfowl, shorebirds, waterbirds, landbirds, and breeding habitat for wood duck and forest-interior birds. Conservation of this parcel will benefit a wide variety of fish and wildlife species,

potentially including federally listed species such as northern long-eared bat, eastern black rail, red knot, piping plover, and monarch butterfly. The tract is near a county road and will provide public recreational access to 1,200 acres of existing Refuge lands.

**Cooperator(s):**

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, National Wild Turkey Federation, Arkansas Bow Hunters Association, The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Lands, The Conservation Fund, Arbor Day Foundation, and Audubon Arkansas.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$12,000	\$1,500

**O&M Description:**

Startup costs include boundary marking. Annual costs are for maintenance.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Dakota Tallgrass Prairie Wildlife Management Area

**Priority:** 10

**State(s):** ND, SD

**Congressional District(s):** ND-AL, SD-AL

**Location:**

South Dakota east of the James River Valley and 3 counties in the southeast corner of North Dakota.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>\$2,000,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	77,666	\$20,377,551
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	105,334	\$83,079,250

**Project Description:**

Dakota Tallgrass Prairie Wildlife Management Area was established in 2000 to preserve quality tallgrass prairie habitat in southeastern North Dakota and eastern South Dakota to help maintain biodiversity and to slow habitat fragmentation. The Service would use conservation easements to protect 185,000 acres of the remaining tallgrass prairie in the eastern Dakotas. Tallgrass prairies support a rich variety of plant, animal, and insect species, including more than 147 species of breeding birds, ranging from neotropical migrants to waterfowl. In some areas, breeding waterfowl densities exceed 100 pairs per square mile. The habitat supports several Federally listed species, including the threatened Dakota skipper, endangered Poweshiek skipperling, and monarch butterfly. The tallgrass prairie ecosystem also supports grassland bird species, including Baird’s sparrow, loggerhead shrike, and ferruginous hawk. Perpetual conservation easements preserve ecological functions by providing floodwater retention, groundwater recharge, carbon sequestration, improved water quality, and reduced soil erosion. The Conservation Area is also rich in culturally significant Native American sites. Conservation of tallgrass prairie also reduces disturbance of burial mounds, stone cairns, teepee rings, and other cultural items in the area.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will pursue the acquisition of perpetual wetland and grassland easements from willing sellers on approximately 2,000 acres of tallgrass prairie. Acquisition of perpetual easements protects important

habitat for grassland birds and other wildlife, while maintaining ranching and other traditional working operations.

**Cooperator(s):**

North Dakota Game and Fish; Pheasants Forever; Audubon; Ducks Unlimited, Inc.; The Nature Conservancy; and the South Dakota Grassland Coalition.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$0	\$1,000

**O&M Description:**

Annual costs include monitoring activities.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2024

**Project / Unit: Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge**

**Priority: 11**

**State(s): IA, MN**

**Congressional District(s): IA-1, IA-2, IA-3, IA-4; MN-1, MN-2, MN-7, MN-8**

**Location:**

Located in portions of 37 counties in IA and 48 in MN, the Refuge is bounded by the U.S.-Canada border to the north and Des Moines, IA, to the south. The Refuge boundary weaves through the Tallgrass Aspen Parklands and Agassiz Beach Ridges of northwest MN and the Prairie Coteau regions of southwest MN and northwest IA.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	14,095	\$9,349,891
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	62,725	\$98,789,075

**Project Description:**

The Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge was established in 2000 to address the loss of America’s grasslands and the decline of grassland wildlife. Scientists estimate the original tallgrass prairie in Minnesota and Iowa covered about 25 million acres. Now, there are only about 300,000 acres left in the two states. The refuge was created to work with individuals, groups, and government agencies to permanently preserve and restore some of the northern tallgrass prairie. The Refuge’s long-term goal is to protect 77,000 acres. Federally listed threatened and endangered species on the Refuge include four plant and seven animal species, including western prairie fringed orchid, prairie bush clover, Topeka shiner, rusty patch bumblebee, and piping plover. Several globally rare species can also be found on the Refuge, including the last remaining U.S. populations of the Dakota skipper and regal fritillary butterflies, which are in steep decline. The Refuge consists of many permanent, temporary, and seasonal wetlands crucial to national waterfowl, waterbird, and shorebird populations. These same water resources provide groundwater recharge supply and mitigates for the severity and risk of downstream flooding. The many units of the Refuge are accessible to numerous diverse communities for public recreation such as fishing, hunting, wildlife observation, and photography.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service is planning to acquire two or more tracts of land totaling 180 acres of fee title or conservation easement in northwestern Iowa and/or western Minnesota for the Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge. Conservation partners in Iowa and Minnesota will leverage acquisitions by providing matching funds, cost-share opportunities, or donating land. In Iowa, the Service works closely with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and Iowa Department of Natural Resources to purchase and manage

tracts of land. In Minnesota, The Nature Conservancy actively provides funding to help restore recently purchased tracts. Some of these land donations are made possible by State of Minnesota grants and, per State law, are open for public hunting and fishing. Acquisition will increase public wildlife observation, education, and photography opportunities. Due to the length of the Refuge, access to units is enjoyed by many diverse communities.

**Cooperator(s):**

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, The Nature Conservancy, Minnesota Waterfowl Association, county conservation boards, and local Chambers of Commerce.

**Operations & Maintenance**

<b>Savings/Cost</b>	<b>Start-up</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$1,250	\$1,000

**O&M Description:**

Startup costs include initial restoration and posting of boundary signs. Annual costs include habitat management.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge

**Priority:** 12

**State(s):** TX

**Congressional District(s):** TX-34

**Location:**

South Texas: Lower Rio Grande Valley in Cameron and Willacy Counties.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>\$2,000,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	99,017	\$25,344,432
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	54,175	\$124,368,864

**Project Description:**

Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1946 to provide habitat for wintering waterfowl and other migratory birds, principally redhead ducks. Today, there is an expanded emphasis that includes endangered species conservation and management for shorebirds. Nearly half of all the bird species found in the continental United States rest, feed, nest, or migrate on or through Refuge lands, making it a premiere bird-watching destination. The Refuge contains the largest population of endangered ocelots in the United States and is important for conservation and recovery efforts for this endangered cat. The Refuge provides public wildlife-dependent recreation such as wildlife watching, hunting, fishing, photography, and environmental education in a state with limited public lands.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will begin phased acquisition of a 215-acre tract. The tract is located between the Refuge’s Bahia Grande Unit and the Laguna Madre, and contains a mosaic of native Tamaulipan thornscrub, coastal prairie, wetland, and tidal bay habitats. This property is another critical link in completing a coastal wildlife corridor along the Laguna Madre, for the recovery of the federally endangered ocelot. Tamaulipan thornscrub provides the necessary habitat to support one of the last remaining breeding populations of the ocelot in the United States. Acquisition of the tract will allow the Service to have complete management of the Bahia Grande wetland complex. The tract will also provide habitat for native and migratory wildlife species, such as meadowlarks, shorebirds, pelicans, egrets, and fiddler

crabs. The tract's location on Highway 100 makes it ideal for development. Acquisition would expand public recreational access for birding, wildlife observation, photography, and hiking.

**Cooperator(s):**

The Conservation Fund; Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; Friends of Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge; Coastal Bends; Bays and Estuaries; and Ducks Unlimited.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$300

**O&M Description:**

Start-up costs include boundary posting. Annual costs include monitoring activities.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge

**Priority:** 13

**State(s):** PA

**Congressional District(s):** PA-7, PA-8

**Location:**

60 miles north of Philadelphia in Monroe County.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	5,547	\$6,704,750
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	13,440	\$89,115,000

**Project Description:**

Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge was established in December 2008 for the conservation of migratory birds and wildlife, and the habitats they depend on. The Refuge provides a diverse mosaic of wetland and upland habitats that support five Federally listed threatened or endangered species such as the bog turtle and Indiana bat. The Kittatinny Ridge (which flanks the south side of the valley) has been designated an Important Bird Area by the Pennsylvania Audubon Society and is a well-known migration flyway that concentrates up to 20,000 migrating raptors and more than 140 bird species every Fall. Large blocks of unfragmented forest along the ridge also serve as valuable breeding areas for interior-forest birds such as ruffed grouse, wood thrush, Eastern wood pewee, scarlet tanager, black-throated blue warbler, and worm-eating warbler. The Refuge provides public recreational opportunities such as fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, hunting, and wildlife viewing.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service is planning to acquire four tracts that total about 200 acres. These forested uplands, wetlands, and riparian areas will provide crucial habitat for native wildlife, including the Federally listed as threatened bog turtle and migratory birds of conservation concern. These tracts include lands on the Kittatinny Ridge, an Important Bird Area, and along Cherry Creek. These proposed tracts are adjacent to

existing Refuge lands. Acquisition will expand public recreational opportunities, including wildlife observation, photography, hunting, hiking, and environmental education.

**Cooperator(s):**

The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, National Park Service (Appalachian National Scenic Trail), Pocono Natural Heritage Trust, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Monroe County, Open Space Institute, and Wildlands Conservancy.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$5,000	\$3,000

**O&M Description:**

Start-up cost would be used for boundary marking. Annual costs include habitat management.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Grasslands Wildlife Management Area

**Priority:** 14

**State(s):** CA

**Congressional District(s):** CA-13

**Location:**

Located in the Pacific Flyway between the Cities of Los Banos and Gustine in Merced County.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	94,997	\$66,318,161
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	38,183	\$152,330,200

**Project Description:**

The Grasslands Wildlife Management Area (WMA) was established in 1979 and is composed mostly of conservation easements. Perpetual conservation easements preserve wetland and grassland habitats while allowing wildlife-friendly agricultural operations. Fee acquisition allows for habitat restoration as well as protection of water quality and quantity. The WMA supports diverse habitats, including seasonally flooded marshlands, semi-permanent marshes, riparian habitats, wet meadows, vernal pools, native uplands, pastures, and native grasslands. These wetlands constitute 30% of the remaining wetlands in California's Central Valley and are extremely important to Pacific Flyway waterfowl populations. In addition to waterfowl, these habitats support shorebirds, wading birds, songbirds, raptors, and other wildlife species.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will acquire a 150-acre tract. Acquisition will allow for improved management of adjacent Service lands and will contribute to the long-term viability of the grassland and wetland ecosystems, providing a haven for migratory birds and other wildlife species. Acquisition will expand public wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, such as wildlife observation and hunting.

**Cooperator(s):**

California Department of Fish and Wildlife, River Partners, Ducks Unlimited, California Audubon Society, Nature Conservancy, and Western Rivers Conservancy.

**Operations & Maintenance**

<b>Savings/Cost</b>	<b>Start-up</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$10,000	\$5,000

**O&M Description:**

Start-up costs will include boundary sign posting. Annual costs will include maintenance and habitat management.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

**Priority:** 15

**State(s):** CA

**Congressional District(s):** CA-07

**Location:**

Approximately 5 miles southwest of Elk Grove in Sacramento County.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>\$3,000,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	6,684	\$2,480,439
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	10,955	\$131,472,000

**Project Description:**

Established in 1992, Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is an urban refuge located 10 miles from downtown Sacramento within the Pacific Flyway. The Refuge consists of a variety of Central Valley habitats including grassland savannah, riparian forest, wetlands, and native freshwater lakes. The diverse habitats support over 200 species of birds and numerous other fish and wildlife species. The Refuge provides public recreational activities, including environmental education, docent-guided walks, canoeing, and waterfowl hunting.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will acquire a 157-acre tract to provide habitat for migratory birds. Farmland in the Central Valley is being converted to permanent crops that are not wildlife friendly and reduce foraging areas for migrating and wintering birds. Acquisition will benefit migratory birds, such as sandhill cranes, and expand birding and other public recreational opportunities.

**Cooperator(s):**

The Conservation Fund, State of California, and Friends of Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$10,000	\$5,000

**O&M Description:**

Start-up costs will include boundary sign posting. Annual costs will include maintenance and habitat management.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

**Priority:** 16

State(s): WA

**Congressional District(s):** WA-3

**Location:**

Pacific County, near the community of Long Beach.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>1,929</b>	<b>\$6,000,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	17,668	\$17,734,727
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	7,144	\$20,456,724

**Project Description:**

Willapa National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1937 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to protect migrating birds and their habitat. The Refuge has grown to encompass diverse ecosystems including salt marsh, muddy tidelands, forest, freshwater wetlands, streams, grasslands, coastal dunes, and beaches. This rich mix of habitats provides places for over 200 bird species to rest, nest, and winter, and benefits chum salmon, river otter, Roosevelt elk, bobcat, and over a dozen species of amphibians. The Refuge is a vital stopover site of the Pacific Flyway and is designated as a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network site of international importance. The Refuge provides public recreation opportunities such as hiking, wildlife viewing, and shellfish harvesting.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service is in negotiations with several willing sellers. Acquisitions focus on upland forest habitats that provide nesting habitat for the federally-listed threatened marbled murrelet and on freshwater and estuarine wetlands that support high levels of plant and animal biodiversity, including critical spawning and rearing habitat for chum, fall Chinook, coho, sea-run cutthroat trout, steelhead, and Pacific lamprey.

The Service will also focus on acquisitions that connect existing Refuge lands to create wildlife corridors and enhance public recreation opportunities such as wildlife viewing, elk and deer hunting, and hiking.

**Cooperator(s):**

Western Rivers Conservancy, Coast Salmon Partnership and Foundation, Pacific Conservation District, The Nature Conservancy, Columbia Land Trust, Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce, Forterra, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Chinook Indian Nation, and Shoalwater Bay Tribe.

**Operations & Maintenance**

<b>Savings/Cost</b>	<b>Start-up</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$30,000	\$5,000

**O&M Description:**

Start-up costs include boundary posting. Annual costs include routine law enforcement patrol and maintenance.

**Project Data Sheet**

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge

**Priority:** 17

**State(s):** VA

**Congressional District(s):** VA-1, VA-7

**Location:**

The Rappahannock River watershed in Essex, King George, Caroline, Richmond, and Westmoreland Counties.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	10,047	\$23,775,570
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	9,870	\$28,138,030

**Project Description:**

The Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1996. The Refuge protects wetlands and their associated uplands along the Rappahannock River and its major tributaries. Refuge habitats include freshwater tidal marsh, forest swamp, upland deciduous forest, mixed pine forest, and grassland. The area is cultural significant for the Federally recognized Rappahannock Tribe, who own land adjacent to the Refuge. In 2007, areas of the Refuge were designated as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society. Shorebirds, neotropical migrant songbirds, raptors, and marsh birds rely on the Rappahannock River’s corridors during the spring and fall migration periods. With help from partners and volunteers, Refuge staff are restoring native grasslands and riparian forests along the river and tributary streams to provide additional habitat for these species. Some of the species the Refuge focuses management actions on include bald eagles, forest dwelling species such as wood thrush and scarlet tanager, and grassland nesting birds such as grasshopper sparrow and northern bobwhite.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will begin phased acquisition of a conservation easement in the Fones Cliffs area. The tract consists of mostly unbroken forest cover and is adjacent to existing Refuge lands. The larger Fones Cliffs area is recognized for its importance to a substantial population of bald eagles for wintering, roosting, and

foraging, and is an Audubon Important Bird Area of global significance. Acquisition will protect the viewshed for canoers and boaters on the Rappahannock River.

**Cooperator(s):**

The Rappahannock Tribe, Commonwealth of Virginia, The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Chesapeake Conservancy, National Park Service, and The Conservation Fund.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$2,000	\$1,000

**O&M Description:**

Costs include monitoring and enforcement.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge

**Priority:** 18

**State(s):** IN

**Congressional District(s):** IN - 8

**Location:**

Pike and Gibson Counties in southwestern Indiana.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>\$2,000,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	10,700	\$9,383,763
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	11,536	\$37,953,147

**Project Description:**

Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1994 to protect one of two remaining intact floodplain forest systems in Indiana and improve the water quality of the Patoka River. The Refuge protects wetlands, floodplain forest, and uplands along 30 miles of the Patoka River corridor for the benefit of migratory birds, fish, and wildlife, including Federally listed endangered species such as the Indiana bat and the interior least tern. The Refuge is located near the diverse communities of Evansville and Indianapolis, Indiana, and Louisville, Kentucky, and provides public access for wildlife-dependent recreation, such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and photography.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will complete the phased acquisition of a 1,650-acre tract. The tract consists of bottomland forests and wetlands that provide habitat for waterfowl, waterbirds, and landbirds, along with associated upland forests and grasslands that provide habitat for Indiana bats. The tract is adjacent to the Patoka River; restoration of farmed land to natural habitat will increase water quality. The tract is easily accessible from county roads and will enhance public access to existing Refuge lands as well as expand public recreational activities, such as wildlife observation, photography, hunting, and fishing.

**Cooperator(s):**

Ducks Unlimited, Friends of Patoka Refuge, Sycamore Land Trust, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, National Wild Turkey Federation, Indiana Department of

Transportation, Indiana Department of Environmental Management, Duke Energy, Evansville Chapter of the Audubon Society, and USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service.

**Operations & Maintenance**

<b>Savings/Cost</b>	<b>Start-up</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$5,000	\$5,000

**O&M Description:**

Startup costs posting of boundary signs. Annual costs include maintenance, law enforcement, and habitat management.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Bear River Watershed Conservation Area

**Priority:** 19

**State(s):** ID, UT, WY

**Congressional District(s):** ID-2, UT-1, WY-AL

**Location:**

Northeastern corner of Utah, extending into southeastern Idaho and southwestern Wyoming. (Bannock, Bear Lake, Caribou, Franklin, Oneida, and Power Counties in Idaho; Box Elder, Cache, Rich, and Summit Counties in Utah; and Lincoln and Uinta Counties in Wyoming).

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>3,665</b>	<b>\$950,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	7,327	\$7,446,940
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	911,708	\$901,106,055

**Project Description:**

The Bear River Watershed Conservation Area was established in 2016. The Service works with private landowners to help maintain important habitat, coordinate watershed-wide conservation efforts, and protect valuable farm and ranch lands. Wetlands and riparian areas in the watershed’s lower elevations provide some of the most important resting, staging, feeding, breeding, and nesting areas for migratory birds in the Pacific and Central Flyways. The watershed also provides critical wildlife habitat linkages and migratory corridors between the northern and southern Rockies and between Idaho and the Greater Yellowstone ecosystems for mule deer, elk, pronghorn, and moose. In addition to supporting big game species, existing national wildlife refuges and adjacent protected lands provide habitat for over 270 other species; easement acquisition would improve connectivity among these protected lands. The watershed supports millions of birds, including 46 percent of the white-faced ibis, 24 percent of the marbled godwit, and 18 percent of the black-necked stilt populations in North America, and provides habitat for greater sage-grouse and Bonneville cutthroat trout.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service is currently working with private landowners on conservation easements, focusing on high priority wetlands and sagebrush steppe habitat benefitting sage thrasher, American avocet, and Bonneville cutthroat trout. Residential and commercial development pose the greatest biological threat within the watershed. Protection of large, unfragmented habitat is key for multiple species, conserving migration corridors and migratory bird breeding grounds, and boosting climate resiliency. The Service works with

local landowners, farmers, and ranchers, to preserve working lands, reduce impacts of development, and conserve sagebrush steppe, wetlands, and riparian buffers.

**Cooperator(s):**

Bear River Land Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust, Western Rivers Conservancy, and the Intermountain West Joint Venture.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$0	\$5,000

**O&M Description:**

Annual costs include easement monitoring and enforcement.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge

**Priority:** 20

**State(s):** IL

**Congressional District(s):** IL-12

**Location:**

Near the southern boundary of Illinois at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	16,514	\$13,139,370
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	19,771	\$24,713,750

**Project Description:**

Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1990 and within the Cache River watershed in southern Illinois. The Refuge consists of bottomland hardwood forest, cypress tupelo swamp, herbaceous wetlands, deep water habitats and canebrakes. Due to the ecological significance of this region, the wetlands on the Refuge were designated a RAMSAR Wetland of International Importance. The Refuge provides public recreational activities, including hiking, canoeing, hunting, wildlife viewing and photography.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will acquire several tracts totaling 400 acres. Acquisitions focus on historically bottomland hardwood forests and wetlands that are currently in agricultural production. The Service will restore the tracts to provide habitat for waterfowl, waterbirds, landbirds, and federally listed endangered Indiana bats. The tracts are accessed from public roadways and will increase public access to existing Refuge lands as well as expand public recreational activities, such as wildlife observation, photography, hunting, and fishing.

**Cooperator(s):**

Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, National Wild Turkey Federation, The Audubon Society, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service.

**Operations & Maintenance**

<b>Savings/Cost</b>	<b>Start-up</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$7,000	\$3,000

**O&M Description:**

Startup costs include initial restoration and posting of boundary signs. Annual costs include maintenance, law enforcement, and habitat management including restoration of agricultural lands to natural habitat.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Flint Hills Legacy Conservation Area

**Priority:** 21

**State(s):** KS

**Congressional District(s):** KS-1, KS-2, KS-4

**Location:**

The Flint Hills of eastern Kansas run north-south in a long, narrow band and include portions of 21 counties.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>830</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>
Acquired to Date	10,116	\$3,441,250
Remaining to be Acquired	1,089,054	\$436,058,750

**Project Description:**

Tallgrass prairie is one of the most endangered ecosystems in the United States, with less than 4 percent of the original acreage remaining. Residential, commercial, and industrial development, as well as woody vegetation encroachment, have fragmented tallgrass prairie wildlife habitat. The purpose of the Flint Hills Legacy Conservation Area is to help maintain the integrity of tallgrass prairie wildlife habitat, stream water quality, and the rich agricultural heritage of the Flint Hills by acquiring and protecting up to 1.1 million acres of habitat through voluntary, perpetual conservation easements. These conservation easements will protect habitat for more than 100 species of grassland birds and 500 plant species and ensure the region's sustainable ranching culture--which directly supports conservation of the tallgrass prairie--continues.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will acquire perpetual conservation easements on 830 acres of tallgrass prairie for the Flint Hills Legacy Conservation Area. These easements will permanently protect tallgrass prairie while allowing traditional ranching to continue. They will protect habitat for a wide variety of grassland-dependent birds and for the threatened Topeka shiner. The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism supports acquisitions for the Flint Hills Legacy Conservation Area because it fulfills State goals to “maintain the integrity of tallgrass prairie wildlife habitat, stream water quality, and rich agricultural heritage of the Flint Hills.”.

**Cooperator(s):**

The Nature Conservancy; Kansas Land Trust; Ranchland Trust of Kansas; Tallgrass Legacy Alliance; Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism; and The Conservation Fund.

**Operations & Maintenance**

<b>Savings/Cost</b>	<b>Start-up</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$0	\$500

**O&M Description:**

Annual costs include monitoring of conservation easements.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2024

**Project / Unit:** Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge

**Priority:** 22

**State(s):** AK

**Congressional District(s):** AK-AL

**Location:**

Southwestern Alaska

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>12,000</b>	<b>\$2,200,000</b>
Acquired to Date	3,574,938	\$2,952,637
Remaining to be Acquired	955,244	\$153,794,327

**Project Description:**

The Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge presents a breathtakingly dramatic landscape made up of active volcanoes, towering mountain peaks, rolling tundra and rugged, wave-battered coastlines. As is the case with most of Alaska's coastal refuges, salmon provide the principal nutrient engine for Alaska Peninsula, supporting the species that prey upon them and enriching the rivers and surrounding lands after they spawn and die. Where there are salmon, there will usually be bears, and when the fish are running, Ugashik Lakes and the streams that surround them attract brown bears in great numbers. Other large land mammals include wolverine, the caribou of the approximately 7,000-animal Northern Alaska Peninsula Herd, wolves, and moose. Refuge lands are also home to almost 40% of the Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run, the largest sustainable sockeye fishery in the world. The Ugashik Lakes system annually produces around 8 million sockeye salmon and contributes nearly 3 million fish to the Bristol Bay sockeye commercial fishery. The Refuge offers a variety of public recreational opportunities, such as sport fishing, hunting, hiking, backpacking, boating, camping, and wildlife observation and photography.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will continue the phased acquisition of a 32,000-acre tract, located at the headwaters of the Ugashik Lakes system. Protecting the headwaters, which is under threat of subsurface development, will ensure protection of the world's largest sustainable sockeye salmon fishery. The Service is also working

with willing sellers to acquire several tracts near Upper Ugashik Lake. Acquisition will protect water quality, further protecting the Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run and protect public fishing opportunities.

**Cooperator(s):**

The Conservation Fund.

**Operations & Maintenance**

<b>Savings/Cost</b>	<b>Start-up</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$5,000	\$5,000

**O&M Description:**

Annual costs include signage, monitoring, overflights, and enforcement.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Wyoming Toad Conservation Area

**Priority:** 23

**State(s):** WY

**Congressional District(s):** WY-AL

**Location:**

Albany County.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>938</b>	<b>\$1,500,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	0	\$0
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	42,262	\$96,477,600

**Project Description:**

The Wyoming Toad Conservation Area was authorized in 2017 but has not been established through land acquisition. From 1985 to 1987, the Wyoming toad was presumed extinct; in 1987, a small population was found at what is now Mortenson Lake National Wildlife Refuge. By 1994, the numbers had drastically dwindled, and the decision was made to bring the last remaining toads into captivity. In 2020, there were 677 individual toads held in captivity. The Service will acquire both fee title and conservation easements in the Laramie Plains to provide release sites and critical habitat for the reestablishment of Wyoming toad populations.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will begin phased acquisition of a 3,559-acre ranch that is adjacent to Hutton Lake NWR. The ranch consists of riparian and wetland habitat that was historically inhabited by the Wyoming toad and contains habitat suitable for reestablishing the species. In addition, the property has senior water rights that will allow for management of surface water flow and levels. Acquisition will establish the Conservation Area, as well as provide an important step in recovery of the Wyoming toad.

**Cooperator(s):**

The Conservation Fund; The Nature Conservancy; Audubon; Laramie Rivers Conservation District; Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative; Wyoming Game and Fish Department; and Aquarium and Zoo Association.

**Operations & Maintenance**

<b>Savings/Cost</b>	<b>Start-up</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$5,000	\$5,000

**O&M Description:**

Startup costs include boundary marking. Annual costs include maintenance and law enforcement.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Green River National Wildlife Refuge

**Priority:** 24

**State(s):** KY

**Congressional District(s):** KY-1, KY-2

**Location:**

Henderson County, adjacent to the Ohio River at its confluence with the Green River; approximately 3 miles from Henderson.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	708	\$2,303,834
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	23,292	\$123,477,600

**Project Description:**

The Green River National Wildlife Refuge was established in 2019 to conserve floodplains of the Ohio and Green Rivers, and portions of their surrounding landscapes. The restoration and conservation of bottomland hardwood forest, wetlands, uplands, and agricultural lands will benefit migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, fish and wildlife and will improve water quality and quantity. The Service plans to acquire 24,000 acres of land within a 53,000-acre Conservation Partnership Area through donation and acquisition from willing sellers to create the Refuge. The Refuge will provide public wildlife dependent recreation, including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will begin phased acquisition of a 1,335-acre tract. The tract is within low-lying lands in the floodplain of the Ohio and Green Rivers, which experience regular backwater flooding that provides optimal wintering waterfowl habitat. The property is a mixture of cropland suitable for reforestation to bottomland hardwood forest, and existing bottomland hardwood forest. This acquisition will augment conservation efforts by the State of Kentucky and contribute to building a large multi-agency conservation area for public recreation, such as hunting and fishing.

**Cooperator(s):**

Kentucky Division of Forestry, Kentucky Department of Parks, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Louisville District of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Henderson County Tourism,

Southern Conservation Corporation, Ducks Unlimited, University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.

**Operations & Maintenance**

<b>Savings/Cost</b>	<b>Start-up</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$10,000	\$1,000

**O&M Description:**

Startup costs include boundary posting and signage. Annual costs include maintenance and law enforcement.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Tulare Basin Wildlife Management Area

**Priority:** 25

**State(s):** CA

**Congressional District(s):** CA-22

**Location:**

35 miles northwest of Bakersfield, in the southern San Joaquin Valley. Kings County.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	4,439	\$8,891,554
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	17,383	\$86,804,900

**Project Description:**

The Tulare Basin Wildlife Management Area was established in 2009 with plans for eventual protection of 22,000 acres in an area between Kern and Pixley National Wildlife Refuges. Ninety percent of the land in the WMA will be conserved through the purchase of conservation easements from willing landowners. The Kern/Tulare Basin provides vital wintering and staging areas for northern pintail and other Pacific Flyway waterfowl. Dry upland habitats that are protected in association with wetlands are important to many types of wildlife.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will acquire a 480-acre tract. The acquisition will benefit existing populations of State or Federally listed endangered or threatened species such as San Joaquin kit fox, Tipton kangaroo rat, and blunt-nosed leopard lizard. In addition to protecting upland habitat at the WMA, ownership of upland parcels near the Kern National Wildlife Refuge provides a buffer around wetlands at the Refuge. Acquisitions will also expand public recreational opportunities such as wildlife observation and photography.

**Cooperator(s):**

Tulare Basin Wetlands Association, California Waterfowl Association, California Outdoor Heritage Alliance, and the many groups associated with the Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$5,000	\$2,000

**O&M Description:**

Start-up costs will include boundary sign posting. Annual costs include maintenance and habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2024

**Project / Unit: St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge**

**Priority: 26**

**State(s): FL**

**Congressional District(s): FL-2**

**Location:**

In the Florida Panhandle, 24 miles south of Tallahassee, in Wakulla and Jefferson Counties.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	85,436	\$21,985,732
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	25,791	\$62,258,715

**Project Description:**

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1931 to provide wintering habitat for migratory birds. It encompasses over 80,000 acres spread out between Wakulla, Jefferson, and Taylor Counties, and includes about 43 miles along the Gulf Coast of northwest Florida. The Refuge contains upland pine forest, wetland, hardwood forest, pine plantation, shrub and brush land, and freshwater marsh habitat. The Refuge is within a designated Important Bird Area and a Land Management and Research Demonstration Site for Longleaf Pine Ecosystems. Wildlife includes numerous Federally threatened, endangered, and at-risk species, including frosted flatwoods salamanders, red-cockaded woodpeckers, wood storks, eastern black rails, red knots, piping plovers, Florida manatees, gulf sturgeon, gopher tortoises, Florida pine snakes, spotted turtles, American oystercatchers, Wilson’s plovers, and least terns, and loggerhead, green, Kemp’s ridley, and leatherback sea turtles. The Refuge also has strong ties to a rich cultural past, and is home to the St. Marks Lighthouse, which was built in 1842 (current tower) and is still in use today. Over 17,000 acres are protected under the Wilderness Act of 1964 including a designated Globally Important Bird Area. The Refuge provides public recreational opportunities, including to underserved communities, by offering hiking, hunting, photography, wildlife viewing, environmental education, and interpretation opportunities.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will acquire a 300-acre tract to conserve habitat for Federally listed threatened and endangered species including the red-cockaded woodpecker, wood stork, and frosted flatwoods salamanders. The tract has a historical frosted flatwoods salamander pond and other ephemeral wetlands. The acquisition will mitigate the impacts of sea level rise by allowing for the expansion and migration inland of these species. Acquisition will also benefit Florida black bear and migratory birds. Acquisition will provide public wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, including improving public access to existing Refuge lands. The Service will also acquire several small tracts that connect existing Refuge

lands with local roads, creating a fire break for the Refuge and improving management of wildland and prescribed fires for the benefit of red-cockaded woodpeckers and other species.

**Cooperator(s):**

The Sam Shine Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance, Ducks Unlimited, Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society, The Florida Natural Areas Inventory, St. Marks Refuge Association, Florida Trail Association, Apalachee Audubon Society, Florida Wildlife Federation, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Forest Service, Tall Timbers Research Station, and the National Wildlife Refuge Association.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$3,000	\$11,000

**O&M Description:**

Startup costs include boundary marking. Annual costs include habitat management and restoration, prescribed burning, maintenance, and law enforcement.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge

**Priority:** 27

**State(s):** IA, IL, MN, WI

**Congressional District(s):** IA-1, IA-2; IL-16, IL-17; MN-1; WI-3

**Location:**

261 miles along the Mississippi River from Wabasha, MN, to Rock Island, IL.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	212,216	\$10,682,171
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	19,719	\$24,793,235

**Project Description:**

Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge was established in 1924 as a refuge for fish, wildlife, and plants, and a breeding place for migratory birds. The Refuge encompasses one of the largest blocks of floodplain habitat in the lower 48 states. Bordered by steep wooded bluffs that rise 100 to 600 feet above the river valley, the Mississippi River corridor and Refuge offer scenic beauty and productive fish and wildlife habitat. The Refuge extends 261 river miles from the confluence of the Chippewa River in Wisconsin to near Rock Island, Illinois. The Mississippi River is an important migratory flyway for neotropical migrants and waterbirds. The Refuge is designated as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention and a Globally Important Bird Area. The Refuge provides public access for wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, including canoeing, hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and wildlife photography. Many underserved and culturally diverse communities, including southeast Asian immigrants and the Amish, make extensive use of the Refuge for fishing.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service is working on multiple acquisition projects along the length of the Refuge and will acquire 125 acres in fee title. Priority is given to acquisitions that have railroad access points to the river or are adjacent to existing Refuge lands and State conservation areas so that the Service can restore wildlife habitat connectivity and expand public access for wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, including canoeing, hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and wildlife photography.

**Cooperator(s):**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Wisconsin DNR, Iowa DNR, Illinois DNR, the Friends of the Refuge Headwaters (Winona District), Friends of the Refuge Mississippi River Pools 7 and 8 (La Crosse District), Friends of Pool 9 (McGregor District), Friends of Pool 10 (McGregor District), Stewards of the

Upper Mississippi River Refuge (Savanna District), National Audubon Society, Audubon Minnesota, County Conservation Boards, and local Chambers of Commerce.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$2,000

**O&M Description:**

Startup costs include improvements for public access points and posting of boundary signs. Annual costs include habitat management, such as spraying, mowing, timber stand improvement, and prescribed burns.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge

**Priority:** 28

**State(s):** TX

**Congressional District(s):** TX-15, TX-28, TX-34

**Location:**

South Texas in Starr, Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>\$2,000,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	106,255	\$86,983,504
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	26,005	\$70,439,139

**Project Description:**

The Lower Rio Grande Valley area has lost approximately 95 percent of its native Tamaulipan thornscrub habitat due to agriculture, urban expansion, and industrial development, and 99 percent of the native vegetation in riparian areas has been destroyed. Hoping to connect and protect isolated tracts of habitat, the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1979 with a management priority to protect biodiversity. As a wildlife corridor, the Refuge follows the Rio Grande along the last 275 river miles, connecting isolated tracts of land managed by private landowners, non-profit organizations, the State of Texas, and Laguna Atascosa and Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuges. During migration, birds from the Central and Mississippi Flyways converge in the Valley. Where possible, migrating birds avoid flying too far east (over the Gulf Coast) or too far west (over the desert) and end up funneling through this region. In addition, many birds from South and Central America reach the northernmost point of their range on the Rio Grande with some species literally not migrating any farther north than the river. In addition, the Valley is where four climates (temperate, desert, coastal, and sub-tropical) converge. The 365-day growing season and rich soils of the Rio Grande delta have resulted in over 1,200 plant species within the Valley. This plant diversity attracts and supports a diversity of wildlife, birds, and butterflies that depend on vegetation that can only be found here in the United States. The Refuge supports 18 Federally listed endangered or threatened species, including the ocelot, peregrine falcon, and Kemp’s ridley sea turtle. The Refuge provides public wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, such as wildlife viewing, photography, and hunting.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will begin phased acquisition of a 475-acre tract. The tract consists of coastal salt prairie habitat, which is extremely scarce and currently under threat of development. Typical vegetative species include sea ox-eye daisy, salt flat grass, camphor daisy, seepweed, Salicornia, pickleweed, and prickly pear cactus on lower elevations, and patches of Gulf cordgrass, or sacahuista, on slightly higher

transitional zones. Yucca, huisache, prickly pear cactus, and mesquite would occur in the upland portions of the tract. Acquisition of the property will protect a large block of land for Federally endangered species, such as the northern Aplomado falcon, while providing habitat for native wildlife and migratory bird species. This property contains at least one, and possibly two, northern Aplomado falcon territories. The Refuge currently has limited examples of this type of habitat and acquisition of the property would contribute to endangered species recovery. Acquisition would also buffer the National Park Service's Palo Alto National Historic Site. Acquisition would expand public recreational access, including birding, wildlife observation, hiking, and wildlife photography.

**Cooperator(s):**

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas General Land Office, Texas Department of Transportation, University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy-Texas, Texas Commission for Environmental Quality, Ducks Unlimited, The Peregrine Fund, Coastal Conservation Association-Texas Chapter, The Rio Grande Valley Nature Coalition, and the Partners for Conservation.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$3,000

**O&M Description:**

Startup costs include fencing and boundary posting. Annual costs include maintenance and habitat management.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Middle Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge

**Priority:** 29

**State(s):** IL, MO

**Congressional District(s):** IL-12, MO-8

**Location:**

Situated along the Mississippi River, from St. Louis, MO to Cairo, IL.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	8,216	\$3,042,400
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	5,566	\$10,497,600

**Project Description:**

The Middle Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge was established as an individual refuge in 2000. Initial land acquisition was in response to the great flood of 1993. Refuge lands lie within the uncontrolled portion of the Middle Mississippi River, below the confluence with the Missouri, where river levels are not regulated by the lock and dam system. The Refuge is primarily floodplain hardwood forest, marsh/wetland, and open water. Refuge lands provide access to the floodplain for native fish during high water stages and create a corridor of floodplain forest habitat for migratory birds and resident wildlife. The Refuge was designated as an Important Bird Area in 2008. The Refuge provides public wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, such as hunting and fishing.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service will acquire a 350-acre tract in the Dogtooth Bend area of the Refuge. The acquisition will facilitate natural river floodplain restoration opportunities, which will support species of concern including pallid sturgeon, least tern, and many mussel species. Water levels fluctuate greatly in this open river section of the Mississippi, and frequent flooding occurs. Acquisition allows for restoration to a naturally functioning floodplain system, which increases water quality and water storage during flood events. Acquisition will also expand public recreational opportunities.

**Cooperator(s):**

The Army Corps of Engineers, Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, local municipal entities, States of Missouri and Illinois. The Refuge participates in the Middle Mississippi River Partnership,

which is a collaboration of 22 partner organizations, including Federal and State agencies, universities, and not-for-profit organizations.

**Operations & Maintenance**

<b>Savings/Cost</b>	<b>Start-up</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$8,000	\$2,000

**O&M Description:**

Startup costs include initial restoration and posting of boundary signs. Annual costs include habitat management, law enforcement, and enhancement.

**Agency:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project / Unit:** Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge

**Priority:** 30

**State(s):** OR

**Congressional District(s):** OR-01

**Location:**

North Central Oregon Coast.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost (\$)
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>
<b>Acquired to Date</b>	1,198	\$4,423,902
<b>Remaining to be Acquired</b>	3,769	\$13,917,935

**Project Description:**

Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1991 to protect and enhance habitat for dusky Canada geese (a species of concern) and Aleutian cackling geese (formerly endangered). The Refuge actively engages in pasture management with local dairy farmers to offer prime habitat for thousands of wintering geese. The Refuge protects an array of distinct habitat types including salt marshes, mudflats, labyrinthine tidal creeks, pastures, grasslands, woodlands, freshwater bogs, and forested wetlands. Riverine and estuarine habitats within the Refuge provide essential habitat for the threatened Oregon Coast coho salmon, as well as Chinook salmon, chum salmon, steelhead trout, and coastal cutthroat trout. The Refuge provides public recreational activities such as hiking, canoeing, hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and photography.

**Purpose / Need:**

The Service is negotiating with a willing seller for acquisition of a key tract. Acquisition will allow for tide gate replacement and wet pasture enhancement to expand wintering migratory bird habitat and improve rearing habitat for State and Federally listed Oregon coastal coho salmon.

Once acquired, some portions will become collaboratively farmed pastures, providing economic benefits to local dairy production. Continued acquisition of collaboratively farmed pastures and restoration of diked, poor quality pastures to tidal marsh habitat is key to balancing the preservation of habitat for both

migratory birds and anadromous fish on the Refuge. Acquisitions will enhance public fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities on adjacent Refuge lands.

**Cooperator(s):**

The Nature Conservancy, North Coast Land Trust, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians; Nestucca, Neskowin, and Sand Lake Watersheds Council; Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Savings:</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Estimated O&amp;M Costs:</b>	\$5,000	\$2,000

**O&M Description:**

Startup costs include initial restoration and posting of boundary signs. Annual costs include habitat management (spraying, mowing, etc.), law enforcement, and enhancement.

**LWCF Category: Grants to States**

**Activity: Highlands Conservation Act**

	2022 Actual	2023 Estimate	2024 Request				Change from 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
<b>Grants to States</b>							
<b>Highlands Conservation Act</b>	<b>9,430</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>0</b>
<i>FTE</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>			<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>

All FY 2022 and 2023, and 2024 LWCF funding is subject to a sequestration reduction of -5.7% which by law, is applied during the year of execution uniformly across all programs.

The Highlands Conservation Act (H.R. 1964, 2004; 16 U.S.C. 3901) (HCA) authorizes a grant program to four States (Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania) to acquire land and protect natural resources in the 3.4-million-acre Highlands Region, a biologically diverse landscape distinguished by Appalachian ridges, hills, and plateaus that provides nature-oriented recreational opportunities for millions of people living in and visiting the Northeast.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the lead agency for administering [the HCA Grant Program<sup>1</sup>](#), and works in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, State Conservation Agencies, and conservation organizations.

Since passage of the HCA in 2004, 15,113 acres of land have been protected under the program. Projects support key conservation objectives outlined in the HCA such as protecting high priority water, forest, wildlife, agriculture, recreational, and cultural resources.

Investment in the HCA program supports the goals set forth in the Biden-Harris Administration’s America the Beautiful Initiative as well as the priorities of the Department of Interior and the Service. The HCA grant program is connecting people with nature and the outdoors by conserving land in a region where one in nine Americans live or are within a two-hour drive. The HCA grant program is protecting strategically important natural areas that sustain a diversity of fish and wildlife species. Priority at-risk species benefiting from HCA land conservation include the [bog turtle<sup>2</sup>](#), [northern long-eared bat<sup>3</sup>](#), [brook floater mussel<sup>4</sup>](#), and the [New England cottontail<sup>5</sup>](#). Land conservation in the Highlands Region is increasing climate change resiliency of the landscape and is protecting drinking water resources used by millions of people.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fws.gov/program/highlands-conservation-act-grant>  
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fws.gov/species/bog-turtle-glyptemys-muhlenbergii>  
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fws.gov/species/northern-long-eared-bat-myotis-septentrionalis>  
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.fws.gov/species/brook-floater-alasmidonta-varicosa>  
<sup>5</sup> <https://www.fws.gov/species/new-england-cottontail-sylvilagus-transitionalis>

The following are examples of recent HCA-funded acquisitions from the past year:

In April 2022, The Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection partnered with the Salisbury Association – a local land trust – to protect the 114-acre “Belter Lime Rock” property with a conservation easement. The property adds to an impressive area of permanently conserved land, abutting the 2,200-mile Appalachian Trail corridor and the 10,000-acre Housatonic State Forest, increasing climate resilience of the landscape. The land has high quality wildlife habitats, including meadow, stream, and steep slopes with bedrock exposures and boulders, and is highly visible from State roads and the Appalachian Trail, with easy access from the roadways to hiking trails and lookouts affording outstanding views.



*Belter Lime Rock Conservation Easement in Connecticut - Photo by Harry White*

In September 2022, the Pennsylvania Game Commission partnered with the regional land trust Natural Lands to acquire a critical 158-acre forested parcel to protect important wildlife habitat and expand opportunities for the public to hike, bird watch, hunt, horseback ride, and cross-country ski. The Horse-Shoe trail, an important regional pathway used by residents of Lancaster and Lebanon Counties that stretches 140 miles from Valley Forge National Historical Park to the Appalachian Trail, traverses the parcel. The acquisition was incorporated into Pennsylvania Game Lands #145 which now totals 2,974 acres.



*Project partners explore the new addition to Cranberry Mountain Wildlife Management Area in New York - Photo by Tricia Andriski*

In July 2022, the New York Department of Environmental Conservation partnered with the Westchester Land Trust to add 91 acres, expanding Cranberry Mountain Wildlife Management Area and creating an important east-west corridor of conservation land linking previously conserved natural areas. The parcel also helps protect New York City’s drinking water supply. Nathan Ermer, regional program manager for the NY Department of Environmental Conservation, expects the land to provide new opportunities for New York City residents and others: “Our proximity to the New York metropolitan area means that there are a

lot of New Yorkers and visitors from adjoining States that are looking for places to get outside and enjoy nature. That is something that this area certainly will provide.”

**Justification of 2024 Program Changes**

The 2024 budget request for Highlands is \$10,000,000 and 1 FTE, level with FY 2023.

Cooperative Endangered Species  
Conservation Fund



# Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund

## Appropriations Language

For expenses necessary to carry out section 6 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1535), [\$24,564,000] \$23,702,000, to remain available until expended, to be derived from the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund.

(Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023.)

## Authorizing Statutes

**Endangered Species Act of 1973**, as amended, (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). Prohibits the import, export, or taking of fish and wildlife and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered species; provides for adding species to and removing them from the list of threatened and endangered species, and for preparing and implementing plans for their recovery; provides for interagency cooperation to avoid take of listed species and for issuing permits for otherwise prohibited activities; and implements the provisions of the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna* (CITES). Authorization of Appropriations: Expired September 30, 1992.

**Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965**, as amended (16 U.S.C. 4601). Authorizes appropriations to the Fish and Wildlife Service to acquire land for national wildlife refuges as otherwise authorized by law. Authorization of Appropriations: Expired September 30, 2015.

**Great American Outdoors Act** (54 U.S.C. 2003). Establishes the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund to support deferred maintenance projects on Federal lands; requires deposits equal to 50% of all Federal revenues from the development of oil, gas, coal, or alternative or renewable energy on Federal lands and waters for fiscal years 2021-2025; and makes funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) permanent. The President shall annually report to Congress specified details regarding the allocation of funds to the LWCF. Congress may provide for alternate allocations using specified procedures.

**Appropriation: Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Change from 2023 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Conservation Grants (\$000)		13,000	13,500	0	0	-500	13,000	-500
Conservation Planning Assistance Grants (\$000)		8,362	8,362	0	0	-362	8,000	-362
Species Recovery Land Acquisition (\$000)		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
HCP Land Acquisition Grants to States (\$000)		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Administration (\$000)		2,702	2,702	0	0	0	2,702	0
<b>Total Current Year Appropriated Funds</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>24,064</b>	<b>24,564</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-862</b>	<b>23,702</b>	<b>-862</b>
Land and Water Conservation Fund – Species Recovery Land Acquisition (Mandatory)* (\$000)		10,526	11,162	0	0	+3,000	14,162	+3,000
Land and Water Conservation Fund – HCP Land Acquisition (Mandatory)* (\$000)		20,404	21,638	0	0	+4,362	26,000	+4,362
<b>Total Current Year (CESCF + LWCF)</b>	<b>(\$000)</b>	<b>54,226</b>	<b>57,364</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+6,500</b>	<b>63,864</b>	<b>+6,500</b>
Mandatory – Unavailable Receipts** (\$000)		96,371	100,241	0	0	-5,851	94,390	-5,851
Rescission of Prior Year Budget Authority (\$000)		-945	0	0	0	0	0	0

\* FY 2024 Species Recovery Land Acquisition and HCP Land Acquisition funding is subject to a sequestration reduction of -5.7% which by law, is applied during the year of execution uniformly across all programs.

\*\*Amounts shown reflect an annual deposit of an amount equal to 5 percent of total Federal Aid/Sport Fish and Lacey Act violation collections above \$500,000 into this Special Fund. The Special Fund amounts are not available in the fiscal year in which they are collected but are available for subsequent appropriation to the CESCF.

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Conservation Grants	-500	0
HCP Assistance Grants	-362	0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>-862</b>	<b>0</b>

**FY 2024 LWCF CESCOF Summary Table (\$)**

<b>Budget Authority/ Activity</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>FY 2024 New Budget Authority</b>	<b>40,606,999</b>
FY 2024 Estimated Sequestration Reduction (-5.7%)	-2,314,599
FY 2024 Estimated Pop Up (+5.7% of 2023)	1,869,600
<b>FY 2024 Net Budget Authority</b>	<b>40,162,000</b>

**Program Overview**

The Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF; Section 6 of the ESA), administered by the Service's Ecological Services program, provides grant funding to States and territories for conservation of listed and at-risk species and habitats on non-Federal lands, including habitat acquisition, conservation planning, habitat restoration, status surveys, captive propagation and reintroduction, research, and education. These actions further the Administration's goal for conserving lands and waters by protecting biodiversity, slowing extinction rates and facilitating local and State conservation and restoration efforts in close coordination with private landowners and local communities. These actions contribute to achieving the Biden-Harris Administration's America the Beautiful initiative, a decade-long, locally led and voluntary campaign to conserve, connect and restore 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030. The Department of the Interior partnered with the Departments of Agriculture and Commerce and the White House's Council on Environmental Quality to develop initial recommendations on how to advance an inclusive and collaborative conservation vision. The subsequent preliminary report, *Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful*, recommends a ten-year campaign called "America the Beautiful," to conserve and restore the Nation's lands and waters, which the components of the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund contribute to through land acquisition and conservation planning assistance.

The Service implements the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended. The key purposes of the Act are to provide a means for conserving the ecosystems upon which endangered and threatened (federally listed) species depend and to provide a program for the conservation of such species. The two primary goals are: 1) recovering federally listed species, and 2) preventing the need to list species-at-risk. The Service's approach to achieving these goals is through minimizing or abating threats to the species and through strategic actions to improve the condition of the species and their habitats.

As many listed species depend on habitat found on State and private lands, grant assistance through the CESCF program is crucial to conserving federally listed species. States and territories have been extremely effective in garnering participation by private landowners, Tribes and diverse stakeholders. These funds also provide the flexibility to prioritize equity and environmental justice so that the Nation can address the disproportionate impact of habitat loss and degradation on disadvantaged communities.

Section 6 grants help States and territories address the impacts of climate change by helping build partnerships that achieve meaningful on-the-ground conservation and through leveraging natural climate solutions into project designs. Land acquisition grants address land-based threats by funding land purchases to preserve key habitats. Conservation Planning Assistance grants assist in abating threats by protecting habitat and preventing the decline of sensitive species. The plans and agreements funded through these grants are pro-active landscape-level planning instruments that balance non-Federal land development objectives with species conservation.

In order to receive funds under the CESCF program, States and territories must contribute 25 percent of the estimated costs of approved projects, or 10 percent when two or more States or Territories implement a joint project. The balance of the estimated cost is reimbursed through these grants. To ensure that States and territories are able to effectively carry out endangered species conservation through this program, a State or territory must enter into a cooperative agreement with the Service to receive grants. All 50 States currently have cooperative agreements for animals, and 44 States have cooperative agreements for plants. All but one of the territories have cooperative agreements for both animals and plants.

**Traditional Conservation Grants**

Conservation Grants provide financial assistance to States and territories to implement conservation and monitoring projects for listed, candidate species, and at-risk species. The Service makes a regional allocation of these funds based on the number of species covered under cooperative agreements within each Service region. Each Region then solicits proposals and selects projects based on species and habitat conservation benefits and other factors. States receive Conservation Grants funding to implement recovery actions for listed species, implement conservation measures for candidate species, and perform research and monitoring critical to conservation of at-risk species.

**Conservation Planning Assistance Grants**

The Conservation Planning Assistance (CPA) Grant program provides funding to States to support the development of new habitat conservation plans (HCP), the renewal or amendment of existing HCPs, as well as the development of new safe harbor agreements (SHA) and candidate conservation agreements with assurances (CCAA). Funding may support preparation of environmental review documents that may be needed under the National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Preservation Act. In addition, funding supports the development and planning of activities such as document preparation, public outreach, baseline species surveys, habitat assessments, and inventories. By developing these plans and agreements, local governments and planning jurisdictions incorporate species conservation into local land use plans and obtain regulatory assurances for activities covered under their conservation agreements.

**Recovery Land Acquisition Grants**

Loss of habitat is the primary threat to most listed species. Land acquisition is often the most effective and efficient means of safeguarding habitats essential for recovery of listed species from land use changes that impair or destroy key habitat values. Land acquisition is costly, and neither the Service nor States and territories individually have all the resources necessary to acquire habitats essential for recovery of listed species. Recovery Land Acquisition Grants are matched by States and non-Federal entities to acquire these habitats from willing sellers.

**Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants**

The conservation benefits provided by HCPs can be greatly increased by protecting important habitat areas associated with HCPs. HCP Land Acquisition Grants are used by States and non-Federal entities to acquire habitats from willing sellers and to complement, not replace, the mitigation responsibilities of HCP permittees. States and territories receive grants for land acquisitions associated with approved HCPs because of their authorities and close working relationships with local governments and private landowners.

**Administration**

Federal grant management and administrative oversight are necessary to ensure compliance with program requirements and purposes. The funding requested for Administration allows the Service to carry out these responsibilities

**2024 Program Activities**

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**Traditional Conservation Grants**

The Service published a request for proposals in December 2022 and anticipates making award announcements in the summer of fiscal year 2023. With the requested program funding, the Service expects to make a similar number of awards in FY 2024 as will be funded in FY 2023 (assuming the average grant amount is constant with that of FY 2022).

The Service awarded 226 Traditional Conservation Grants in FY 2022. Each project includes Federal funds provided through the CESCFC program, but, in all cases, funds were leveraged by State, county, city, or private matching funds. Some examples include:

- ✓ Assessing the occurrence of Western and McKay's bumble bees in Southeast Alaska, \$28,010;
- ✓ Enhancing nesting habitat for piping plover at Headlands Dunes State Nature Preserve in Ohio, \$73,244;
- ✓ Breeding season surveys for the yellow-billed cuckoo in Nevada, \$24,304;
- ✓ Fender's blue butterfly habitat expansions and enhancement in Oregon, \$27,650; and
- ✓ Red-cockaded woodpecker recovery on the McCurtain County Wilderness Area in Oklahoma, \$45,872.



*A piping plover walking on the beach. Photo by Gene Nieminen.*

### Conservation Planning Assistance Grants

The Service published a request for proposals in December 2022 and anticipates making award announcements in the summer of fiscal year 2023. With the requested program funding, the Service expects to make a similar number of awards in FY 2024 as will be funded in FY 2023 (assuming the average grant amount is constant with that of FY 2022).

The Service awarded 15 Conservation Planning Assistance Grants in FY 2022. Examples are listed below. Each project includes the Federal funds provided through the CESCOF program, but in all cases these funds were leveraged by State, county, city, or private matching funds. (For more information, please see <https://www.fws.gov/program/cooperative-endangered-species-conservation-fund> ).

- Western Oregon State Forests Habitat Conservation Plan (Tillamook, Lane, Washington, Clatsop, and Coos Counties, Oregon) \$750,000. This grant will support the completion of the Oregon Department of Forestry's Western Oregon State Forests Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The State is working with over 40 stakeholders on this HCP as a means to provide an effective solution to current competing demands on approximately 640,000 acres of the State's forest landscape. Oregon's State Forests are managed to achieve the greatest permanent value for all Oregonians. This mandate directs forestland be managed for social, economic, and environmental benefits to provide both sustainable and predictable revenue from forest products and the long-term conservation of fish and wildlife habitats. The completion of this HCP will ensure that take of northern spotted owls, marbled murrelets, or any other federally listed species is minimized through

negotiated forest management strategies that will provide for protection from habitat modification and disturbance in a manner that meet both State forest management goals and the Service's goals to conserve the ecosystems upon which listed species depend, ultimately contributing to species recovery.

- Kansas Aquatics Safe Harbor Agreement and Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (State-wide) \$312,030. This grant will support the amendment of the Kansas Aquatic Species Conservation Agreement: a Programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement and Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (Agreement) to add species included on the Service's 7-Year listing workplan. The inclusion of these additional species will allow for important conservation and reintroduction efforts for species considered for Federal listing. Grant funding will be used to develop and distribute promotional and informational materials to facilitate enrollment of private and public (non-federal) landowners under the Agreement with the goal of increasing participation and conservation efforts for aquatic species on non-federal land in Kansas.

### Recovery Land Acquisition Grants

The Service published a request for proposals in December 2022 and anticipates making award announcements in the summer of fiscal year 2023. With the requested program funding derived from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Service expects to make two additional awards in FY 2024 as will be funded in FY 2023 (assuming the average grant amount is constant with that of FY 2022).

The Service awarded 9 Recovery Land Acquisition Grants in FY 2022. Examples are listed below. Each project includes the Federal funds provided through the CESCOF program, but in all cases these funds were leveraged by State, county, city, or private matching funds.

(For more information, please see <https://www.fws.gov/program/cooperative-endangered-species-conservation-fund> ).

- Red Hills Salamander Recovery Land Acquisition (Monroe County, Alabama) \$2,567,060. This grant will support the acquisition of 1,728 acres of Red Hills salamander habitat in Monroe County. This project supports the state's ongoing efforts to permanently protect and restore some of the best remaining habitat for the species across its range and will result in over 13,800 contiguous acres of permanently protected habitat for the species.



*Red Hills Salamander on the ground. Photo by CK Dodd, Jr.*

- Wetland Habitat Conservation in Kansas and Nebraska in Support of Whooping Crane and Eastern Black Rail Recovery Goals (Stafford, Rice, Barton, and Cloud Counties, KS & Clay and Hall Counties, NE) \$4,586,640. This award will support the acquisition of over 2,000 acres of habitat in central Kansas and Nebraska to support high-priority recovery actions for whooping crane and Eastern black rail. The protection of shallow, diverse, emergent wetlands in perpetuity abates threats to migration habitat for roosting and foraging whooping cranes and nesting and brood rearing habitat for Eastern black rail.



Whooping crane and chick. Photo taken by Klaus Nigge, USFWS

### **Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants**

The Service published a request for proposals in December 2022 and anticipates making award announcements in the summer of fiscal year 2023. With the requested program funding derived from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Service expects to make two additional awards in FY 2024 as will be funded in FY 2023 (assuming the average grant amount is constant with that of FY 2022).

The Service awarded 10 HCP Land Acquisition Grants in FY 2022. Examples are listed below. Each project includes the Federal funds provided through the CESCOF program, but in all cases these funds were leveraged by State, county, city, or private matching funds.

(Please see <https://www.fws.gov/program/cooperative-endangered-species-conservation-fund> for more information.)

- Pima County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition (Pima County, Arizona) \$365,974. This grant will enable acquisition and permanent protection of 20 acres of undisturbed Sonoran Desert scrub habitat for the benefit of species covered by the Pima County Multiple Species Conservation Plan including the cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl, Tucson shovel-nosed snake, western yellow-billed cuckoo, and Sonoran desert tortoise. Lands targeted

for acquisition are critical in preserving one of the last open corridors linking the Tucson Mountains to the Avra Valley which is essential to ensuring unimpeded movement and genetic exchange for many species, including Arizona's last natural population of desert bighorn sheep.

- Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Land Acquisition (Riverside County, California) \$4,391,156. This grant will enable the acquisition and permanent protection of up to 737 acres of lands that complement, but do not replace, the mitigation commitments of the Western Riverside Multiple Species HCP in Riverside County. The proposed acquisitions are in ecologically significant, high-priority conservation areas that support key populations of ESA-listed species such as the San Jacinto Valley crowscale, spreading navarretia, coastal California gnatcatcher, thread-leaved brodiaea, Stephens' kangaroo rat and western spadefoot toad.

### **Proposed Program Changes**

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The 2024 budget request for Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund is \$23,702,000 and 14 FTE, a program change of -\$862,000 and +0 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Conservation Grants (-\$500,000/ 0 FTE)**—With the requested program funding, the Service expects to make seven less awards in FY 2024 as will be funded in FY 2023 (assuming the average grant amount is constant with that of FY 2022).

**Conservation Planning Assistance Grants (-\$362,000/ 0 FTE)** —With the requested program funding, the Service expects to make one less award in FY 2024 as will be funded in FY 2023 (assuming the average grant amount is constant with that of FY 2022).

# Legacy Restoration Fund: GAOA



# **The National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF)**

## **Appropriations Language**

The National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) account does not require appropriations language because there is permanent authority, established August 4, 2020 (P.L. 116-152), to use the receipts in the account in the fiscal year following their collection.

## **Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders**

Great American Outdoors Act of 2020, now referred to as The Great American Outdoors Act, P.L. 116-152 (GAOA), provided a trust-based vehicle for applying a significant portion of revenues and receipts from energy development on Federal lands and waters to reduce the deferred maintenance (DM) backlog for specific Department of the Interior (Department) Bureaus, as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service. The legislation also authorizes permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at \$900 million per fiscal year.

Projects funded and delivered with GAOA funding fall under the Construction and Deferred Maintenance guidelines. The Service has the legal mandate and responsibility to ensure its inventory of assets, facilities, and infrastructure is safe and adequate to accomplish its conservation mission and that operations are conducted in compliance with applicable regulations. More than 19 laws, statutes, and executive orders govern what the Construction program must do with the funding it receives from Congress. Governing authorities are discussed below.

*Refuge Recreation Act* (16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4). Authorizes development of fish and wildlife areas for recreational use, including land acquisition and facilities construction and management.

*National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act*, as amended (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee). Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to award contracts for the provision of public accommodations of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

*Migratory Bird Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 715-715d, 715e, 715f-715r). Provides for land acquisition, construction, maintenance, development, and administration for migratory bird reservations.

*Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956* (16 U.S.C. 742a-742f). Authorizes the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources, including the acquisition and development of existing facilities.

*Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act*, as amended (42 U.S.C. 9601-9675). Authorizes Federal agencies to conduct cleanup and/or recover costs associated with hazardous materials removal, remediation, cleanup, or containment activities from responsible parties.

*Federal Facilities Compliance Act* (42 U.S.C. 6961). Requires Federal agencies to comply with Federal, State, and local solid and hazardous waste laws in the same manner as any private party.

*Pollution Prevention Act*, (42 U.S.C. 13101, 13101 note, 13102-13109), as amended by P.L. 101-508. Requires pollution that cannot be prevented at the source to be recycled in an environmentally sound manner and disposal as a last resort.

*Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act* (42 U.S.C. 7701 -7706). Establishes an earthquake hazards reduction program.

*National Dam Safety Program Act* (33 U.S.C. 467). Provides for Federal agencies to implement the Federal Guidelines for Dam Safety, which established management practices for dam safety at all Federal agencies.

*National Energy Conservation Policy Act* (42 U.S.C. 8152-8259). Establishes an energy management program in the Federal government and directs Federal agencies to perform energy surveys and implement energy conservation opportunities to reduce consumption of nonrenewable energy resources in buildings, vehicles, equipment, and general operations.

*Energy Policy Act (EPAct)* (P.L. 109-58). Extends previous Congressional direction to Federal facility managers with even greater goals of energy efficiency improvements in existing and new facilities, mandates increased use of renewable energy sources, sustainable building design and construction, metering of all Federal buildings, and procurement of Energy Star equipment. This legislation contains energy efficiency tax credits and new ways to retain energy savings.

*Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA)* (P.L. 110-140). Intends to move the United States toward greater energy independence and security; increase production of clean renewable fuels; protect consumers; increase the efficiency of products, buildings, and vehicles; promote research on and deploy greenhouse gas capture and storage options; and improve the energy performance of the Federal Government.

(16 U.S.C. 695k-695r). Provides for limitations on reduction of areas by diking or other construction in California and Oregon in the case of migratory waterfowl and other refuges, as well as other construction provisions.

(16 U.S.C. 760-760-12). Provides for the construction, equipping, maintenance, and operation of several named fish hatcheries.

(23 U.S.C. 144 and 151). Requires bridges on public highways and roads to be inspected.

## **Executive Orders**

Presidential Memorandum of October 4, 1979, directs all Federal agencies to adopt and implement the Federal Guidelines for Dam Safety as prepared by the Federal Coordinating Council for Science, Engineering, and Technology (Secretary of the Interior Order No. 3048, implements and assigns responsibility for a Department-wide dam safety program in accordance with the President's memorandum).

Executive Order 12088, Federal Compliance with Pollution Control Standards (October 13, 1978). Requires agencies to ensure that facilities comply with applicable pollution control standards; ensure that sufficient funds for environmental compliance are requested in their budgets; and include pollution control projects in an annual pollution abatement budget plan.

Executive Order 13717, Establishing a Federal Earthquake Risk Management Standard (February 2016). Updates performance goals to strengthen the security and resilience of the Nation against earthquakes, to promote public safety, economic strength, and national security. Implementation Guidelines (January 2017) provide Federal agencies with clarifying guidance for implementing Executive Order 13717.

Executive Order 14057, Catalyzing Clean Energy Industries and Jobs through Federal Sustainability (December 2020). This document sets standards and requirements that affect federal projects at the design and construction level around energy efficiency, electrification, and net-zero emissions.

**Appropriation: Great American Outdoors Act – NPLLRF**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change from 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Estimate	
Obligation Authority for Deferred Maintenance Reduction	(\$000)	89,601	95,191	0	0	+0	95,000	0
<b>TOTAL, Great American Outdoors Act</b>	(\$000)	<b>89,601</b>	<b>95,191</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-191</b>	<b>-0</b>	<b>95,000*</b>	<b>-191</b>
	<i>FTE</i>	<b>69</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>0</b>

\*This amount reflects the best available data on the credit due to the FY 2023 Sequestration “Pop-Up” being applied to the FY 2024 NPLLRF appropriation.

<b>FY 2024 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Allocation Summary Table</b>	
<i>(Dollars in Thousands)</i>	
<b>Budget Authority/Activity</b>	<b>Amount</b>
FY 2024 Allocation (estimate)	95,000
FY 2024 Sequestration (estimate)	-5,415
FY2024 Sequestration Pop-Up (FY 2023 Estimate)	5,415
FY 2024 Proposed Projects	95,000
<b>Total Available/Unallocated (estimate)</b>	<b>0</b>

**Program Overview**

The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) is historic legislation that combines a financial commitment to conservation and recreation for future generations with a significant investment in the facilities needed to carry out Interior’s important mission, including the care and maintenance of America’s national treasures. This investment provides an unprecedented opportunity to address the Department of the Interior’s deferred maintenance backlog and restore deteriorating assets. To do so effectively requires investment prioritization and a sound program execution and management strategy.

The Department of the Interior is responsible for administering and implementing GAOA’s National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) program, which is shared with the U.S. Forest Service. For fiscal years 2021 through 2025, Congress authorized up to \$1.9 billion annually to be deposited in the LRF Fund for projects that address deferred maintenance (DM). The annual deposit is equal to 50 percent of energy development revenues from oil, gas, coal, alternative, or renewable energy on Federal land and water credited, covered, or deposited as miscellaneous receipts under Federal law in the preceding fiscal year.

This funding provides an opportunity to strategically address DM backlog projects at FWS sites that are a part of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS). The assets of the NWRS comprise a taxpayer investment of \$48.8 billion dollars in 40,335 assets. Of these assets, approximately 45% of the infrastructure inventory is 40 years old or older and many have identified, but unfunded, DM work orders to address the deficiencies.

The purpose of this GAOA program, as administered through the NWRS has the following goals:

- Retain, restore, and enhance access and outdoor recreation in alignment with current Administration priorities;
- Leverage with Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) funding, maintenance and construction appropriations, grants, and partnerships for maximum impact;
- Strategically focus the funding on Urban Refuges and the top 10% most visited field stations, which support 80% of the public use and have more than one-third of the total DM backlog, to improve access to underrepresented communities;
- Complete 20-30 large projects utilizing all fund sources, including 10 to 20 partially or fully funded by GAOA, and reduce the rate of DM backlog growth from 1.2% to 0.75% annually;
- Complete proactive life-cycle investments to prevent DM, maximizing the return on the American taxpayers' investment;
- Implement a surge workforce of Maintenance Action Teams (MATs) and fellowship programs to provide an in-house delivery and training mechanism for Wage Grade employees and an infrastructure career development employment pipeline for college students and recent graduates.

**Types of Deferred Maintenance Retirement Projects** – All 50 States, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have the option of submitting project proposals for GAOA funding based on regional prioritization and alignment with broader strategic investment initiatives. The following are typical activities that would retire existing Deferred Maintenance needs.

- Rehabilitation or replacement of public use facilities such as boat ramps, access roads, and campgrounds.
- Rehabilitation of levees and water control structures for both resiliency and operational purposes.
- Rehabilitation or replacement of significantly deteriorated buildings and offices.
- Demolition of unused buildings and structures.

This program is specific to the National Wildlife Refuge System and the administrative needs for implementation. Other Bureau Divisions are ineligible for project funding from this source.

**Matching Requirements** – There are no strict matching requirements for correlating funds to be obligated with the GAOA projects.

**Obligation Requirements** – The GAOA funds are not an appropriated fund source and are not subject to time constraints for obligation. The FWS will continue to emphasize the priority of the GAOA program with internal metrics.

## 2022 and 2023 Program Performance

Overall, fiscal year 2022 saw the FWS having made significant progress in funds obligation and construction progress in executing the GAOA program. As of the end of fiscal year 2022, the Service had awarded the primary projects at 10 funded GAOA NWRS locations as well as having begun and completed significant deferred maintenance retirement activities with the Maintenance Action Strikeforce Team members funded from the GAOA legislation.

Examples of accomplishment during the year included the completion of rehabilitation activities on 10 public use roads, 20 public parking areas, and five campgrounds at the Dale Bumpers White River National Wildlife Refuge by internal FWS Maintenance Action Teams. Significant construction progress was also made on the construction of replacement facilities such as at the Bombay Hook NWR in Delaware and the replacement of the Auto Tour Route bridge at Seney NWR in Michigan.

Fiscal Year 2023 program performance saw the preparation and budget submittal of an additional 14 key NWRS locations designated to receive initial GAOA funding, and three facilities designated to receive funding for additional phases of GAOA/LRF work. All projects will address the highest priority Deferred Maintenance needs of the NWRS. The FY 2023 Project List includes the continuation of the MAT Strike Force Team project, and Year 2 funding of the NWRS's Supplemental Conservation Workforce program.

Examples of high priority FY 2023 proposed projects include projects that address water infrastructure in drought-plagued areas as well as the replacement of flooded facilities due to vulnerability issues. For example, the rehabilitation of mission critical refuge habitat water supply and delivery systems at the Bear River MBR in Utah and the San Luis NWR Complex in southern California will enable both of those Refuges to proactively adapt to the waterfowl management needs of their respective Refuges. The replacement of Refuge facilities at the Upper Mississippi NWFR will create a permanent management space at a more resilient location to replace unrepairable flooded office facilities.



Figure 1. Dale Bumpers White River NWR – Example of Roadway Campground Rehabilitation



Figure 2. Bombay Hook NWR – Replacement Multipurpose Building Under Construction



Figure 3: Seney NWR – Replacement Auto Tour Route Bridge

NWRS Wage Grade maintenance professionals are critical to accomplish smaller-scale DM activities. Through the GAOA program, the NWRS will continue to maintain and fund a surge workforce to execute rehabilitation, demolition, and other low-risk construction activities.

For FY 2023 the Service will continue to prioritize Deferred Maintenance retirement projects within the NWRS that are consistent with the *National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) Deferred Maintenance and Transportation Allocation and Strategic Investment Strategy*, Departmental guidance, and Presidential Administration initiatives.



*Figure 4: GAOA MAT Strikeforce Team Members Constructing a Replacement Boardwalk at Eastern Neck NWR*

## **Project List**

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Consistent with Congressional direction, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service submits the following LRF projects as part of the FY 2024 Budget process. Detailed project data sheets will be submitted separately for each identified project. The project lists below have been thoroughly considered and vetted and are considered ready for implementation in FY 2024. The Department will keep Congress informed should the circumstances of a specific project change during the course of the FY 2024 Budget process.

The FY 2024 project list below assumes the full \$1.9 billion allowable for deposit into the Legacy Restoration Fund is realized and best available data on sequestration credits from FY 2023. Because determination of the deposit relies on the amount of qualifying energy revenue collected in the prior year, the actual amount available for FY 2024 projects will not be finalized until the start of FY 2024. Projects listed below are ranked and prioritized. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will select and implement projects based on the prioritized list below until the LRF allocation is exhausted net of the mandatory funding sequester (5.7% of funding). Projects not funded with the FY 2024 allocation may be considered for FY 2025 implementation.

## FY 2024 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service GAOA LRF Project List

Unique ID	Priority	Station or Unit Name	Project/Activity Title	State	Cong. District	Funding Estimate (in \$000)	Estimated DM Addressed (in \$000)
F001	1	National Wildlife Refuges	National Maintenance Action Team, Year 4	Multiple	Multiple	8,000	139,104
F010	2	National Wildlife Refuges	Salary Funding for Supplemental Conservation Workforce, Year 3	Multiple	Multiple	2,000	8,000
F002	3	Wichita Mountains WR	Consolidate and Modernize Public Use Facilities and Improve Recreational Access, Phase III	OK	OK04	2,961	28,918
F033	4	Sherburne NWR	Replacement of the Headquarters & Visitor Center Building	MN	MN08	3,720	3,720
F034	5	Great Swamp NWR	Replacement of the Great Swamp & Great Meadows Headquarters Buildings	NJ	NJ02	3,600	3,600
F035	6	Ridgefield NWR	Replace River S Pump and Infrastructure	WA	WA03	5,500	5,500
F036	7	Swan Lake NWR	Replacement of Office & Retirement of Deferred Maintenance Backlog	MO	MO06	8,607	8,607
F037	8	Crystal River NWR	Replacement of the Three Sisters Spring Bulkhead & Boardwalk	FL	FL11	8,060	8,087
F038	9	Quivira NWR	Rehabilitation of the Great Plains Nature Center & Deferred Maintenance Retirement at Quivira NWR	KS	KS01	11,450	11,400
F039	10	San Luis Valley NWR Complex	Rehabilitation of Water Management Infrastructure & Bunkhouse Replacement	CO	CO03	15,400	15,400
F040	11	Alaska Peninsula/Bec harof NWR	Replacement & Rehabilitation of Refuge Buildings	AK	AK00	7,000	7,800
F041	12	Sacramento NWR Complex	Repair Water Management Capabilities & Infrastructure (Ph. I)	CA	CA03	8,400	8,400
			Program Administration (Indirect Costs)			2,850	
			Contingency Fund			7,452	
<b>Total*</b>						<b>95,000*</b>	<b>248,536</b>

\*Total amount is net of FY 2024 sequestration and previously unavailable (sequestration “pop-up”).

Note: See project data sheets for detailed project descriptions.

Note: Estimated deferred maintenance numbers reflect the maintenance and repair work that will be addressed upon completion of the project, not within the funding year.

# North American Wetlands Conservation Fund



# North American Wetlands Conservation Fund

## Appropriations Language

For expenses necessary to carry out the provisions of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 4401 et seq.), \$50,000,000 to remain available until expended.

(Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023.)

## Authorizing Statutes

**North American Wetlands Conservation Act of 1989**, (16 U.S.C. 4401-4414). Authorizes appropriations to be used to encourage partnerships among public agencies and other interests to protect, enhance, restore, and manage wetland ecosystems and other habitats for migratory birds and other fish and wildlife; to maintain current or improved distributions of migratory bird populations; and to sustain an abundance of waterfowl and other migratory birds consistent with goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and international obligations. Section 4406 of the Act authorizes fines, penalties, and forfeitures from violations of the *Migratory Bird Treaty Act* to be made available for wetlands conservation projects. Section 4407 authorizes interest on excise taxes for hunting equipment deposited for wetlands conservation grants and costs for administering this grant program. Such amounts have been permanently appropriated as provided in Public Law 103-138.

**Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act**, (16 U.S.C. 3951-3956). Establishes the National Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Program within the Sport Fish Restoration Account for projects authorized by the North American Wetlands Conservation Act in coastal States.

**Aquatic Resources Trust Fund**, (26 U.S.C. 9504). Authorizes appropriations from the Sport Fish Restoration Account to carry out the *Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act*.

**Appropriation: North American Wetlands Conservation Fund**  
**Activity: North American Wetlands Conservation Fund**

	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change From 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
<b><u>Appropriations:</u></b>							
North American Wetlands Conservation Fund (\$000)	48,500	50,000	0	0	0	50,000	0
<b><u>Receipts (Mandatory):</u></b>							
Migratory Bird Treaty Act Fines (\$000)	133	1,866	0	0	0	141	0
<b>Total, North American Wetlands Conservation Fund (\$000)</b>	<b>48,633</b>	<b>51,866</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>50,141</b>	<b>0</b>
<i>FTE</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>0</i>

\* The amounts presented in all years include the sequestration in accordance with Sec. 251A of the BBDECA, 2 U.S.C 901a. In addition, the amounts shown include amounts previously sequestered which are now available in accordance with said Act.

**Program Overview**



*Wetland enhancement project at the Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana. Photo credit: Ducks Unlimited, Inc.*

The North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) is considered by many to be the most important piece of legislation and funding mechanism to conserve wetlands in the U.S. today. As the only Federal grant program dedicated to the conservation of wetland habitats for migratory birds, NAWCA has protected more than 31 million acres of wetlands in over 3,200 projects on the ground, engaging over 7,100 partners across all 50 States plus the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Mexico and Canada. There is no doubt that this grant program has significantly benefited waterfowl conservation in many ways and is one of the primary reasons that wetland-dependent bird species are doing better than most other groups of birds.

From the boreal forest of Canada to the mangroves of Mexico, and throughout the United States, North American Wetlands Conservation Act grants have supported collaborative partnerships and projects that protect and restore significant habitat for wetland-dependent birds and other wildlife. These grants also promote flood control, recharge groundwater stores, and improve water quality for local communities; sequester carbon; sustain hunting, fishing, and bird watching by increasing both the quality and quantity of opportunities for outdoor recreation; support the conservation of at-risk birds of conservation concern and the recovery of endangered and threatened species; and help implement the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and other national and international bird conservation plans.

**Investing in Partnerships**

Since its inception, thousands of public-private partnerships have leveraged NAWCA funding to protect and improve the health and integrity of wetland-associated landscapes across North America. NAWCA grants routinely leverage over twice the legally required 1:1 non-Federal matching ratio. Once approved to receive NAWCA grant funding, recipients begin an active partnership with the Service for the duration of the project to safeguard the program’s integrity and ensure success. Consistent and thorough monitoring helps identify areas where partners might need additional technical assistance; enables evaluation of recipient performance and regulatory compliance; and allows the Service to address any errors, irregularities, or issues of noncompliance.

**NAWCA GRANT PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS 1991-2022**

Country	Protected Acres	Enhanced, Restored, and Created Acres	Number of Projects
<b>Canada</b>	15,279,993	3,436,791*	593
<b>Mexico</b>	2,669,481	1,890,913	357
<b>U.S.</b>	5,350,831	4,976,767	2,282
<b>All Countries</b>	23,300,305	10,304,471	3,232

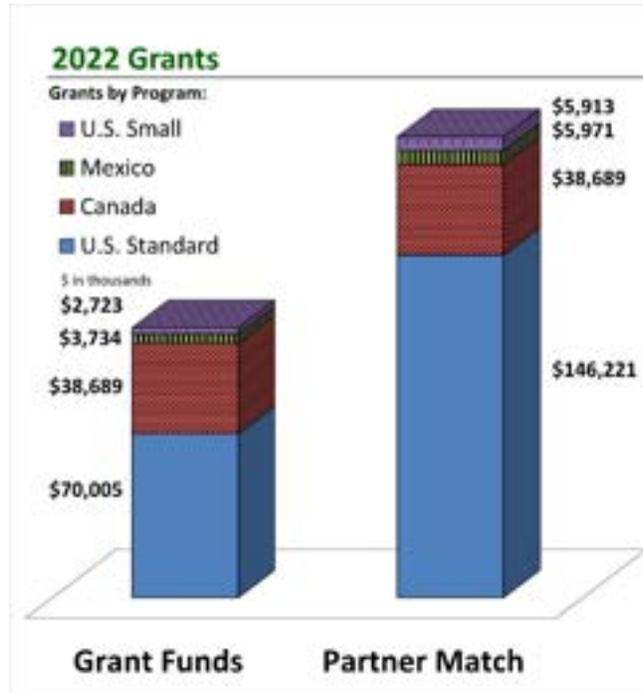
Acreages represent total proposed acres approved for funding in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico from FY 1991 through FY 2022. Some acres are included in both “Protected” and “Enhanced, Restored, and Created” due to multiple activities occurring on the same properties. Additionally, some protection is not perpetual. Therefore, the two categories should not be added to demonstrate total acres affected over the life of the program.

\* This figure includes 413,910 acres of moist soil management completed prior to 1998.

**Supporting Administration and Agency Priorities**

NAWCA is a critical funding source for migratory bird habitat conservation and is an important tool to bring back the 3 billion birds lost over the last half century, but the program’s influence is much broader.

- Habitats conserved by NAWCA projects provide critical stopping points for birds to rest and eat as they migrate and are increasingly important as birds and other wildlife shift their ranges in response to climate change. The protected and restored wetlands in these projects provide important flood protection benefits and ground water recharge, improving community resilience to increased extreme weather events while also sequestering carbon. Conserving wetland habitat also contributes to the America the Beautiful goal of protecting biodiversity and mitigating climate change impacts.



- NAWCA projects contribute to the conservation of at-risk birds of conservation concern and fulfilling the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act mandate to address these birds’ conservation needs.
- NAWCA projects often complement other Service conservation efforts through the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Endangered Species Act, national wildlife refuges, and other programs. The NAWCA grant program also complements and enhances actions of other agencies including the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and Department of Defense.
- NAWCA projects connect both rural and urban communities with nature by funding projects that enrich and increase outdoor recreational opportunities such as hiking, birdwatching, hunting, and fishing.
- NAWCA grants produce local jobs in communities where habitat is conserved—for businesses directly involved in the conservation, as well as for those that benefit from the resulting habitat (e.g., conservation tourism, hospitality, etc.).
- NAWCA projects provide opportunities for local communities and individuals to contribute, as matching partners, in wetland conservation who otherwise might not be able to or likely to participate in broader conservation efforts.

**2024 Program Activities**

The 2024 budget will:

- Process and issue NAWCA grants that support wetland habitat conservation for migratory birds and other ecosystem benefits.

### Proposed Program Changes

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The 2024 budget request for North American Wetlands Conservation Fund is \$50,000,000 and 7 FTE, equal to the 2023 enacted budget.

Mandatory Receipts – Receipts are derived from court-imposed fines for violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and vary greatly from year to year. The FY 2024 estimate is \$141,450 for this account.



*A diverse array of waterfowl occupying a restored wetland in the Central Valley of California.  
Photo credit: California Waterfowl Association*

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# Multinational Species Conservation Fund



# Multinational Species Conservation Fund

## **Appropriations Language**

For expenses necessary to carry out the African Elephant Conservation Act of 1988 (16 U.S.C. 4201 et seq.), the Asian Elephant Conservation Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 4261 et seq.), the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act of 1994 (16 U.S.C. 5301 et seq.), the Great Ape Conservation Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.), and the Marine Turtle Conservation Act of 2004 (16 U.S.C. 6601 et seq.), [\$21,000,000] \$22,000,000, to remain available until expended.

(Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023.)

## **Authorizing Statutes**

***African Elephant Conservation Act*** (16 U.S.C. 4201-4203, 4211-4214, 4221-4225, 4241-4246, 1538). Authorizes funding for approved projects for research, conservation, management, and protection of African elephants and their habitats, and combating ivory trafficking. The Act authorizes prohibitions against the sale, importation, and exportation of illegally obtained ivory derived from African elephants. The Act also authorizes three percent or \$100,000, whichever is greater, to pay necessary administrative expenses. Authorized through September 30, 2023.

***Asian Elephant Conservation Act*** (16 U.S.C. 4261-4266, 1538). Authorizes financial assistance for the conservation and protection of wild Asian elephants and their habitats. The Act also authorizes three percent or \$100,000, whichever is greater, to pay necessary administrative expenses. Authorized through September 30, 2023.

***Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act*** (16 U.S.C. 5301-5306, 1538). Authorizes funding to assist in the conservation of tigers in Asia and rhinoceroses in Asia and Africa, and in combating trafficking of rhinoceros and tiger parts. Prohibits the sale, importation, and exportation of products derived from any species of rhinoceros or tiger. The Act also authorizes three percent or \$100,000, whichever is greater, to pay necessary administrative expenses. Authorized through September 30, 2023.

***Great Ape Conservation Act*** (16 U.S.C. 6301-6305, 1538). Authorizes financial assistance for the conservation of great apes within their ranges in Africa and Asia. The Act also authorizes three percent or \$150,000, whichever is greater, to pay necessary administrative expenses. Authorized through September 30, 2023.

***Marine Turtle Conservation Act*** (16 U.S.C. 6601-6607). Authorizes financial assistance for the conservation of marine turtles, freshwater turtles, tortoises, and the habitats of marine turtles and tortoises in foreign countries and territories of the United States as amended by the *John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation Management and Recreation Act of 2019* (P.L. 116-9), and addresses other threats to the survival of marine turtles, freshwater turtles, and tortoises, including habitat loss, poaching of turtles or their eggs, and wildlife trafficking. The Act also authorizes five percent or \$150,000, whichever is greater, to pay necessary administrative expenses. Authorized through September 30, 2023.

*Multinational Species Conservation Fund Semipostal Stamp Act* (39 U.S.C. 416 note) as amended. Requires the United States Postal Service to issue and sell a Multinational Species Conservation Fund Semipostal Stamp. As of FY 2022, the U.S. Postal Service is required to sell all remaining copies of the Multinational Species Conservation Fund Semipostal Stamp, as authorized under the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-241) and reauthorized in the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Reauthorization Act of 2021 (Public Law 117 – 127). The proceeds from stamp sales are divided equally among the existing Multinational Species Conservation Funds and are used to help fund priority activities supported by those Funds. By law, the proceeds cannot affect or influence the disposition of discretionary appropriations.

**Appropriation: Multinational Species Conservation Fund**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Budget Request	Change From 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
African Elephant Conservation Fund	(\$000)	4,610	4,796	0	0	+200	4,996	+200
Asian Elephant Conservation Fund	(\$000)	2,800	3,017	0	0	+200	3,217	+200
Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund	(\$000)	6,210	6,388	0	0	+200	6,588	+200
Great Ape Conservation Fund	(\$000)	3,600	3,802	0	0	+200	4,002	+200
Marine Turtle Conservation Fund	(\$000)	2,780	2,997	0	0	+200	3,197	+200
<b>Total, Multinational Species Conservation Fund</b>	(\$000)	<b>20,000</b>	<b>21,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+1,000</b>	<b>22,000</b>	<b>+1,000</b>
	<i>FTE</i>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>+0</b>

**Program Mission**

To provide technical and financial assistance to local communities, wildlife authorities, and non-governmental organizations in range countries for on-the-ground conservation work to protect elephants, rhinoceroses, tigers, great apes, marine turtles, and freshwater turtles and tortoises.

**Program Overview**

Elephants, rhinoceroses, tigers, great apes, and marine and freshwater turtles and tortoises are among the world’s most recognized and beloved animals. Yet, these iconic species face severe threats and some even teeter on the brink of extinction due to habitat loss and degradation, climate change, unsustainable collection, poaching, wildlife trafficking, and disease. Key populations of these species are found in countries where these threats are compounded by political instability, expanding human populations, and a lack of funding and capacity for conservation. The health, economic, and security implications of the COVID-19 pandemic are expected to have a strongly negative impact on these at-risk species. Increases in poaching, wildlife subsistence use, and habitat loss brought on during the pandemic occurred alongside significant reductions in tourist and donor revenue have reduced the ability to effectively manage protected areas and wildlife in many parts of the world.

The Multinational Species Conservation Funds (MSCFs) were authorized through five Congressional Acts to provide critical technical and financial assistance to local communities, government agencies, and non-government organizations working to protect and safeguard the future of wildlife. Through this support, the Service assists foreign countries to manage their wildlife populations and attract substantial leveraged funding, while also building considerable good will towards the United States. From 2015 to 2022, the MSCFs provided more than \$92.5 million in appropriated funds through grants and cooperative agreements for on-the-ground conservation, leveraging nearly \$200 million in additional funds. Since their inception, the MSCFs have engaged nearly 600 domestic and foreign partners in over 54 countries. The provision of financial assistance to protect these priority species helps to ensure their survival for the benefit of the

American people and others around the world.

MSCF project selection is highly competitive and enables the Service to provide direct assistance to key wildlife populations and the most urgently needed activities. Priority activities include supporting the effective management of protected areas; monitoring wildlife populations; combating poaching and wildlife trafficking; reducing consumer demand for illegal wildlife products; mitigating human-wildlife conflict; and providing vital infrastructure, training, and equipment to effectively manage protected areas and wildlife populations. Several of the species covered by the MSCFs, including rhinoceroses, tigers, and elephants, are under unprecedented pressure due to habitat loss, poaching, and trafficking. These programs provide essential and consistent support to ensure effective and strategic responses.



*African Elephants in Pendjari National Park, Benin.  
Credit: Matt Luizza/USFWS*

### **African Elephant Conservation Fund**

The African elephant was recently re-classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), with the forest elephant now listed as Critically Endangered and the savanna elephant as Endangered. The African elephant population has declined by approximately 110,000 since 2006, and the continent-wide estimate for the two species combined has been revised downward to 415,000 elephants.

The African Elephant Conservation Fund provides critical support to curb this poaching epidemic; to combat trafficking of ivory, elephant meat, and other illegal elephant products; and to

reduce the demand for these products. In recent years, these funds supported essential frontline protection in elephant habitat in West, Central, East, and Southern Africa; sponsored technological innovations to better detect and intercept ivory in transit and to more reliably and economically identify the geographic origin of confiscated ivory samples; bolstered efforts to reduce human-elephant conflict; and supported the installation of modern management systems for seized ivory in range countries.



*Asian elephant. Credit: Cory Brown/USFWS*

### **Asian Elephant Conservation Fund**

Large herds of elephants once roamed freely throughout Asia's forests and grasslands. Current population estimates of wild Asian elephants hover around 45,000 individuals, but this is a rough estimate, as it is exceedingly difficult to count low density populations of elephants dispersed across large areas and densely forested landscapes. Today's population and distribution is a tiny fraction of historic estimates. Adding to the conservation challenge is that Asian elephants require large ranges; therefore, many populations are transboundary.

The level of cooperation between governments for joint management of shared populations varies

across the continent. Of note is that shrinking habitats and more people throughout Asia mean the interface

between elephants and humans continues to increase. The resulting human-elephant conflict is ranked as the number one problem in elephant conservation by all 13 Asian elephant range state governments. To wit: on average, 700 people and 500 elephants are killed every year. This conflict is exacerbated by habitat loss and fragmentation; linear infrastructure, such as roads and railroads; poaching; and the illegal trade in elephant parts and live animals.

The Asian Elephant Conservation Fund is a key source of global funding for the conservation of Asian elephants and the only one dedicated exclusively to this species. Activities under the Fund address the major threats to wild Asian elephant populations within range countries. Program activities include human-elephant conflict mitigation, protected area management and habitat protection, transboundary conservation, local stewardship and community outreach, population monitoring and applied research, strengthening efforts to combat wildlife trafficking, and development of management plans. Most projects incorporate human-elephant conflict mitigation.

### **Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund**

Rhinoceros poaching represents a significant threat to the species. In South Africa, which is where most African rhinos are found, poaching numbers increased from 13 animals in 2007 to more than 1,000 poached per year between 2013 and 2017. In 2018 and 2019, poaching numbers declined but still approximately two rhinos were killed illegally per day. In 2020, 435 rhinos were poached in South Africa, but this number increased to 451 in 2021. This change, which represents a 13 percent increase from poaching levels in 2020, is likely due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with criminal syndicates seizing opportunities once COVID-19-related lockdowns and curfews were lifted.<sup>1</sup> In addition, over the last three years, African rhinos have faced new security threats as economic support from tourism income has suffered due to COVID-19.



*Sumatran rhinoceros. Credit Meenakshi Nagendran/USFWS*

In Asia, the status of both rhinos and tigers is also bleak. There has been some conservation success with the greater one-horned rhino, which now numbers around 3,700 individuals in South Asia. This small population increase is mainly due to strict protections from Indian and Nepalese wildlife authorities. In addition to the continued threat of poaching, harassment, encroachment, habitat destruction and loss, and conflicts between humans and rhinos still represent major threats to the one-horned rhino. Sumatran rhinos, which live in dense tropical forests across parts of Southeast Asia, now number less than 90 in the wild. Although their survival continues to be under threat from poaching and habitat loss, the decline in their population has slowed down, thanks to the efforts of dedicated anti-poaching teams known as Rhino Protection Units. With approximately 75 individuals left, the Javan rhino is believed to be the rarest large mammal on earth. Today, the species is confined to a single population in Indonesia's Ujung Kulon National Park. The greatest threat to its survival is its small population size, and the inbreeding and loss of genetic diversity that this will bring about. In addition, the Javan rhino is threatened by poaching and habitat destruction and loss, primarily for agriculture and development.

<sup>1</sup> Save the Rhino International, Poaching Statistics: <https://www.savetherhino.org/rhino-info/poaching-stats/>

In the last 100 years, Asia's wild tiger populations have been reduced by 97 percent due to poaching, habitat loss, and human-wildlife conflict. Once abundant throughout Asia, tigers now live in small, fragmented groups; experts estimate there are now fewer than 4,000 tigers in the wild. The known tiger range has declined by 93 percent, and tigers are now estimated to inhabit less than 7 percent of their historic range. All six subspecies of tiger – Sumatran, Amur, Bengal, Indochinese, South China (extinct in the wild), and Malayan tiger – are considered Endangered or Critically Endangered according to the IUCN Red List. In addition to the threat of illegal wildlife trafficking to meet demand for tiger skins, tiger bone wine, and other tiger-derived products, tigers are severely threatened by habitat loss and retaliatory killings due to human-wildlife conflict. Three of the eight recognized subspecies of tigers have already gone extinct.



*Tiger in Tadoba National Park, India.  
Credit: Cory Brown/USFWS*

The Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund, which supports conservation in both Asia and Africa, has been essential in responding to the poaching and trafficking crisis while also addressing other critical threats facing rhinos and tigers. Program activities aim to protect source and expanding rhino and tiger populations; restore animals to their original habitat; combat trafficking of tiger and rhino products, and live animals; decrease human-wildlife conflict with these species; support protected area management; strengthen local conservation stewardship; and improve transboundary conservation.



*Mountain gorilla. Credit: Meenakshi Nagendran/USFWS*

### **Great Ape Conservation Fund**

Apes are highly intelligent beings and humans' closest living relatives. But they are also under extreme threat. Apes' slow rate of reproduction makes their populations less resilient to losses, and all are at risk of extinction. Great apes are threatened by many factors, including destruction of their forest habitats in Africa and Asia, hunting for bushmeat and the illegal pet trade, and disease. The Great Ape Conservation Fund supports efforts to conserve all apes, including chimpanzees, gorillas, and bonobos in Africa, and orangutans and gibbons in Asia.

Orangutans are found only on two islands in Indonesia and Malaysia, with approximately 55,400 left in the wild and all three subspecies are Critically Endangered. In addition to orangutans, the Great Ape Conservation Fund also protects 19 species of gibbons across 10 range countries in Asia: four species are Critically Endangered and the rest are Endangered. The biggest threat to Asian apes is habitat loss, primarily from logging and oil palm plantations. Other threats include poaching, the illegal pet trade, and disease.

The Fund supports combating poaching and trafficking in great apes, enhancing habitat protection, supporting effective management of protected areas, strengthening ape range countries' capacity to address conservation threats, and creating long-term buy-in and stewardship for great ape conservation among

local communities.



*Green sea turtle in Dry Tortugas National Park.  
Credit Ed Lyman/NOAA*

### Marine Turtle Conservation Fund

The Marine Turtle Conservation Fund annually supports about 50 marine turtle conservation projects in over 30 countries, conserving the most important and Critically Endangered populations in the world. The Fund supports initiatives that promote marine turtle protection and recovery by protecting critical nesting habitat and addressing key threats to the survival of sea turtles like poaching, trafficking, fisheries bycatch, marine debris, and the impacts of a changing climate. Many projects work with local fishing and nesting beach communities to promote habitat and species conservation. One of the Fund's strengths is the consistent long-term funding it provides for

conservation and technical support while promoting constructive engagement with national governments for marine turtle protection. Currently this Fund supports over 40 projects in nearly 30 countries. With the amendment and reauthorization of the Marine Turtle Conservation Act by the *John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation Management and Recreation Act of 2019*, in FY 2021 the Service expanded its conservation support to include not only marine turtles, but also Endangered freshwater turtles and tortoises. To-date, the Service has issued eleven new projects to partners to protect freshwater turtles and tortoises through this Fund.

### Multinational Species Conservation Fund Stamp

The Save Vanishing Species semipostal stamp was issued in September 2011 to raise public awareness and garner support for critically important global conservation work. This Multinational Species Conservation Fund semipostal stamp provides the public an easy and inexpensive way to help contribute to the conservation of tigers, rhinos, elephants, great apes, marine turtles, and now also freshwater turtles and tortoises around the world. Featuring the image of an Amur tiger cub, the stamp sells just slightly above the cost of first-class postage with proceeds directed to the five Multinational Species Conservation Funds. Since issuance, sales of this stamp have raised nearly \$7 million, supporting 135 projects in 37 countries and contributing directly to the conservation



of some of the most beloved endangered species on earth. The Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Reauthorization Act, which was signed into law in 2022, ensures the U.S. Postal Service will continue selling the forty million remaining Tiger Stamps, enabling the public to continue voluntarily contributing further critical funds to international wildlife conservation.

## ***Project Spotlights: Working with Local Communities Towards Species Recovery***

### ***Conserving Leatherbacks in Indonesia***



*Pacific leatherback hatchling*  
Credit: Nicholas Pilcher

Since 2018, the Marine Turtle Conservation Fund has helped conserve the largest nesting assemblage of the Western Pacific leatherback turtle population in Papua Barat Province, Indonesia. This population had declined by over 80 percent since the 1980s, largely due to extensive turtle and egg poaching and bycatch in fishing gear. Marine Turtle Conservation Fund support has enabled a multi-faceted approach to engage local communities and authorities to conserve leatherbacks, including nest monitoring and protection and threat reduction. The project also fosters long-term community engagement through cultural outreach and alternative livelihood programs. With over 1,000 nests recorded in 2021, the population is making steps to recovery in good part due to this community-based approach to protect leatherbacks on nesting beaches.

### ***Protecting Loggerheads from “Ghost FADs”***



*Loggerhead turtle in the Mediterranean*  
Credit: Alnitak

Fish aggregating devices, called FADs, are floating devices made by fishers to attract and aggregate fish that are drawn to items floating in the ocean, like seaweed or driftwood. These FADs result in more bycatch than other fishing methods and lost FADs become “ghost gear,” abandoned fishing debris that can entangle marine wildlife, like sea turtles. Support from the Marine Turtle Conservation Fund is enabling the networks on a basin-wide level in the Spanish Mediterranean to address sea turtle bycatch due to “ghost FADs” and other types of drifting abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear. This project works with local fishers (some since the late 1980s), actively involving them in the loggerhead sea turtle conservation as well as ghost gear retrieval, and to develop technology to reduce the impact of bycatch. This network is helping collect data and building evidence of this threat by reporting ghost gear and illegal fishing, while ensuring correct turtle rescue protocols are widely known by fishers in the Mediterranean.

*Species Funds Prevent and Reduce Zoonotic Disease*

*Researchers with the Wildlife Conservation Society supported by the Great Ape Conservation Fund sample a carcass while monitoring for Ebola. Photo: Wildlife Conservation Society.*

The MSCFs play a critical role in supporting intact, resilient ecosystems that buffer both humans and wildlife from the spillover and spread of zoonotic disease. Grants support project partners working on the ground in Africa, Eurasia, and Latin America to implement conservation actions that also reduce disease transmission. These include maintaining healthy wildlife populations and connected habitats, reducing the unsustainable commercial bushmeat trade, and carrying out research and monitoring to better understand and mitigate the spread of emerging diseases. For example, in FY 2021, the Great Ape Conservation Fund supported three health-related projects that are advancing disease investigation, monitoring, and mitigation in African apes by (1) studying the ecology and distribution of an emerging and potentially zoonotic pathogen causing a fatal disease in chimpanzees in Sierra Leone; (2) assessing parasites associated with a fatal syndrome affecting mountain gorillas and eastern chimpanzees in Uganda; and (3) screening captive Grauer's gorillas for disease in order to identify individuals suitable for reintroduction to the wild in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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## 2024 Program Activities

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The 2024 budget will:

- Support the Service's work with partners around the world to improve the conservation of elephants; rhinoceroses; tigers; great apes; and marine and freshwater turtles and tortoises and their habitats through technical and financial assistance programs.
- Work with grantees to support continuation of projects in the face of unexpected challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Support healthy wildlife populations and habitats, which in turn support healthy human communities, by protecting healthy, resilient ecosystems that are less vulnerable to disease outbreaks and potential spillover to people and livestock.
- Protect intact habitats and protected areas that are not only key wildlife strongholds but also serve the critical function of staving off the negative impacts of climate change at both the local and global scale by conserving vital ecosystem services and some of the world's most valuable carbon sinks.
- Invest in protected areas and landscapes where local communities and stakeholders are vested, engaged, and benefit from protection status.
- Support capacity to effectively protect wildlife and their habitat through the development of effective governance systems and responsible enforcement of the law across the full chain of illegal take.

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## Proposed Program Changes

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The 2024 budget request for the Multinational Species Conservation Fund is \$22,000,000 and 5 FTE, a net program change of +\$1,000,000 and +0 FTE from the 2023 enacted budget.

**African Elephant Conservation Fund (+\$200,000)**— Threats to African elephants continue to rise, and with it, the need for assistance to on-the-ground conservation efforts in range countries. With the funding increase, the African Elephant Conservation Fund will be able to provide additional support to priority actions, such as enhancing protection of at-risk populations, decreasing human-elephant conflict, improving habitat conservation and management, and improving the evidence base for key conservation interventions.

**Asian Elephant Conservation Fund (+\$200,000)**— The Asian Elephant Conservation Fund continues to support projects aimed at reducing threats to wild Asian elephants in their range countries. Needs to reduce the most pressing threats continue to outpace available resources, and therefore the program prioritizes conservation actions with a high likelihood of long-term benefit. Increased funding will enable the program to fund additional projects to mitigate for human-elephant conflict by working with the communities at the frontlines of the conflict. Funding for additional projects to address conflict will help to reduce the death toll: on average, 700 people and 500 elephants are killed each year as a result of human-elephant conflict.

**Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund (+\$200,000)**— Threats to rhinoceroses and tigers have continued to increase through their respective ranges, with pressure from poaching and trafficking, habitat loss, and human-wildlife conflict all rising. This funding increase will support priority on-the-ground conservation actions in range countries for these species, including activities that secure key populations in their home range, reduce trafficking of these species, decrease human-wildlife conflict, support protected area management, and strengthen conservation activities with local communities.

**Great Ape Conservation Fund (+\$200,000)**— Ape populations in Africa and Asia have faced persistent and new threats in the past year, with continued habitat loss, reduced support for conservation activities

with the loss of tourism revenue, and increased poaching and trafficking. The need for financial support to key populations in range countries continues to outpace available financial support. With the increased funds, the program will support high priority on-the-ground conservation activities in range countries, including the conservation and management of key protected areas, strengthening local capacity to advance conservation stewardship, applied research on the impacts of disease dynamics, including coronaviruses, and bridging gaps in conservation evidence.

**Marine Turtle Conservation Fund (+\$200,000)**— Turtles are one of the most imperiled taxa, facing many threats including habitat loss, climate change, poaching and trafficking, and the illegal pet trade. With the expansion of the Marine Turtle Conservation Fund to now include tortoises and freshwater turtles, the increased funding will enable much needed support for essential on-the-ground conservation efforts across the globe, including securing nesting beaches, building local capacity for conservation stewardship, reducing the illegal trade for live animals as well as parts and products, and strategic investments in conservation interventions with strong evidence of success.

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# Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation



# Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund

## **Appropriations Language**

For expenses necessary to carry out the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 6101 et seq.), [\$5,100,000] *\$9,910,000*, to remain available until expended.

(Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023.)

## **Authorizing Statute**

*Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Improvement Act of 2006*, (16 U.S.C. 6101-6109). For expenses necessary to carry out the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Improvement Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 6101 et seq.). Authorizes a competitive grants program for the conservation of Neotropical migratory birds in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

**Appropriation: Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund**

Program Element		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change From 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund	(\$000)	5,000	5,100	0	0	+4,810	9,910	+4,810
	FTE	1	1	0	0	+0	1	+0

**Program Mission**

The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA or the Act) program provides matching grants to partners throughout the Western Hemisphere to promote the conservation of neotropical migratory birds in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Neotropical migratory birds, as defined by the Act, are birds that spend their winters in Latin America and the Caribbean and breed in Canada and the United States.

**Program Overview**

The impacts of NMBCA grant program are internationally renowned. Since the first projects were funded in 2002, 685 grants have been awarded, totaling over \$84 million and leveraging over \$326 million in matching contributions. These projects benefit almost all 386 bird species that breed in the continental United States or Canada and spend the winter in Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, or South America. For many of these species, addressing threats in their wintering areas outside of the United States are often the most important conservation actions to address population declines. These grants stimulate intercontinental bird conservation initiatives by funding important habitat protection efforts, research and monitoring, and outreach and education programs, which help maintain the ecological and economic balance of birds throughout the Americas.

**2022 Grants**

Match Ratio: 3.5 to 1  
 Projects: 28  
 Countries/Territories: 18

Partner Match: \$16,816,059  
 Grant Funds: \$4,861,730



By law, at least 75 percent of the NMBCA funds available each year must go to projects in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada, with the remaining funds available for projects in the United States. In Latin America and the Caribbean, where resources for migratory bird conservation are scarce, NMBCA funds act as a critical catalyst by providing crucial resources for partners working to conserve bird species on their migrating and wintering grounds. NMBCA grants require a partner to match funds. NMBCA grants are highly competitive, with demand for projects greatly exceeding available funds. In fiscal year 2022 alone, applicants requested nearly \$9 million in funding for NMBCA projects.

**Supporting Administration and Agency Priorities**

The NMBCA grant program is an important tool to bring back the 3 billion birds lost over the last half century and supports the Administration’s and Department’s priorities, as well as international initiatives to improve resilience to climate change, engage people in conservation, and benefit under-resourced communities and economies.

- NMBCA projects will contribute to the Administration’s America the Beautiful initiative by focusing

one-quarter of its funding to conserving habitat within the U.S.; the remaining 75 percent of NMBCA funding will contribute to global bird population targets. Additionally, selection criteria will favor proposals that include climate change components (e.g., building resiliency and adaptive management; conserving or restoring habitat that provides connectivity or refugia).

- Working in partnership and energizing local, on-the-ground conservation efforts are cornerstones of NMBCA projects. This investment builds conservation capacity in local organizations, fosters international goodwill toward the United States, and connects diverse communities and cultures to birds and nature wherever they live.
- Migratory birds conserved under NMBCA generate revenue and jobs for industry and local economies. In 2016, 45 million Americans considered themselves to be bird watchers, and collectively spent billions of dollars on equipment, supplies, and travel related to this activity. NMBCA projects demonstrate that conservation investments abroad directly benefit Americans at home.

**NMBCA Project Highlights**

The NMBCA program focuses grant funding on high priority Neotropical migratory bird species, the priority actions identified by broader bird conservation efforts, and continues to be a catalyst for conservation, supporting organizations working to address threats in areas important to migratory birds. NMBCA grants support a full range of conservation activities needed to protect Neotropical migratory bird populations.

Recent year examples of completed NMBCA projects include:

*Restoring Habitat for the Conservation of Migratory Hummingbirds*

Fires affect the diversity and density of flowers but not enough is known about the effects of forest fires in Mexico, and how they are changing, even worsening, with climate change. This project investigated the impact of fire and post-fire habitat restoration on nectar sources for migratory hummingbirds. The results of the project led to improved fire management in the Sierra de Manantlan Biosphere Reserve in Mexico, and provided recommendations to land managers about the use of fire as a management tool for hummingbirds. Partners restored nearly 2,000 acres in the Biosphere Reserve and provided nectar-producing plants that migratory hummingbirds need.



*Project partners monitoring prescribed fire in the Sierra de Manantlan Biosphere Reserve in Mexico. Photo credit: Environment for the Americas*



*Migratory Bird Conservation Via Shade Crop Farming*

*Native tree nursery. Photo Credit: Provita*

This was a follow-up project from a successful 2017 NMBCA grant. In this phase, partners scaled up their organic and Bird-Friendly certification to double their total impact, to an additional 500 acres of shade crop farms (nearly 1,000 acres total) in a megadiverse region of the Venezuelan Andes. This location is a corridor between two national parks where deforestation risk is exceedingly high. Partners strategically selected sites to conduct farmer-led tree planting to reduce the risk of deforestation at higher altitudes and support conservation of more than 3,400 acres of crucial habitat for many species of migratory and resident birds. The project promoted preservation of both natural and cultural heritage, bolstered sustainable livelihoods, and introduced elementary school children to the benefits of protecting large forests for both birds and people through the Smithsonian's longstanding "Bridging the Americas" curriculum.



*Implementation of the school education program.*

*Photo credit: Provita*

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**2024 Program Activities**

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The 2024 budget will:

- Process and issue NMBCA grants that support the conservation of Neotropical migratory birds in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

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**Proposed Program Changes**

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The 2024 budget request for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund is \$9,910,000 and 1 FTE, a net program change of +\$4,810,000 and +0 FTE from the 2023 enacted budget.

**Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (+\$4,810,000/ +0 FTE)** – On average, \$1 million of NMBCA grant dollars leverages at least a 3-to-1 ratio of matching contributions, supports 5-7 projects, and improves 150,000 acres of habitat. The proposed funding increase would likely generate nearly \$14 million in matching funds and result in 24-33 additional projects throughout the Western Hemisphere that will benefit more than 700,000 acres of habitat that migratory birds depend upon for their survival.

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# State and Tribal Wildlife Grants



# State and Tribal Wildlife Grant Program

## ***Appropriations Language***

For wildlife conservation grants to States and to the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the United States Virgin Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, and Indian tribes under the provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, for the development and implementation of programs for the benefit of wildlife and their habitat, including species that are not hunted or fished, [\$73,812,000]\$76,612,000, to remain available until expended: Provided, That of the amount provided herein, [\$6,200,000]\$9,000,000 is for a competitive grant program for Indian tribes not subject to the remaining provisions of this appropriation: Provided further, That \$7,612,000 is for a competitive grant program to implement approved plans for States, territories, and other jurisdictions and at the discretion of affected States, the regional Associations of fish and wildlife agencies, not subject to the remaining provisions of this appropriation: Provided further, That the Secretary shall, after deducting [\$13,812,000]\$16,612,000 and administrative expenses, apportion the amount provided herein in the following manner: (1) to the District of Columbia and to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, each a sum equal to not more than one-half of 1 percent thereof; and (2) to Guam, American Samoa, the United States Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, each a sum equal to not more than one-fourth of 1 percent thereof: Provided further, That the Secretary of the Interior shall apportion the remaining amount in the following manner: (1) one-third of which is based on the ratio to which the land area of such State bears to the total land area of all such States; and (2) two-thirds of which is based on the ratio to which the population of such State bears to the total population of all such States: Provided further, That the amounts apportioned under this paragraph shall be adjusted equitably so that no State shall be apportioned a sum which is less than 1 percent of the amount available for apportionment under this paragraph for any fiscal year or more than 5 percent of such amount: Provided further, That the Federal share of planning grants shall not exceed 75 percent of the total costs of such projects and the Federal share of implementation grants shall not exceed 65 percent of the total costs of such projects: Provided further, That the non-Federal share of such projects may not be derived from Federal grant programs: Provided further, That any amount apportioned in [2023]2024 to any State, territory, or other jurisdiction that remains unobligated as of September 30, [2024]2025, shall be reapportioned, together with funds appropriated in [2025]2026, in the manner provided herein.

*(Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023.)*

## **Authorizing Statutes**

***Endangered Species Act (ESA)*** (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544). Prohibits the import, export, or taking of fish and wildlife and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered species; provides for adding species to or removing them from the list of threatened and endangered species, and for preparing and implementing plans for their recovery; provides for interagency cooperation to avoid take of listed species and for issuing permits for otherwise prohibited activities; provides for cooperation with States, including authorization of financial assistance; and implements the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES).

*Fish and Wildlife Act* (16 U.S.C. 742(a)-742j). Establishes a comprehensive national fish and wildlife policy and authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to take steps required for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fisheries resources and wildlife resources through research, acquisition of refuge lands, development of existing facilities, and other means.

*Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act* (16 U.S.C. 661-666(e)). The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to provide assistance to, and cooperate with, Federal, State, and public or private agencies and organizations in the development, protection, rearing, and stocking of all species of wildlife, resources thereof, and their habitats, in controlling losses of the same from disease or other causes, in minimizing damages from overabundant species, and in providing public shooting and fishing areas, including easements across public lands for access thereto.

**Appropriation: State and Tribal Wildlife Grants**

		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Change From 2023 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
State Wildlife Grants (Formula)	(\$000)	59,250	60,000	0	0	0	60,000	0
State Wildlife Grants (Competitive)	(\$000)	7,362	7,612	0	0	0	7,612	0
Tribal Wildlife Grants	(\$000)	6,000	6,200	0	0	+2,800	9,000	+2,800
<b>Total, State and Tribal Wildlife Grants</b>	(\$000)	<b>72,612</b>	<b>73,812</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+2,800</b>	<b>76,612</b>	<b>+2,800</b>
	FTE	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>+0</b>

**Summary of 2024 Program Changes for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants**

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Tribal Wildlife Grants	+2,800	+0
<b>Program Changes</b>	<b>+2,800</b>	<b>+0</b>

**Program Overview**

The State and Tribal Wildlife Grant (STWG) Program provides Federal grant funds to States, the District of Columbia, Commonwealths, and Territories (States), and to federally recognized Tribes, to develop and implement programs for the benefit of fish and wildlife and their habitats. The State Wildlife Grant (SWG) Program’s State apportionment formula and the Tribal Wildlife Grants (TWG) Program were first established in the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for FY 2002 (Public Law 107-63). Since then, the SWG Program has achieved notable results in helping States prevent new Federal species listings and in contributing to de-listing or down-listing of federally threatened or endangered species. The TWG Program has likewise strengthened Tribal natural resources agencies, helping them conserve and protect species of cultural and traditional importance while building institutional capacity and supporting Tribal sovereignty.

The two Programs support the Administration’s priorities by improving State and Tribal climate change adaptation and increasing resilience through fish and wildlife research, habitat restoration, land acquisition, and related actions. Many of the projects conducted under the SWG and TWG Programs directly or indirectly support *Executive Order 14008: Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*. Program activities support land conservation and biodiversity efforts, contributing to the Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful (30x30) initiative. Both are covered Programs under the Administration’s Justice40 initiative, furthering the Administration’s equity, diversity, and inclusion goals by delivering needed resources to underserved communities.

**Table 1.** Sample of at-risk species conserved with SWG Program funding that were later found Not Warranted for Federal listing or were federally de-listed due to recovery or down-listed (from endangered to threatened) between 2015 and 2022. For more information, see the State and Tribal Wildlife Grant Programs 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Report ([https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/2616/0087/6829/STWG\\_2020\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/2616/0087/6829/STWG_2020_Report_Final.pdf)).

SPECIES	STATE(S)	STATUS	YEAR	REPORT PAGE
Arkansas darter	AR, CO, KS, OK	Not warranted	2016	157
Louisiana black bear	LA	De-listed - recovery	2016	59
Fisher – N. Rocky Mtn. DPS	ID, other western states	Not warranted	2017	137
Boreal toad	UT, CO	Not warranted	2017	148
Brook floater	MA, ME, NH, NC, NY, VA	Not warranted	2019	9
Yellow-banded bumble bee	ME, other northeastern states	Not warranted	2019	19
Kirtland’s warbler	MI, MN	De-listed - recovery	2019	97
American burying beetle	AR, KS, MA, MO, NE, OH, OK, RI, SD, TX	Down-listed	2020	n/a
Least tern	AR, CO, IL, IN, IO, KS, KY, LA, MS, MO, MT, NE, NM, ND, OK, SD, TN, TX	De-listed – recovery	2021	n/a
Sonoran Desert tortoise	AZ	Not warranted	2022	n/a
Roundtail chub – Lower Colorado River DPS	AZ, NM	Not warranted	2022	n/a
Snail darter	GA	De-listed – recovery	2022	n/a
Gopher tortoise – Eastern DPS	GA	Not warranted	2022	57

### The State Wildlife Grant Program

The State Wildlife Grant (SWG) Program, including the formula and competitive programs, is the primary Federal funding source for States seeking to implement proactive conservation actions that target America’s most imperiled wildlife species. The SWG Program is unique in that it helps to conserve our Nation’s wildlife heritage before species decline to levels that require listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). It is also unique in its foundation of partnership with State fish and wildlife agencies, which are responsible for selecting and adding “species of greatest conservation need” to their Wildlife Action Plans (Plans). Every State regularly updates their Plan with the best, most current scientific information in order to prioritize conservation action for the greatest possible impact.

When a State fish and wildlife agency identifies and adds new species to their Plan, the agency is eligible to receive SWG Program funding to conserve and recover them. Through preventative measures such as captive rearing and release and habitat restoration, the SWG Program helps States and the Service avert new Federal listings under the ESA, often by focusing resources on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s National Listing Workplan species and species recently proposed for Federal listing. Many States also choose to dedicate SWG Program funds to the recovery of Federal or State-listed threatened or endangered species.

The SWG Program leverages additional matching resources provided by State fish and wildlife agencies and their many conservation partners. Working with interested stakeholders, these recipient agencies translate State-identified conservation needs into practical actions and on-the-ground results. The SWG Program has played a crucial and indispensable role in reducing or preventing Federal listings of species such as the Arkansas darter, Kirtland’s warbler, least tern, and many others.

Recent SWG Program investments include:



*The Taylor's Checkerspot butterfly is endangered throughout its known range in Oregon and Washington. Credit: USFWS*

Partnering states are using SWG Program funds to focus on conservation of sensitive species in the Northwest, including California, Oregon, and Washington. Following a habitat-based approach, these states seek to substantially improve the population status of identified species of greatest conservation need associated with prairie, grassland, and oak-woodlands habitats. By managing and restoring up to 395 acres, the partners will contribute to the recovery of the federally endangered Taylor's checkerspot butterfly and help ensure that populations of the Oregon vesper sparrow – currently under review for Federal listing – are maintained.

For many years, SWG Program funding has supported a wide variety of conservation actions for lake sturgeon populations in the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River. The species, which is known as the oldest and largest native species in the Great Lakes, has experienced significant declines for decades due to overfishing and water quality and habitat degradation. Among other states, Michigan and New York have conducted planning and coordination with partners, research and monitoring, and restoration activities. Continued conservation actions for the species will ensure steady recovery of this unique fish and help reduce the need for future listing under the ESA.



*Fossil records suggest the Lake Sturgeon has existed for at least 150 million years. Credit: USFWS*



*Tracking species such as the Golden-winged warbler helps identify migration routes and key areas for conservation. Credit: USFWS*

Alabama, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Vermont are using cutting-edge technology to inform and enhance the conservation of migratory wildlife, with support from the SWG Program. The Motus Wildlife Tracking System uses a series of telemetry receiver stations to track species movements across large portions of the central and eastern United States. Recently targeted species include the federally threatened bog turtle, the federally endangered gray bat, and the golden-winged warbler, a species currently under review for Federal listing.

**The Tribal Wildlife Grant Program**

The Tribal Wildlife Grants (TWG) Program supports federally-recognized Tribes in the development and implementation of conservation programs for the benefit of wildlife and their habitats, including species of Tribal cultural or traditional importance. By helping reduce threats to populations of fish, birds, mammals, invertebrates, and other species, the TWG Program directly benefits many Tribes whose members depend on such species for subsistence, cultural uses, and livelihoods. Tribes use certain species as traditional food sources, and species of cultural importance are a necessary component of Tribal sovereignty. Recipient

Tribes may also voluntarily dedicate TWG Program funds to conservation efforts that help protect and recover ESA-listed threatened and endangered species.

Using a multi-partner approach that often involves inter-Tribal organizations, State and Federal agencies, and volunteers, Tribes often use TWG Program funds as seed money to launch key programs, facilities, and partnerships that continue to deliver results. TWG Program funds also are used to develop the capacity of Tribal natural resources agencies to address species conservation.

Recent TWG Program investments include:



*Tiana Williams-Claussen, Director of the Yurok Tribe Wildlife Department, restrains a California Condor so that an Oregon Zoo veterinarian can perform a health assessment in preparation of release to the wild. Credit: Chris West, Senior Biologist*

**California Condor Recovery** - Prey-go-neesh (California Condor) once lived among the giant trees and pristine rivers in the Greater Yurok Ancestral Region of northern California. By the mid-20th century, Condor populations had dropped dramatically, and by 1967 the California Condor was listed as federally endangered. Today, the Yurok Tribe is combining funding from the Tribal Wildlife Grant Program with the Tribe's resources and support from other partners to implement three key actions contributing to Condor recovery. Tribal specialists and partners conducted outreach to hunters to provide education on reducing lead ammunition when hunting in northern California. The Tribe also used Tribal Wildlife Grant Program funds and resources from

their many partners to design and build a Condor management facility to protect and treat them for chronic lead exposure. Finally, the Tribe developed a plan for reintroducing California Condors into the Greater Yurok Ancestral Region and Redwood National Park. Reintroductions require close coordination with federal, state, and non-governmental partners to jointly address permitting, infrastructure and logistics, management strategies, data collection and continuity.

**Shellfish Conservation** - Shellfish are an important subsistence food for Native peoples of Southeast Alaska and an integral part of Native culture, identity and tribal sovereignty. The Sitka Tribe of Alaska worked with the Southeast Alaska Tribal Research Group (SEATOR) partners to conduct an assessment of subsistence shellfish, to help ensure sustainable management of this important traditional resource. This partnership of 14 Southeast Alaska tribes collected data on biomass, abundance, growth, and distribution of important subsistence populations of butter clams, littleneck clams, and cockles. This project provides information and resources for participating tribes to make decisions that impact their traditional foods, food security, and tribal sovereignty. The project promotes education, monitoring, and ownership of shellfish resources by southeast Alaska tribal communities.



*Finding Butter Clams at Point Louisa, Juneau, Alaska. Photo: Lindsey Pierce of Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska*

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## 2024 Program Activities

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The 2024 budget will:

- Administer financial assistance to States, awarding formula-based and nationally-competitive grant funds to their fish and wildlife or other natural resource agencies. These agencies continue to coordinate effectively with the Service and other Federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, universities, private landowners, and industry representatives in revising, updating, and implementing their Wildlife Action Plans. Involving many stakeholders with different perspectives helps ensure that the Plans are strategic, thoroughly vetted, and leveraged with resources from many partners. Implementation activities include a wide range of strategies from research and monitoring to direct species and habitat management. As many States begin making key improvements to their Plans in preparation for the Service's FY 2025 review deadline, they are increasingly incorporating climate science to address changing habitat conditions and extreme weather events. In FY 2024, the Service will continue offering Plan Enhancement subprogram grants that help advance the Administration's goal of improving species and habitat adaptation and resiliency as the climate changes. This includes supporting the America the Beautiful initiative. Summaries of all of the States' Plans are provided in the State and Tribal Wildlife Grant Program 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary report.
- Make strategic investments focused on at-risk species that have the potential to be listed under the ESA. Within just the past six years, States played an essential role in helping to preclude listing of 13 declining species and in helping de-list or down-list five threatened and endangered species using SWG Program funds. The Service provides incentives to encourage State fish and wildlife agencies to focus efforts on ESA candidate or listed species, when doing so is consistent with priorities expressed in States' Plans.
- Continue supporting States' efforts to conserve species at range-wide or landscape scales. For several years, Northeastern States have pooled a portion of their formula grants program funding to be used in major initiatives to conserve and protect species that occur across the region. Pooled funds were used by collaborating States to meet habitat and population goals for the New England cottontail rabbit, contributing to a finding of not warranted for listing under the ESA in 2015. Priorities for FY 2023 include conservation of at-risk turtles and pollinators that occur throughout the Northeast. Similar efforts to identify and collaboratively conserve species of greatest conservation need across State lines are also now underway in the Southeast and the Midwest.
- Administer financial assistance through the nationally-competitive Tribal Wildlife Grants (TWG) Program. TWG Program funding has proven critical in helping increase Tribal staff capacity to manage fish and wildlife populations and their habitats on Tribal lands. In FY 2024, TWG Program funds will target the protection and enhancement of populations of species that are used for subsistence, cultural, and ceremonial purposes by Tribal members. Additionally, funded projects will advance Administration priorities and goals by: strengthening the government-to-government relationships with Tribes through conservation partnerships; improving fish and wildlife habitat adaptation and resiliency in a changing climate; supporting the Administration's America the Beautiful conservation and restoration efforts; and providing Tribes the ability to address environmental justice issues that have disproportionately and cumulatively harmed or impacted fish and wildlife of cultural and traditional importance.

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**Proposed Program Changes**

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The 2024 budget request for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants is \$76,612,000 and 16 FTE, a program change of +\$2,800,000 and +0 FTE from the 2023 Enacted.

**Tribal Wildlife Grants (+\$2,800,000/ +0 FTE)** – The request will result in 10 to 14 new projects designed to help protect biodiversity on Tribal lands through conservation and restoration of culturally significant species and their habitats. The increase provides resources to support Tribes in their key role with States, Federal agencies, and private entities in helping recover species listed or candidates for listing under the ESA. The increase will result in the creation of approximately 34 jobs, provide employment opportunities for Tribal members, and help build needed capacity for adapting to climate-related impacts on Tribal lands.

**Table 2**  
**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**  
**FINAL APPORTIONMENT OF STATE WILDLIFE GRANTS**  
**FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022**  
**CFDA: 15.634**

<b>STATE</b>	<b>State Wildlife - 5620<sup>1</sup></b>
ALABAMA	\$856,778
ALASKA	2,808,854
AMERICAN SAMOA	140,443
ARIZONA	1,459,849
ARKANSAS	645,462
CALIFORNIA	2,808,854
COLORADO	1,250,671
CONNECTICUT	561,771
DELAWARE	561,771
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	280,885
FLORIDA	2,703,645
GEORGIA	1,521,435
GUAM	140,443
HAWAII	561,771
IDAHO	698,352
ILLINOIS	1,734,993
INDIANA	956,573
IOWA	683,378
KANSAS	810,686
KENTUCKY	732,712
LOUISIANA	793,108
MAINE	561,771
MARYLAND	737,510
MASSACHUSETTS	817,063
MICHIGAN	1,449,187
MINNESOTA	1,125,500
MISSISSIPPI	607,373
MISSOURI	1,087,294

<sup>1</sup> 65/35 match for conservation implementation and 75/25 match for planning.

<b>STATE</b>	<b>State Wildlife - 5620</b>
MONTANA	\$993,573
N. MARIANA ISLANDS	140,443
NEBRASKA	674,641
NEVADA	997,369
NEW HAMPSHIRE	561,771
NEW JERSEY	1,060,925
NEW MEXICO	955,067
NEW YORK	2,499,003
NORTH CAROLINA	1,454,586
NORTH DAKOTA	561,771
OHIO	1,535,025
OKLAHOMA	848,643
OREGON	1,040,610
PENNSYLVANIA	1,689,974
PUERTO RICO	280,885
RHODE ISLAND	561,771
SOUTH CAROLINA	744,631
SOUTH DAKOTA	561,771
TENNESSEE	1,005,846
TEXAS	2,808,854
UTAH	862,773
VERMONT	561,771
VIRGIN ISLANDS	140,443
VIRGINIA	1,187,358
WASHINGTON	1,247,959
WEST VIRGINIA	561,771
WISCONSIN	977,947
WYOMING	561,771
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$56,177,084<sup>2</sup></b>

<sup>2</sup> This table factors in amounts removed for administration and includes reverted funds from prior years.

**Table 3**  
**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**  
**FINAL APPORTIONMENT OF STATE WILDLIFE GRANTS**  
**FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023**  
**CFDA: 15.634**

<b>STATE</b>	<b>State Wildlife - 5620<sup>3</sup></b>
ALABAMA	\$861,543
ALASKA	2,824,693
AMERICAN SAMOA	141,235
ARIZONA	1,468,073
ARKANSAS	649,197
CALIFORNIA	2,824,693
COLORADO	1,257,447
CONNECTICUT	564,939
DELAWARE	564,939
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	282,469
FLORIDA	2,717,771
GEORGIA	1,529,756
GUAM	141,235
HAWAII	564,939
IDAHO	702,248
ILLINOIS	1,745,099
INDIANA	962,211
IOWA	687,367
KANSAS	815,261
KENTUCKY	736,967
LOUISIANA	797,699
MAINE	564,939
MARYLAND	741,482
MASSACHUSETTS	822,074
MICHIGAN	1,457,715
MINNESOTA	1,132,133
MISSISSIPPI	610,843
MISSOURI	1,093,531

<sup>3</sup> 65/35 match for conservation implementation and 75/25 match for planning.

<b>STATE</b>	<b>State Wildlife - 5620</b>
MONTANA	\$999,168
N. MARIANA ISLANDS	141,235
NEBRASKA	678,465
NEVADA	1,002,921
NEW HAMPSHIRE	564,939
NEW JERSEY	1,067,351
NEW MEXICO	960,396
NEW YORK	2,513,782
NORTH CAROLINA	1,462,368
NORTH DAKOTA	564,939
OHIO	1,543,980
OKLAHOMA	853,419
OREGON	1,046,490
PENNSYLVANIA	1,699,966
PUERTO RICO	282,469
RHODE ISLAND	564,939
SOUTH CAROLINA	748,718
SOUTH DAKOTA	564,939
TENNESSEE	1,011,633
TEXAS	2,824,693
UTAH	867,608
VERMONT	564,939
VIRGIN ISLANDS	141,235
VIRGINIA	1,192,486
WASHINGTON	1,254,695
WEST VIRGINIA	564,939
WISCONSIN	983,715
WYOMING	564,939
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$56,493,864<sup>4</sup></b>

<sup>4</sup> This table factors in amounts removed for administration and includes reverted funds from prior years.

**Table 4**  
**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**  
**ESTIMATED APPORTIONMENT OF STATE WILDLIFE GRANTS**  
**FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024**  
**CFDA: 15.634**

<b>STATE</b>	<b>State Wildlife – 5620<sup>5</sup></b>
ALABAMA	\$915,012
ALASKA	3,000,000
AMERICAN SAMOA	150,000
ARIZONA	1,559,185
ARKANSAS	689,487
CALIFORNIA	3,000,000
COLORADO	1,335,487
CONNECTICUT	600,000
DELAWARE	600,000
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	300,000
FLORIDA	2,886,442
GEORGIA	1,624,696
GUAM	150,000
HAWAII	600,000
IDAHO	745,831
ILLINOIS	1,853,404
INDIANA	1,021,928
IOWA	730,027
KANSAS	865,858
KENTUCKY	782,705
LOUISIANA	847,206
MAINE	600,000
MARYLAND	787,500
MASSACHUSETTS	873,093
MICHIGAN	1,548,184
MINNESOTA	1,202,396
MISSISSIPPI	648,753
MISSOURI	1,161,398

<sup>5</sup> 65/35 match for conservation implementation and 75/25 match for planning.

<b>STATE</b>	<b>State Wildlife - 5620</b>
MONTANA	\$1,061,179
N. MARIANA ISLANDS	150,000
NEBRASKA	720,573
NEVADA	1,065,165
NEW HAMPSHIRE	600,000
NEW JERSEY	1,133,594
NEW MEXICO	1,020,000
NEW YORK	2,669,793
NORTH CAROLINA	1,553,126
NORTH DAKOTA	600,000
OHIO	1,639,803
OKLAHOMA	906,384
OREGON	1,111,437
PENNSYLVANIA	1,805,471
PUERTO RICO	300,000
RHODE ISLAND	600,000
SOUTH CAROLINA	795,185
SOUTH DAKOTA	600,000
TENNESSEE	1,074,417
TEXAS	3,000,000
UTAH	921,454
VERMONT	600,000
VIRGIN ISLANDS	150,000
VIRGINIA	1,266,495
WASHINGTON	1,332,565
WEST VIRGINIA	600,000
WISCONSIN	1,044,767
WYOMING	600,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$60,000,000</b>

# Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration



# Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration

## Appropriation Language

The Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration account does not require authorization through annual appropriations because there is permanent authority, established August 31, 1951 (65 Stat. 262), to use the receipts deposited into the Trust Fund in the fiscal year following their collection.

## Applicable Statutes

**The Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act of 1950**, now referred to as the *Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act* (16 U.S.C. 777 et seq.), as amended by the Deficit Reduction and Control Act of 1984 (P.L. 98-369), the *Surface Transportation and Uniform Relocation Act of 1987* (P.L. 100-17), the *Coast Guard Authorization Act of 1987* (P.L. 100-448), the *Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (P.L. 105-178), the *Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs Improvement Act of 2000* (P.L. 106-408), the *Surface Transportation Act of 2003* (P.L. 108-88), SAFETEA-LU, and the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (P.L. 117-58), which expires in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026, authorizes assistance to the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands, and the territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands (States) to carry out projects to restore, enhance, and manage sport fishery resources. In addition to sport fishery projects, these acts allow for the development and maintenance of boating access facilities and aquatic education programs.

**The Appropriations Act of August 31, 1951** (P.L. 82-136, 65 Stat. 262) authorizes receipts from excise taxes on fishing equipment to be deposited into the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, established as a permanent, indefinite appropriation. Receipts and interest distributed to the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund are available for use and distribution by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to States in the fiscal year following collection.

**The Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act of 1990** (16 U.S.C. 3951 et. seq.) provides for three Federal grant programs for the acquisition, restoration, management, and enhancement of coastal wetlands in coastal States. A coastal State means a State of the United States, bordering on the Atlantic, Pacific, or Arctic Oceans, the Gulf of Mexico, Long Island Sound, or one or more of the Great Lakes, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands, the Territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the trust territories of the Pacific Islands. The Service administers two of the three grant programs that this Act provides funding for, including the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program and the North American Wetlands Conservation Grant Program. The latter program receives funds from other sources, as well as from the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Program. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers administers the third grant program that receives funding because of this Act. It also requires the Service to update and digitize wetlands maps in Texas and assess the status, condition, and trends of wetlands in Texas, and provides permanent authorization for coastal wetlands conservation grants and North American Wetlands Conservation projects. The *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (P.L. 117-58) authorizes funding for the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act through FY 2026.

**The Clean Vessel Act of 1992** (16 U.S.C. 777c) Section 5604 authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to provide grants to the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands, and the territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands for the construction, renovation, operation, and maintenance of sewage pumpout stations and dump stations, as well as for educational programs designed to inform boaters about the importance of proper disposal of their onboard sewage. Section 5604 also amended the *Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act* to provide for the transfer of funds out of the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund for use by the Secretary of Homeland Security (U.S. Coast Guard) to fund State recreational boating safety programs. The *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (P.L. 117-58) authorizes funding for the Clean Vessel Act of 1992 and boating infrastructure improvement through FY 2026.

**The Sportfishing and Boating Safety Act of 1998** (16 U.S.C. 777c-777g) authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to develop national outreach plans to promote safe fishing and boating, and to promote conservation of aquatic resources through grants and contracts with States and private entities. The Act contains provisions for transferring funds to the U.S. Coast Guard for State recreational boating safety programs. In addition, it authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to provide funds to the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands, and the territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands to construct, renovate, and maintain tie-up facilities with features for transient boaters in vessels 26 feet or more in length, and to produce and distribute information and educational materials under the Boating Infrastructure Grant Program. The *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (P.L. 117-58) authorizes funding for boating infrastructure improvement through FY 2026.

**The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs Improvement Act of 2000** (P.L. 106-408) amends the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act. It authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to provide funding under the Multistate Conservation Grant Program for wildlife and sport fish restoration projects identified as priority projects by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. These high priority projects address problems affecting States on a regional or national basis. It also provides \$200,000 each to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, and the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission; and \$400,000 to the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council. The Act provides 12 allowable cost categories for administration of the Act.

**The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users of August 10, 2005** (P.L. 109-59) made several changes to the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act. SAFETEA-LU changed the distribution of Sport Fish Restoration receipts from amounts primarily specified in law to a percentage-based distribution. The Act extended program authorizations for the Clean Vessel Act Program, the Boating Infrastructure Grant Program, and the National Outreach and Communications Program through FY 2009, and it extended the authority to use Sport Fish Restoration receipts for the U.S. Coast Guard's State Recreational Boating Safety Program through FY 2009. The Act authorized the expenditure of remaining balances in the old Boat Safety Account through FY 2010, for Sport Fish Restoration and State recreational boating safety programs and redirected 4.8 cents per gallon of certain fuels from the general account of the Treasury to the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund.

**The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act** (P.L. 117-58) (*Bipartisan Infrastructure Law*) changes several sections of the *Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act*. It amends Section 4 of the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. 777c), changing the amount of administrative funding and allowable expenses, and extending authorizations for Sport Fish Restoration; Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act; Boating Infrastructure Improvement; and the National Outreach and Communications program through FY 2026. It also amends Section 9(a) [16 U.S.C. 777h(a)] for administrative activities and Section 14(e) [16 U.S.C. 777m(e)] to instruct the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council (Council) to study the impact of derelict vessels and identify recyclable solutions for recreational vessels.

**The James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023** (Public Law 117-263) included a provision that amended the *Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act* (16 U.S.C. 777c) to adjust the amounts available for administrative expenses for inflation using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers published by the Department of Labor for FY 2022, and allowed administrative expenses to include personnel costs of employees working on a part-time basis.

**Appropriation: Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration**

Program Element		2022 Actual	2023 Estimate	2024			Budget Estimate	Change From 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Payments to States	(\$000)	397,608	415,870	0	0	+13,054	428,924	+13,054
Administration	(\$000)	12,730	13,775	0	0	+1,780	15,555	+1,780
Clean Vessel	(\$000)	13,812	14,441	0	0	+450	14,891	+450
Boating Infrastructure Grant Program	(\$000)	13,811	14,441	0	0	+450	14,891	+450
National Outreach	(\$000)	13,811	14,441	0	0	+450	14,891	+450
Multistate Conservation Grant Program	(\$000)	3,000	3,000	0	0	0	3,000	0
Coastal Wetlands	(\$000)	19,342	20,224	0	0	+630	20,854	+630
Fishery Commissions	(\$000)	800	800	0	0	0	800	0
Sport Fishing & Boating Partnership Council	(\$000)	400	400	0	0	0	400	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	(\$000)	<b>475,314</b>	<b>497,391</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+16,814</b>	<b>514,205</b>	<b>+16,814</b>
	<i>FTE</i>	<b>56</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+0</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>+0</b>
North American Wetlands	(\$000)	19,342	20,225	0	0	+628	20,853	+628
	<i>FTE</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>+0</b>
<b>TOTAL, Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration</b>	(\$000)	<b>494,656</b>	<b>517,616</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+17,442</b>	<b>535,058</b>	<b>+17,442</b>
	<i>FTE</i>	<b>57</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+0</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>+0</b>

The 2022, 2023, and 2024 amounts include sequestration in accordance with section 251A of the BBDECA, 2 U.S.C. 901a. In addition, the amounts in 2022, 2023, and 2024 include amounts previously sequestered, which are now available in accordance with said Act. 2023 and 2024 Estimates include an additional amount provided for administration, and inflation adjustment using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58).

### Program Description

The Sport Fish Restoration Program (SFR) provides Federal aid to State fish and wildlife and boating agencies for the management and restoration of fish having material value in connection with sport or recreation. Since 1950, this stable source of funding has been critical to the recovery of many of the Nation's sport fish species and has provided over \$10.5 billion to these agencies. The Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act programs have expanded over time through a series of Congressional actions and now encompass several grant programs that address increased conservation and recreation needs of States, the District of Columbia, Commonwealths, and territorial governments. Partner agencies, within set program boundaries, determine the best use of these Federal funds to meet these needs. The various programs enhance the Nation's sport fish resources in both fresh and salt waters. They also provide funding for projects that improve and manage aquatic habitats, protect and conserve coastal wetlands, and provide important infrastructure for recreational boaters. Through administering these programs, the Service helps to create and maintain strong conservation stewardship by supporting local communities in sustainably utilizing natural resources.

The economic impacts of boating and sport fishing in the United States are considerable. According to the *2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*, 35.8 million people participated in fishing and generated over \$46.1 billion in retail sales. According to the American Sportfishing Association's 2021 report *Sportfishing in America: A Reliable Economic Force*, anglers create and support 826,000 jobs.

All grant programs funded by SFR leverage the Federal funds by requiring a minimum of a 25 percent cost share, with the exception of the Multistate Conservation Grant Program, which does not require a cost share. The core value of the program is a cooperative partnership of Federal and State agencies, anglers, boaters, and industry that provides significant benefits to the public and our Nation's natural resources.

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) and the Service work cooperatively together to manage the **Multistate Conservation** grant program (MSCGP). The Service ultimately awards and manages the grants, while AFWA manages the grant application process, providing oversight, coordination, and guidance for the program as established by the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs Improvement Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-408). These high priority projects address problems affecting States on a regional or national basis. Project types include biological research/training, species population status assessment, outreach, data collection regarding angler participation, aquatic education, research on the economic value of fishing, and regional or multistate habitat needs assessments.

The **Clean Vessel Act** grant program is a nationally competitive program for the construction, renovation, operation, and maintenance of sewage pumpout stations and dump stations, as well as for educational programs designed to inform boaters about the importance of proper disposal of their onboard sewage. Table 2 provides the Fiscal Year 2022 Clean Vessel Act grant program awards.

The **Boating Infrastructure** grant program (BIG) is a nationally competitive program that provides funding to construct, renovate, and maintain tie-up facilities with features for transient boaters in vessels 26 feet or longer. The program also produces and distributes information and educational materials. Tables 3 and 4 provide the Fiscal Year 2022 BIG program awards.

The **National Coastal Wetlands Conservation** grant program provides grants to governor-appointed State agencies to restore and protect coastal wetlands ecosystems nationwide. Partnerships are an essential part of this program and allow the Service to work closely with a diversity of agencies and organizations concerned about natural resources, leveraging program funds for broad conservation benefits. Table 5 provides the Fiscal Year 2022 National Coastal Wetlands Conservation grant program awards.

The **North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA)** grant program is an internationally recognized conservation program that provides grants throughout North America for the conservation of waterfowl and other wetland-associated migratory birds. This program receives funds from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund to support projects in U.S. coastal areas. These funds help sustain the abundance of waterfowl and other migratory bird populations throughout the Western Hemisphere. Table 6 provides the FY 2022 North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant awards.

The **National Outreach** program improves communications with anglers, boaters, and the public regarding angling and boating opportunities, which reduce barriers to participation in these activities, advance adoption of sound fishing and boating practices, promote conservation and the responsible use of the Nation's aquatic resources, and further safety in fishing and boating. The Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, a nonprofit 501(c)(3), is the current recipient of this nationally competitive grant program.

SFR funds many important projects across the United States including:

Trout have returned to the Swan River in **Colorado**. Fish population surveys by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) biologists supported through SFR revealed that brook trout have taken to newly renovated stream sections. In 2016, a fishery survey documented only a few hundred brook trout larger than six inches per mile of stream. Three years later the renovated Swan River sections contained more than 1,800 brook trout per mile of stream measuring six inches and larger. Moreover, fish biologists discovered that the numbers of mottled sculpin - a curious-looking, finger-sized fish with broad fanning pectoral fins that hold it in place on the river bottom in fast waters - have proliferated. The sculpin's presence in impressive numbers is indicative of quality fish habitat. The Swan River restoration is not complete. There is more stone to remove and re-purpose instream and elsewhere. More streamside plantings are yet to come. In the end, CPW biologists expect more habitat for anglers where there had been none for more than a century.



*A tree stump serves as trout habitat on the Swan River in Colorado. Photo: USFWS*

The **Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation** received a MSCGP grant to conduct a funding needs assessment complete with survey and scorecard as a tool for State agencies, organizations, and industry partners with grant programs that face challenges determining which angler R3 (recruitment, retention, and reactivation) programs and projects to fund. The impetus for this project was the need for better and more specific and objective criteria for awarding grants. The culmination of this project is the section of the report on the implications of the findings to assist the R3 community, as well as a scorecard for those with grant programs to use in scoring proposals and prioritizing angler R3 programs to fund and support.

The **North Carolina** Wildlife Resources Commission uses Aquatic Education funds for a comprehensive fly-fishing program offering several different classes that provide next steps in the angler's fly-fishing education. There are beginning and intermediate casting classes taught using instruction methods learned at the Wulff School of Fly-fishing. These are followed by several Fly-fishing Basics courses, such as Understanding and Selecting Fly-fishing Gear, Wading Safety and Etiquette, Warm-water Fly-fishing, How to Read a Trout Stream, Nymphing Techniques, and even how to Build your own Fly-fishing Leaders. Trout are brought from the Setzer Hatchery in the winter to provide fishing opportunities, and catfish, bass, and bluegill provide participants with targets the rest of the year.



*Fly fishing workshop in North Carolina. Photo: North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission*

The **South Carolina** Conservation Bank is using funds from the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program to expand the 12,000-acre Wee Tee State Forest by acquiring the adjacent 2,118-acre Great Santee Swamp tract in Georgetown County, South Carolina. The property consists of 1,824 acres of nationally declining wetlands, including freshwater tidal wetlands connected to the Santee River along three miles of riverfront. The proposed tract is part of the Santee River Conservation Corridor, a network of permanently protected lands along the Santee River. The tract will be managed by the South Carolina Forestry Commission in coordination with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources as a Wildlife Management Area.

Onancock, **Virginia** is a shining example of precisely the type of changes the BIG program was created to make possible for transient boaters and the communities they visit. Town officials decided, about a decade ago, that they wanted more transient traffic because the average boater spends five times what the average visitor spends when arriving by car. After putting in a floating dock, the town submitted its first of what would become a half-dozen BIG applications. It kept winning grants, allowing for a rebuild of the harbor master house into a modern transient facility with laundry, showers, and restrooms. The town also used BIG program money to help install fuel and pump-out stations.

**Budget Estimate**

The FY 2024 budget estimate for the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act programs is \$535,058,778 and 57 FTE. The estimate is based on current law projections provided by the Department of the Treasury's Office of the Tax Analysis.

**Table 1**

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE ESTIMATED APPORTIONMENT  
OF DINGELL-JOHNSON SPORT FISH RESTORATION FUNDS\***

<u>STATE</u>	<u>FY 2022</u>	<u>FY 2023</u>	<u>FY 2024</u>
ALABAMA	6,891,770	6,877,146	6,944,363
ALASKA	19,983,067	21,234,157	21,522,030
AMERICAN SAMOA	1,332,205	1,415,611	1,434,802
ARIZONA	8,202,526	9,003,432	9,141,851
ARKANSAS	6,381,774	6,355,865	6,417,302
CALIFORNIA	18,654,555	20,059,004	20,346,718
COLORADO	10,907,164	12,242,685	12,445,699
CONNECTICUT	3,996,614	4,246,832	4,304,406
DELAWARE	3,996,614	4,246,832	4,304,406
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	1,332,205	1,415,611	1,434,802
FLORIDA	14,239,304	15,312,788	15,531,946
GEORGIA	10,228,940	10,425,495	10,544,108
GUAM	1,332,205	1,415,611	1,434,802
HAWAII	3,996,614	4,246,832	4,304,406
IDAHO	7,354,716	7,905,906	8,018,882
ILLINOIS	6,871,588	7,637,327	7,760,706
INDIANA	5,183,733	5,955,250	6,061,659
IOWA	4,844,890	5,464,600	5,557,352
KANSAS	5,404,749	6,114,074	6,219,092
KENTUCKY	5,417,651	6,056,010	6,155,929
LOUISIANA	8,001,029	7,945,269	8,021,008
MAINE	3,997,809	4,246,832	4,304,406
MARYLAND	3,996,614	4,246,832	4,304,406
MASSACHUSETTS	3,996,614	4,246,832	4,304,406
MICHIGAN	11,935,265	12,913,189	13,102,998
MINNESOTA	13,914,531	14,799,869	15,003,178
MISSISSIPPI	4,470,357	4,585,754	4,638,494
MISSOURI	8,184,196	8,541,090	8,649,478
MONTANA	9,576,607	10,176,423	10,314,785
N. MARIANA ISLANDS	1,332,205	1,415,611	1,434,802
NEBRASKA	5,003,942	5,526,461	5,613,727
NEVADA	5,985,176	6,525,945	6,623,838
NEW HAMPSHIRE	3,996,614	4,246,832	4,304,406
NEW JERSEY	3,996,614	4,246,832	4,304,406
NEW MEXICO	6,915,955	7,532,727	7,630,108
NEW YORK	9,179,560	9,014,056	9,093,347
NORTH CAROLINA	12,655,901	12,993,928	13,144,227
NORTH DAKOTA	4,619,573	4,940,293	5,009,370
OHIO	7,862,728	8,489,201	8,612,368

**SPORT FISH RESTORATION****FY 2024 BUDGET JUSTIFICATION**

<b><u>STATE</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2022</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2023</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2024</u></b>
OKLAHOMA	9,170,924	8,710,258	8,766,453
OREGON	8,818,803	9,229,182	9,347,083
PENNSYLVANIA	9,317,437	10,198,210	10,353,917
PUERTO RICO	3,996,614	4,246,832	4,304,406
RHODE ISLAND	3,996,614	4,246,832	4,304,406
SOUTH CAROLINA	5,669,227	5,758,227	5,820,764
SOUTH DAKOTA	4,919,345	5,381,426	5,463,813
TENNESSEE	8,190,161	8,477,187	8,579,792
TEXAS	19,983,067	21,234,157	21,522,030
UTAH	7,356,647	8,235,978	8,371,954
VERMONT	3,996,614	4,246,832	4,304,406
VIRGIN ISLANDS	1,332,205	1,415,611	1,434,802
VIRGINIA	6,259,833	6,226,128	6,285,007
WASHINGTON	8,337,612	8,911,194	9,035,219
WEST VIRGINIA	3,996,614	4,246,832	4,304,406
WISCONSIN	12,060,014	13,133,476	13,331,634
WYOMING	6,085,431	6,519,731	6,611,492
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>399,661,336</b>	<b>424,683,137</b>	<b>430,440,603</b>

\*This table includes reverted funds and sequester returns from prior years.

Table 2

## FY 2022 Clean Vessel Act Grant Program Awards\*

State	Coastal or Inland	Federal Share
Alabama	Coastal	\$ 217,579.00
Alabama	Inland	\$ 90,250.00
Alaska	Coastal	\$ 11,250.00
Arizona	Inland	\$ 412,629.00
Arkansas	Inland	\$ 1,500,000.00
California	Coastal	\$ 920,624.00
California	Inland	\$ 1,086,750.00
Connecticut	Coastal	\$ 1,500,000.00
Connecticut	Inland	\$ 58,903.00
Florida	Coastal	\$ 498,280.00
Idaho	Inland	\$ 12,596.41
Illinois	Inland	\$ 100,000.00
Kentucky	Inland	\$ 154,386.00
Louisiana	Coastal	\$ 68,302.88
Maine	Coastal	\$ 405,393.00
Massachusetts	Coastal	\$ 1,280,285.00
Michigan	Coastal	\$ 606,250.00
Mississippi	Coastal	\$ 105,678.00
Mississippi	Inland	\$ 114,808.65
New Hampshire	Coastal	\$ 121,109.00
New Hampshire	Inland	\$ 38,122.00
New York	Coastal	\$ 650,768.75
New York	Inland	\$ 74,501.25
Ohio	Coastal	\$ 442,520.85
Oklahoma	Inland	\$ 655,473.00
Oregon	Inland	\$ 675,000.00
Pennsylvania	Coastal	\$ 50,000.25
Pennsylvania	Inland	\$ 50,000.25
Rhode Island	Coastal	\$ 353,896.00
South Carolina	Coastal	\$ 607,814.00
South Carolina	Inland	\$ 201,768.00
Virginia	Coastal	\$ 828,988.00
Virginia	Inland	\$ 132,750.00
Washington	Coastal	\$ 1,500,000.00
Washington	Inland	\$ 1,060,000.00

<b>State</b>	<b>Coastal or Inland</b>	<b>Federal Share</b>
Wisconsin	Coastal	\$ 23,255.00
Wisconsin	Inland	\$ 22,896.75
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$ 16,632,828.04</b>

\*This table includes carryover and sequester returns from prior years.

**Table 3**

**FY 2022 Boating Infrastructure Grant Program – Tier 1 Awards\***

<b>State</b>	<b>Federal Share</b>
Alabama	\$ 200,000.00
Arizona	\$ 200,000.00
Arkansas	\$ 199,011.56
Florida	\$ 117,000.00
Georgia	\$ 199,909.00
Iowa	\$ 200,000.00
Maine	\$ 200,000.00
Michigan	\$ 200,000.00
Mississippi	\$ 200,000.00
New Jersey	\$ 198,772.80
New York	\$ 197,104.00
North Carolina	\$ 200,000.00
Ohio	\$ 73,899.38
Oregon	\$ 200,000.00
South Carolina	\$ 33,393.00
Tennessee	\$ 200,000.00
Vermont	\$ 200,000.00
Virginia	\$ 200,000.00
Washington	\$ 147,827.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 3,366,916.74</b>

\*This table includes carryover and sequester returns from prior years.

Table 4

## FY 2022 Boating Infrastructure Grant Program – Tier 2 Awards\*

State	Project Title	Federal Share
Florida	Lofton Island Marina	\$ 1,098,391.51
Georgia	Donnelly Yacht Center	\$ 1,498,740.00
Michigan	Adelaide Pointe Marina	\$ 1,472,780.74
Michigan	Discovery Center and Pier	\$ 847,954.80
Ohio	DeRivera Park Trust	\$ 1,430,885.50
Oregon	Bandon Marina	\$ 704,783.00
South Carolina	Lady's Island Marina	\$ 840,228.00
South Carolina	Port Royal Marina	\$ 1,500,000.00
South Carolina	St. Johns Yacht Harbor	\$ 1,500,000.00
South Carolina	Wando River Marina	\$ 208,334.00
Texas	Surfside Marina	\$ 1,500,000.00
Virginia	Old Point Comfort	\$ 1,500,000.00
Washington	Boat Haven Linear Dock Replacement	\$ 908,433.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$ 15,010,530.55</b>

\* This table includes carryover and sequester returns from prior years.

Table 5

**FY 2022 National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program Awards\***

<b>2022 National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grants</b>				
<b>Project</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Federal Request</b>	<b>Non-federal Match</b>	<b>Total Project Cost</b>
Bon Secour River	AL	\$491,640.00	\$223,472.00	\$715,112.00
Potter Marsh	AK	\$1,000,000.00	\$484,000.00	\$1,484,000.00
Coyote Hills	CA	\$1,000,000.00	\$1,717,000.00	\$2,717,000.00
Grizzly Island	CA	\$610,263.00	\$517,100.00	\$1,127,363.00
Hérons Head Park	CA	\$1,000,000.00	\$3,725,000.00	\$4,725,000.00
Mad River Slough	CA	\$806,990.00	\$366,814.00	\$1,173,804.00
Banning Ranch	CA	\$1,000,000.00	\$965,900.00	\$1,965,900.00
Bride Brook	CT	\$341,500.00	\$240,474.62	\$581,974.62
Augustine Creek	DE	\$883,000.00	\$402,000.00	\$1,285,000.00
Cape Sable	FL	\$1,000,000.00	\$417,334.00	\$1,417,334.00
Little Tiger Island	FL	\$1,000,000.00	\$1,070,010.00	\$2,070,010.00
Baptisia Tract	GA	\$1,000,000.00	\$500,000.00	\$1,500,000.00
Ka'ena Point	HI	\$231,775.24	\$264,186.27	\$495,961.51
Kaho'olawe	HI	\$355,531.00	\$259,668.00	\$615,199.00
Cousins River	ME	\$466,365.00	\$211,985.00	\$678,350.00
Tizzard Island	MD	\$1,000,000.00	\$1,169,000.00	\$2,169,000.00
North Fork Siuslaw	OR	\$520,527.00	\$830,243.00	\$1,350,770.00
Dawhoo Lake	SC	\$1,000,000.00	\$422,000.00	\$1,422,000.00
Great Santee Swamp	SC	\$1,000,000.00	\$422,000.00	\$1,422,000.00
Waccamaw River	SC	\$1,000,000.00	\$1,571,000.00	\$2,571,000.00
Anderson Creek	WA	\$650,000.00	\$271,000.00	\$921,000.00
Discovery Creek	WA	\$727,000.00	\$303,000.00	\$1,030,000.00
Livingston Bay	WA	\$1,000,000.00	\$425,000.00	\$1,425,000.00
Milltown Island	WA	\$1,000,000.00	\$417,500.00	\$1,417,500.00
West Oakland Bay	WA	\$1,000,000.00	\$423,000.00	\$1,423,000.00
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>\$20,084,591.24</b>	<b>\$17,618,686.89</b>	<b>\$37,703,278.13</b>

\*This table includes carryover and sequester returns from prior years.

Table 6

**FY 2022 North American Wetlands Conservation Act  
Migratory Bird Conservation Commission Grants**

PROJECT TYPE	NUMBER OF PROJECTS	NAWCA GRANT	MATCHING AMOUNT	TOTAL PARTNER AMOUNT	TOTAL ACRES
CANADA STD GRANT	8	\$38,689,065	\$38,689,065	\$38,689,065	86,833.00
MEXICO STD GRANT	8	\$3,734,209	\$5,971,124	\$5,971,124	86,686.90
U.S. SMALL GRANT	30	\$2,722,808	\$5,913,216	\$5,913,216	27,968.51
U.S. STD GRANT	52	\$70,005,437	\$146,220,533	\$146,220,533	375,801.97
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>\$115,151,519</b>	<b>\$196,793,938</b>	<b>\$196,793,938</b>	<b>577,290.38</b>
Standard Grants Only	68	\$112,428,711	\$190,880,722	\$190,880,722	549,321.87

# Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration



# Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration

## Appropriations Language

The Wildlife Restoration Account does not require authorization through annual appropriations because there is permanent authority, established September 6, 1950 (64 Stat. 693), to use the receipts in the account in the fiscal year following their collection.

## Authorizing Statutes

**Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937**, now referred to as *The Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act*, as amended (16 U.S.C. 669-669k) provides Federal assistance to the 50 States, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands (States) for projects to restore, enhance, and manage wildlife resources, and to conduct State hunter education programs. The Act authorizes the collection of receipts for appropriation to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for use in the fiscal year following collection. Funds not used by the States within two years revert to the Service for carrying out the provisions of the *Migratory Bird Conservation Act*. The *Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act* also requires the Secretary of the Treasury to invest the portion of the fund not required for current year spending in interest-bearing obligations. The interest must be used for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant program.

**The Appropriations Act of August 31, 1951** (P.L. 82-136, 64 Stat. 693) authorized receipts from excise taxes on selected hunting and sporting equipment to be deposited in the Wildlife Restoration Account as a permanent, indefinite appropriation. Receipts and interest distributed to the Wildlife Restoration Account were made available for use by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the fiscal year following collection.

**The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs Improvement Act of 2000** (P.L. 106-408) amends the *Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act* and authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to provide funding under the Multistate Conservation Grant Program for wildlife and sport fish restoration projects identified as priority projects by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. These high priority projects address problems affecting States on a regional or national basis. It also authorizes a Bow Hunter Education and Safety Program that provides grants to States.

**North American Wetlands Conservation Act of 1989** (16 U.S.C. 4407) amends the *Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act* and requires the Secretary of the Treasury to invest the portion of the Wildlife Restoration Account not required for current year spending in interest-bearing obligations to be available for States to implement wetlands conservation projects.

**Target Practice and Marksmanship Training Support Act of 2019** (Pub. L. 116-17) amends the *Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act* (16 U.S.C. 669) to define a public target range and offers States alternatives for funding specific activities related to public target ranges under the Basic Hunter Education subprogram (BHE), the Enhanced Hunter Education Program (EHE), and the Wildlife Restoration Program (WR).

**Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow's Needs Act of 2019** (Public Law 116-94) amends the *Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act* (16 U.S.C. 669) to make hunter recruitment and recreational-shooter recruitment (as defined at 16 U.S.C. 669(a)(3)) an eligible activity with funds from both the Basic Hunter Education subaccount (5221) and the Enhanced Hunter Education subaccount (5230). It also removed the prohibition of public relations, and the requirement that the operation and maintenance of public target ranges using Basic Hunter Education funds be tied to a hunter safety program.

**The America's Conservation Enhancement (ACE) Act** (Public Law 116-188) included a provision that amended the *Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act* (16 U.S.C. 669) to allow the use of the value of any land owned by a Land Grant University as a source of in-kind match for cost-sharing requirements under the Act.

**The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act** (Public Law 117-58) (*Bipartisan Infrastructure Law*) included a provision that amended the *Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act* (16 U.S.C. 669c(a)) to adjust the amounts available for administrative expenses for inflation using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers published by the Department of Labor for FY 2023 and future years, and allowed administrative expenses to include personnel costs of employees working on a part-time basis.

**The James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023** (Public Law 117-263) included a provision that amended the *Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act* (16 U.S.C. 669c(a)) to adjust the amounts available for administrative expenses for inflation using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers published by the Department of Labor for FY 2022, and allowed administrative expenses to include personnel costs of employees working on a part-time basis.

**Appropriation: Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration**

		2022 Actual	2023 Estimate	2024			Budget Estimate	Change From 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Payments to States	(\$000)	1,106,615	1,189,241	0	0	-171,389	1,017,852	-171,389
Hunter Education and Safety Grants	(\$000)	8,000	8,000	0	0	0	8,000	0
Multistate Conservation Grants	(\$000)	8,000	8,000	0	0	0	8,000	0
Administration	(\$000)	12,730	14,425	0	0	+1,222	15,647	+1,222
<b>Subtotal</b>	(\$000)	<b>1,135,345</b>	<b>1,219,666</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-170,167</b>	<b>1,049,499</b>	<b>-170,167</b>
	<i>FTE</i>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+0</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>+0</b>
Interest - NAWCF	(\$000)	25,973	39,667	0	0	+2,530	42,197	+2,530
	<i>FTE</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL, Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration</b>	(\$000)	<b>1,161,318</b>	<b>1,259,333</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-167,637</b>	<b>1,091,696</b>	<b>-167,637</b>
	<i>FTE</i>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+0</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>+0</b>

The 2022, 2023, and 2024 amounts include sequestration in accordance with section 251A of the BBDECA, 2 U.S.C. 901a. In addition, the amounts in 2022, 2023, and 2024 include amounts previously sequestered, which are now available in accordance with said Act. 2022 Actuals include an additional amount provided for administration, and inflation adjustment using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) through the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 (P.L. 117-263). 2023 and 2024 Estimates are similarly adjusted through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58).

**Program Description**

In 1937, Congress passed the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act, authorizing the appropriation of funds from an existing excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition to the Secretary of the Interior for apportionment to States on a formula basis. It provided a much-needed, stable source of funding for wildlife conservation programs across the country. The legislation’s supporters were industry, sportsmen and women, and hunters – the very groups that would be most affected by the tax. Supporters accepted a permanent tax if it meant the government would use the funds to work with the States to ensure the sustainability of wildlife resources. The accompanying grant programs that are administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), including the Section 4(c) Hunter Education and Safety Program (Basic Hunter Education) and the Section 10 Enhanced Firearm and Bow Hunter Education and Safety Program (Enhanced Hunter Education), are key components of the Nation’s cooperative conservation efforts for wildlife and their habitats. Through administering these programs, the Service helps to create and maintain strong conservation stewardship, supporting local communities in sustainably utilizing natural resources. Since 1937, the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Program has contributed over \$14.6 billion in

unadjusted actual dollars (\$22.5 billion in dollars adjusted for inflation) to restore, conserve, manage, and enhance wild bird and mammal populations, acquire and manage wildlife habitats, provide public uses that benefit from wildlife resources, educate hunters on conservation ethics and safety, and construct, operate, and manage recreational firearm shooting and archery ranges. View more data on funding sources and appropriations on the Partner with a Payer website: <https://partnerwithapayer.org/funding-sources/>

The economic impacts of hunting and recreational shooting in the United States are considerable. The Service's 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation estimated the total number of hunters in the United States to be 11.5 million, and total hunting expenditures to be \$26.2 billion. An estimated total of 32 million people went target shooting with firearms, and 12.4 million engaged in archery activities. According to the 2018 National Shooting Sports Foundation's report, *Hunting in America: An Economic Force for Conservation*, hunter spending generates \$185 million per day for the United States economy and supports as many as 525,000 jobs. The 2018 National Shooting Sports Foundation's report, *Target Shooting in America: An Economic Force for Conservation*, reports that target shooters spent \$16.9 billion in 2016 on equipment and travel and supported 329,000 jobs.

The core value of the program is a cooperative partnership of Federal and State agencies, hunters, archers, recreational shooters, and industry that provides significant benefits to the public and our Nation's natural resources. Grant programs funded by the Wildlife Restoration program include:

**Traditional Wildlife Restoration (WR)** authorizes using funds under 16 U.S.C. 669c(b) and provides Federal grant funding to the 50 States as well as the Commonwealths and Territories (not the District of Columbia) for: the selection, restoration, rehabilitation, and improvement of wildlife habitat; wildlife management research; wildlife population surveys and inventories; land acquisition; coordinating, developing, operating, and maintaining facilities, acquiring land for, expanding, or constructing public target ranges; provisions for public use of wildlife resources, and public relations activities in support of the previously listed activities.

**The Basic Hunter Education and Safety Subprogram (BHE)** authorizes using funds under 16 U.S.C. 669c(c) for activities under 16 U.S.C. 669g(b) to: provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and archery equipment, hunter responsibilities, ethics, and survival; construction, operation, and maintenance of public target ranges (used for hunter education or recreational shooting); recruiting, retaining, and reactivating hunters and recreational shooters; basic wildlife management and identification; and public relations that supports hunter recruitment and recreational-shooter recruitment, as defined at 16 U.S.C. 669(a)(3), as long as the public relations activities are necessary and reasonable for the performance of the award. Basic Hunter Education and Safety Programs include developing and implementing a programmed course of instruction that helps achieve the State's hunter safety training goals and objectives.

**The Enhanced Hunter Education and Safety Program (EHE)** provides funding to the 50 States, as well as the Commonwealths and Territories (not the District of Columbia), to: enhance programs for hunter education, hunter development, and firearm and archery safety including hunter development programs to introduce individuals to and recruit them to take part in hunting, bow hunting, target shooting, or archery; enhance interstate coordination of hunter education, and firearm and archery range programs; enhance programs for education, safety, or development of bow hunters and archers; enhance construction and development of firearm and archery ranges; update safety features of firearm and archery

ranges; enhance activities for hunter and recreational shooter recruitment, retention, and reactivation; and public relations activities as covered under the definition of hunter recruitment and recreational-shooter recruitment and defined at 16 U.S.C. 669(a)(3).

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) and the Service work cooperatively together to manage the **Traditional Multistate Conservation Grant Program (MSCGP)**. The Service ultimately awards and manages the grants, while AFWA administers the grant application process, providing oversight, coordination, and guidance for the program as established by the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs Improvement Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-408). These high priority projects address problems affecting States on a regional or national basis. Project types include biological research/training, species population status, outreach, data collection regarding angler participation, aquatic education, economic value of fishing and hunting programs, and regional or multistate habitat needs assessments.

In addition to the Traditional MSCGP, the President signed the Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow’s Needs Act (P.L. 116-94) into law on December 20, 2019. This law, among other measures, created a new “**R3 Multistate Conservation Grant Program**” that makes up to an additional \$5 million available for projects that address hunter and recreational shooter recruitment, retention, and re-activation (R3) as well as projects that promote a national R3 program, including related communication and outreach activities. The Service previously referred to this program as the Modern SCGP.

The Wildlife Restoration Program funds many important projects across the United States including:

The **Alaska Department of Fish and Game** and the Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation Department commenced range renovation planning in 2019. For many years the South Cushman Shooting Range located in Fairbanks has been a staple for recreational target shooters, hunter education, private training classes, law enforcement agencies, and hunters looking to zero in their rifles prior to moose and caribou hunts. The range is visited more than 100,000 times each year. Using Wildlife Restoration Enhanced Hunter Education funding, Alaska Fish and game conducted the following renovations: new rifle range shelter roof, refurbished shooting benches, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant benches, hard surface pathways, new and ADA-accessible parking areas, concrete ADA accessible paths connecting firing lines to the restroom and parking, and a concrete vault toilet. New side berms at the rifle range protect those using the pistol range and surrounding areas, and a center berm at the rifle range created two separate and improved areas for hunter education and other



*The grand re-opening event for South Cushman Shooting Range with Stutzman Engineering, Fairbanks North Star Borough Mayor, Great Northwest, Inc., Alaska Department of Fish & Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks & Recreation  
Photo credit: ADF&G DWC.*

training. The range was opened to Fairbanks community use on August 26, 2022, during National Shooting Sports Month.

The **Nevada Department of Wildlife** has used Wildlife Restoration funds for decades to restore bighorn sheep, which once roamed America's West by the millions. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century this iconic species was completely extirpated from many States, and only a few thousand remained. Recovery efforts including many partners have restored these wild sheep to much of their former range. In Nevada, approximately 12,000 now roam the landscape. View a story map of this successful reintroduction effort [here](#)<sup>1</sup>.

**New Hampshire's Fish and Game Department** is partnering with the University of New Hampshire and using Wildlife Restoration funding to install cameras at about 140 sites throughout northern New Hampshire to get a more accurate count of the State's iconic moose populations. As the effects of climate change grow more severe, New Hampshire's moose population is taking a big hit, declining by 47 percent from 1990 to 2017. Shorter, warmer



*A Biologist counting ticks on a moose. Photo credit: NH Fish & Game.*

winters in recent years have created a thriving environment for ticks, which can cause anemia in moose. Researchers, along with State officials, will use drones and trail cams as part of a new moose surveillance program, which started in August 2022 and will continue for three years.

**The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)** used Wildlife Restoration funds to build a health and population laboratory to combat diseases in wildlife populations. There are many wildlife diseases including Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, Newcastle Disease and White-Nose Syndrome. CWD may be the most well-known and is a contagious and fatal neurological disease in deer, elk, and moose. With CWD identified in more than half of States in the U.S., and new cases found regularly, it is rightfully high on the list of diseases that experts are tasked to study and combat. Because of facilities like this, wildlife agencies have learned the best way to combat CWD is to limit movement and transportation of cervids, and to monitor captive populations closely for outbreaks. Communication strategies have been put in place to transfer these best practices. State restrictions, such as a ban on importing potentially infected spinal columns and brain matter of deer, elk, and moose into Oregon, help limit the spread of CWD.

<sup>1</sup> <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e43f651abd472abe35a5fc89e0b8c2>

**The U.S. Sportsmans Alliance Foundation** received an R3-MSCGP grant for a project titled, “Development of a Hunter Avidity Model to Assess and Improve R3 Participation.” The hunting community will be able to employ a more sophisticated and targeted approach to R3 because of this project, which builds on the Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model (ORAM)—an essential resource for understanding how people become introduced and initiated into hunting—by providing a better understanding of participation characteristics central to the latter stages of ORAM: avidity. The resulting Avidity Model will facilitate the development of targeted marketing and regulatory strategies to encourage hunters’ progression through the ORAM and benefits hunter R3 in all 50 states.

### **Budget Estimate**

The FY 2024 budget estimate for the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Program is \$1,091,695,527 and 50 FTE. The estimate is based on current law projections provided by the Department of the Treasury’s Office of Tax Analysis.

<b>U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE</b>				
<b>FINAL APPORTIONMENT OF PITTMAN-ROBERTSON</b>				
<b>WILDLIFE RESTORATION FUNDS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023</b>				
	<b>WILDLIFE</b>	<b>HUNTER EDUCATION</b>		
	<b>FUNDS-5220</b>	<b>SEC 4(c)</b>	<b>ENHANCED</b>	
		<b>FUNDS-5210</b>	<b>FUNDS-5230</b>	
<b><u>STATE</u></b>	<b><u>CFDA:</u></b>	<b><u>CFDA:</u></b>	<b><u>CFDA:</u></b>	<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>
	<b>15.611</b>	<b>15.611</b>	<b>15.626</b>	
ALABAMA	\$22,202,545	\$5,134,602	\$179,553	\$27,516,700
ALASKA	\$48,092,228	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$50,459,945
AMERICAN SAMOA	\$1,603,074	\$381,286	\$13,333	\$1,997,693
ARIZONA	\$27,054,014	\$6,863,150	\$240,000	\$34,157,164
ARKANSAS	\$17,250,399	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$19,618,116
CALIFORNIA	\$31,754,871	\$6,863,150	\$240,000	\$38,858,021
COLORADO	\$26,205,032	\$5,900,599	\$206,340	\$32,311,971
CONNECTICUT	\$4,809,223	\$3,685,018	\$128,863	\$8,623,104
DELAWARE	\$4,809,223	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$7,176,940
FLORIDA	\$14,992,384	\$6,863,150	\$240,000	\$22,095,534
GEORGIA	\$30,750,209	\$6,863,150	\$240,000	\$37,853,359
GUAM	\$1,603,074	\$381,286	\$13,333	\$1,997,693
HAWAII	\$4,809,223	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$7,176,940
IDAHO	\$21,141,026	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$23,508,743
ILLINOIS	\$16,719,799	\$6,863,150	\$240,000	\$23,822,949
INDIANA	\$13,201,178	\$6,863,150	\$240,000	\$20,304,328
IOWA	\$14,733,464	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$17,101,181
KANSAS	\$19,645,094	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$22,012,811
KENTUCKY	\$15,214,330	\$4,604,677	\$161,023	\$19,980,030
LOUISIANA	\$19,799,002	\$4,759,935	\$166,452	\$24,725,389
MAINE	\$10,894,145	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$13,261,862
MARYLAND	\$4,892,733	\$6,312,919	\$220,759	\$11,426,411
MASSACHUSETTS	\$4,809,223	\$6,863,150	\$240,000	\$11,912,373
MICHIGAN	\$27,590,564	\$6,863,150	\$240,000	\$34,693,714
MINNESOTA	\$28,381,638	\$5,831,603	\$203,928	\$34,417,169
MISSISSIPPI	\$15,247,838	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$17,615,555
MISSOURI	\$24,961,392	\$6,289,962	\$219,956	\$31,471,310
MONTANA	\$28,702,800	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$31,070,517
N. MARIANA ISLANDS	\$1,603,074	\$381,286	\$13,333	\$1,997,693

<b>U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE FINAL APPORTIONMENT OF PITTMAN-ROBERTSON WILDLIFE RESTORATION FUNDS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023</b>				
	<b>WILDLIFE FUNDS-5220</b>	<b>HUNTER EDUCATION</b>		
		<b>SEC 4(c) FUNDS-5210</b>	<b>ENHANCED FUNDS-5230</b>	
<b><u>STATE</u></b>	<b><u>CFDA:</u> <b>15.611</b></b>	<b><u>CFDA:</u> <b>15.611</b></b>	<b><u>CFDA:</u> <b>15.626</b></b>	<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>
NEBRASKA	\$16,904,150	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$19,271,867
NEVADA	\$19,667,899	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$22,035,616
NEW HAMPSHIRE	\$4,809,223	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$7,176,940
NEW JERSEY	\$4,809,223	\$6,863,150	\$240,000	\$11,912,373
NEW MEXICO	\$22,298,070	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$24,665,787
NEW YORK	\$23,428,714	\$6,863,150	\$240,000	\$30,531,864
NORTH CAROLINA	\$26,538,893	\$6,863,150	\$240,000	\$33,642,043
NORTH DAKOTA	\$14,912,000	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$17,279,717
OHIO	\$16,462,168	\$6,863,150	\$240,000	\$23,565,318
OKLAHOMA	\$24,735,932	\$4,046,271	\$141,496	\$28,923,699
OREGON	\$24,031,729	\$4,330,261	\$151,427	\$28,513,417
PENNSYLVANIA	\$33,964,242	\$6,863,150	\$240,000	\$41,067,392
PUERTO RICO	\$4,809,223	\$381,286	\$13,333	\$5,203,842
RHODE ISLAND	\$4,809,223	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$7,176,940
SOUTH CAROLINA	\$10,914,836	\$5,230,839	\$182,919	\$16,328,594
SOUTH DAKOTA	\$17,479,766	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$19,847,483
TENNESSEE	\$27,081,159	\$6,863,150	\$240,000	\$34,184,309
TEXAS	\$48,092,228	\$6,863,150	\$240,000	\$55,195,378
UTAH	\$20,399,024	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$22,766,741
VERMONT	\$4,809,223	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$7,176,940
VIRGIN ISLANDS	\$1,603,074	\$381,286	\$13,333	\$1,997,693
VIRGINIA	\$13,371,079	\$6,863,150	\$240,000	\$20,474,229
WASHINGTON	\$15,512,386	\$6,863,150	\$240,000	\$22,615,536
WEST VIRGINIA	\$10,809,778	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$13,177,495
WISCONSIN	\$27,517,772	\$6,022,955	\$210,619	\$33,751,346
WYOMING	\$18,600,747	\$2,287,717	\$80,000	\$20,968,464
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$961,844,560</b>	<b>\$228,771,678</b>	<b>\$8,000,000</b>	<b>\$1,198,616,238<sup>2</sup></b>

<sup>2</sup> This table includes reverted funds from prior years.

<b>U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE</b>				
<b>ESTIMATED APPORTIONMENT OF PITTMAN-ROBERTSON</b>				
<b>WILDLIFE RESTORATION FUNDS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024</b>				
	<b>WILDLIFE</b>	<b>HUNTER EDUCATION</b>		
	<b>FUNDS-5220</b>	<b>SEC 4(c)</b>	<b>ENHANCED</b>	
<b><u>STATE</u></b>	<b><u>CFDA:</u></b>	<b><u>CFDA:</u></b>	<b><u>CFDA:</u></b>	<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>
	<b>15.611</b>	<b>15.611</b>	<b>15.626</b>	
ALABAMA	\$18,698,953	\$4,387,799	\$179,553	\$23,266,305
ALASKA	\$40,626,519	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$42,661,519
AMERICAN SAMOA	\$1,354,217	\$325,833	\$13,333	\$1,693,383
ARIZONA	\$22,891,541	\$5,865,000	\$240,000	\$28,996,541
ARKANSAS	\$14,533,913	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$16,568,913
CALIFORNIA	\$26,850,034	\$5,865,000	\$240,000	\$32,955,034
COLORADO	\$22,142,476	\$5,042,295	\$206,340	\$27,391,111
CONNECTICUT	\$4,062,652	\$3,149,140	\$128,863	\$7,340,655
DELAWARE	\$4,062,652	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$6,097,652
FLORIDA	\$12,673,782	\$5,865,000	\$240,000	\$18,778,782
GEORGIA	\$25,973,288	\$5,865,000	\$240,000	\$32,078,288
GUAM	\$1,354,217	\$325,833	\$13,333	\$1,693,383
HAWAII	\$4,062,652	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$6,097,652
IDAHO	\$17,881,222	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$19,916,222
ILLINOIS	\$14,129,371	\$5,865,000	\$240,000	\$20,234,371
INDIANA	\$11,170,964	\$5,865,000	\$240,000	\$17,275,964
IOWA	\$12,454,558	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$14,489,558
KANSAS	\$16,591,241	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$18,626,241
KENTUCKY	\$12,859,221	\$3,935,033	\$161,023	\$16,955,277
LOUISIANA	\$16,710,295	\$4,067,709	\$166,452	\$20,944,456
MAINE	\$9,209,853	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$11,244,853
MARYLAND	\$4,129,373	\$5,394,689	\$220,759	\$9,744,821
MASSACHUSETTS	\$4,062,652	\$5,865,000	\$240,000	\$10,167,652
MICHIGAN	\$23,324,783	\$5,865,000	\$240,000	\$29,429,783
MINNESOTA	\$23,961,249	\$4,983,592	\$203,928	\$29,148,769
MISSISSIPPI	\$12,864,369	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$14,899,369
MISSOURI	\$21,116,553	\$5,375,204	\$219,956	\$26,711,713
MONTANA	\$24,252,421	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$26,287,421
N. MARIANA ISLANDS	\$1,354,217	\$325,833	\$13,333	\$1,693,383

<b>U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE</b>				
<b>ESTIMATED APPORTIONMENT OF PITTMAN-ROBERTSON</b>				
<b>WILDLIFE RESTORATION FUNDS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024</b>				
	<b>WILDLIFE</b>	<b>HUNTER EDUCATION</b>		
	<b>FUNDS-5220</b>	<b>SEC 4(c)</b>	<b>ENHANCED</b>	
		<b>FUNDS-5210</b>	<b>FUNDS-5230</b>	
<b><u>STATE</u></b>	<b><u>CFDA:</u></b>	<b><u>CFDA:</u></b>	<b><u>CFDA:</u></b>	<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>
	<b>15.611</b>	<b>15.611</b>	<b>15.626</b>	
NEBRASKA	\$14,279,732	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$16,314,732
NEVADA	\$16,624,963	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$18,659,963
NEW HAMPSHIRE	\$4,062,652	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$6,097,652
NEW JERSEY	\$4,062,652	\$5,865,000	\$240,000	\$10,167,652
NEW MEXICO	\$18,838,493	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$20,873,493
NEW YORK	\$19,709,420	\$5,865,000	\$240,000	\$25,814,420
NORTH CAROLINA	\$22,417,957	\$5,865,000	\$240,000	\$28,522,957
NORTH DAKOTA	\$12,609,828	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$14,644,828
OHIO	\$13,916,040	\$5,865,000	\$240,000	\$20,021,040
OKLAHOMA	\$20,881,889	\$3,457,779	\$141,496	\$24,481,164
OREGON	\$20,304,271	\$3,700,478	\$151,427	\$24,156,176
PENNSYLVANIA	\$28,682,573	\$5,865,000	\$240,000	\$34,787,573
PUERTO RICO	\$4,062,652	\$325,833	\$13,333	\$4,401,818
RHODE ISLAND	\$4,062,652	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$6,097,652
SOUTH CAROLINA	\$9,224,824	\$4,470,019	\$182,919	\$13,877,762
SOUTH DAKOTA	\$14,761,656	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$16,796,656
TENNESSEE	\$22,870,253	\$5,865,000	\$240,000	\$28,975,253
TEXAS	\$40,626,519	\$5,865,000	\$240,000	\$46,731,519
UTAH	\$17,234,958	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$19,269,958
VERMONT	\$4,062,652	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$6,097,652
VIRGIN ISLANDS	\$1,354,217	\$325,833	\$13,333	\$1,693,383
VIRGINIA	\$11,278,700	\$5,865,000	\$240,000	\$17,383,700
WASHINGTON	\$13,115,647	\$5,865,000	\$240,000	\$19,220,647
WEST VIRGINIA	\$9,183,042	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$11,218,042
WISCONSIN	\$23,234,842	\$5,147,098	\$210,619	\$28,592,559
WYOMING	\$15,708,062	\$1,955,000	\$80,000	\$17,743,062
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$812,530,384</b>	<b>\$195,500,000</b>	<b>\$8,000,000</b>	<b>\$1,016,030,384</b>

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# Migratory Bird Conservation Account



# Migratory Bird Conservation Account

## Appropriations Language

*This activity does not require appropriations language, except for advances, which are not requested, as there is permanent authority as provided in the 81<sup>st</sup> Congress, Second Session—Chapter 896, Interior Appropriations Act, 1951, September 6, 1951 (64 Stat. 697) to use the receipts.*

## Authorizing Statutes

*The Migratory Bird Conservation Act*, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715-715d, 715e, 715f-715r), established the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission (MBCC) to approve migratory bird areas that the Secretary of the Interior recommends for acquisition. The Act also authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to acquire MBCC-approved migratory bird areas.

*The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act*, as amended (16 U.S.C. 718a-718k), requires all waterfowl hunters 16 years of age or older to possess a Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, commonly known as a Duck Stamp, while waterfowl hunting. Funds from the sale of Duck Stamps are deposited in a special treasury account known as the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (MBCF) established by this Act. The Act also authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to use funds from the MBCF to acquire waterfowl production areas. The 2014 amendment to the Act (Pub. L. 113-264) increased the price of the Federal Duck Stamp from \$15 to \$25, with the \$10 increase dedicated to the acquisition of conservation easements.

*The Wetlands Loan Act* (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5), requires the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Service Director, to obtain the approval of the State's Governor or the appropriate State agency to acquire land in the State with MBCF monies. The Act also authorized the appropriation of advances of up to \$200,000,000 to accelerate acquisition of migratory waterfowl habitat. From 1963 to 1988, \$197,439,000 was appropriated under this authority.

*The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act*, as amended (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee), requires payment of fair market value for any right-of-way granted over, across, through, or under National Wildlife Refuge System lands. These payments are deposited into the MBCF.

*The Emergency Wetlands Resources Act*, as amended (P. L. 99-645; 100 Stat. 3582), provides for: (1) an amount equal to the amount of all import duties collected on arms and ammunition to be paid quarterly into the MBCF, and (2) removal of the repayment provision of the Wetlands Loan Act (P. L. 87-383).

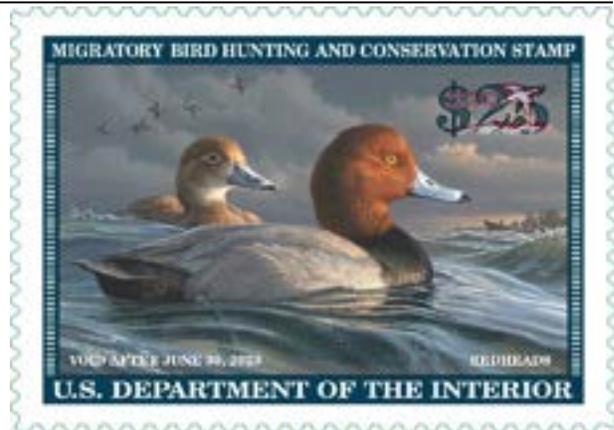
**Appropriation: Migratory Bird Conservation Account**

	2022 Actual	2023 Estimate	2024				Change from 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Land Acquisition: Fee, Easements, and Leases (\$000)	114,679	88,218	0	0	-1,818	86,400	-1,818
U.S. Postal Service Duck Stamp Printing and Sales Costs (\$000)	473	600	0	0	0	600	0
<b>Total, Migratory Bird Conservation Account</b> (\$000) <i>FTE</i>	<b>115,152</b> <b>79</b>	<b>88,818</b> <b>79</b>	<b>0</b> <b>0</b>	<b>0</b> <b>0</b>	<b>-1,818</b> <b>0</b>	<b>87,000</b> <b>79</b>	<b>-1,818</b> <b>0</b>

\*The amounts presented include sequestration in accordance with section 251(a) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act, 2 U.S.C. 901(a). In addition, the amounts include previously sequestered funding, which are now available in accordance with said Act.

**Program Overview**

The Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (MBCF) allows the Service to acquire important waterfowl habitat within units of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Service pursues MBCF acquisition of lands, waters, or interests in land or water, including fee title, easements, and leases, from willing sellers, when necessary to prevent the loss of important waterfowl habitat. We leverage the best waterfowl science available, and the expertise of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) community, including Migratory Bird Joint Venture (JV) step-down plans, Migratory Bird Program and JV staff expert opinions, and input from State wildlife agencies, to identify important areas to acquire. Areas acquired become part of the National Wildlife Refuge System and provide compatible wildlife-dependent educational and recreational opportunities that contribute to NAWMP goals. The program contributes to the goals of the Administration’s America the Beautiful initiative, including identifying important lands and waters for conservation, supporting locally led and designed conservation efforts, and supporting the voluntary stewardship efforts of private landowners.



*The 2022-2023 Duck Stamp features Minnesota artist James Hautman’s painting of a pair of redheads floating in the water. Each fall approximately 200 artists participate in the opportunity to become the next “Duck Stamp Artist” in the only Federally regulated art contest.*

The *Migratory Bird Conservation Act* established the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission (MBCC), which oversees MBCF expenditures. The MBCC is chaired by the Secretary of the Interior and includes four members of Congress. During its 93-year history, the MBCC has approved acquisition of key wetland habitats to sustain migratory bird populations, while establishing or enhancing many of our Nation’s most popular destinations for public waterfowl hunting and bird watching. Since 1929, the MBCC has approved proposals to establish or expand more than 256 national wildlife refuges using the MBCF. By protecting more wetlands, these refuges also improve water quality and groundwater recharge, and moderate flooding events.

All proposed MBCF land acquisitions for national wildlife refuges must be approved by the MBCC, and

the MBCC only considers such proposals in a State after:

- The State’s legislature has consented by law to acquisition by the United States (16 U.S.C. 715f).
- The Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has consulted with the affected county or other unit of local government and with the State’s Governor or the appropriate State agency, about the proposed land acquisition (16 U.S.C. 715c).
- The State’s Governor or his/her designee has approved the acquisition (16 U.S.C. 715k-5).

Additionally, the State official that administers the State’s game laws, or his/her representative, serves as an ex officio member of the MBCC and considers and votes on all proposed acquisitions in their State.

There are two major sources of funds deposited into the MBCF account. The best-known source is the revenue received from the sale of Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps, commonly known as Duck Stamps, as provided for under the *Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act of March 18, 1934, as amended*. The other major funding source is import duties collected on arms and ammunition, as provided for under the *Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986*. The MBCF is further supplemented by payments for rights-of-way granted across refuge lands, and any proceeds from refuge land disposals or State-reverted Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration funds.

### Delivering Conservation for Migratory Birds

Since its creation, the MBCF has contributed significantly to the successful conservation of wetland-dependent migratory birds and continues to support habitat conservation for waterfowl and other birds, including conservation of coastlines, grasslands, and forests. From 1935 to 2022, the Service expended more than \$1.9 billion from the MBCF to purchase 3.1 million acres in fee title and more than 3 million acres in conservation easements. Examples of recent MBCC-approved land acquisition projects are below:

- Acquisition of 4,081 easement acres at the Bear River Watershed Conservation Area located eight miles west of Brigham City, in Box Elder County, Utah. The Bear River watershed is one of the most significant resting, staging, feeding, breeding, and nesting areas for migratory waterfowl and shorebirds in both the Central and Pacific Flyways. This conservation easement permanently protects wetlands and waterfowl-friendly agricultural lands adjacent to the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in Utah. The conservation easement precludes additional infrastructure development outside the current footprint, and it will keep water on the landscape by prohibiting the severing of the property’s water rights. In addition to protecting important habitat for migratory waterfowl, the easement will ensure that the area continues to maintain healthy wetland areas that recharge aquifers, reduce soil erosion, filter chemical wastes, moderate stream temperatures, and help buffer water loss from upland drainage.



Wetlands protected by the recent conservation easement acquisition at the Bear River Watershed Conservation Area. Photo by Amber Furness, FWS.

- Acquisition of 3,934 acres at the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge, located approximately 50 miles south of Houston, Texas. The acquisition completes the first phase of a project that will permanently protect 5,641 acres of bottomland hardwood forest, as well as swamps, sloughs, ephemeral wetlands, and pasture, which, when combined with adjacent protected lands, will create the largest protected

block of Columbia Bottomlands in southeast Texas. This forested floodplain provides wintering habitat for mallards, hooded mergansers, and breeding wood ducks, as well as habitat for neotropical migratory songbirds. After restoring wetlands drained by a prior landowner, the Service will make the lands available for public hunting and other compatible outdoor recreation.

- Acquisition of 140 acres at the Montezuma NWR located 30 miles west of Syracuse, New York. The Service collaborated with Ducks Unlimited, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and local conservation partners to identify important wetlands to conserve as part of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex, including this property. The property consists of emergent and forested wetlands, as well as other forested lands and agricultural land. The acquisition expands the amount of protected wetlands habitat for American black duck, northern pintail, and wood duck, and will enable the Service to expand public hunting opportunities for waterfowl and big and small game.



Emergent marsh habitat at Montezuma NWR benefits waterfowl and other wildlife. FWS photo.

### **Budget Estimate**

The 2024 budget estimate for the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund is \$87,000,000 and 79 FTE.

# Recreation Fee Program



# Federal Lands Recreation Fee Program

## Appropriations Language

The budget includes a General Provision that proposes to reauthorize the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act until October 1, 2024. The Act is set to expire on October 1, 2023.

## Authorizing Statutes

*Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act* (16 U.S.C. 6801-6814). The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) provides the authority to establish, modify, charge, and collect recreation fees at Federal recreation land and waters. The Act seeks to improve recreational facilities and visitor opportunities and services on Federal recreational lands by reinvesting receipts from fair and consistent recreational fees and pass sales. The budget includes a General Provision to reauthorize the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, which will expire on October 1, 2023.

**Appropriation: Federal Lands Recreation Fee Program**

Program Element		2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024			Change from 2023 Estimate (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)*	Budget Estimate	
Federal Lands Recreation Fee Program	(\$000)	7,564	7,000	0	0	7,000	0
	FTE	25	25	0	0	25	0

\*The amounts presented in 2022, 2023, and 2024 includes the sequestration in accordance with Sec. 251A of the BBDECA, 2 U.S.C 901a. In addition, the amounts in 2022, 2023, and 2024 include amounts previously sequestered, which are now available in accordance with said Act.

**Program Mission**

FLREA authorizes the Fish and Wildlife Service to collect, retain, and expend recreation fees to provide benefits and services to visitors. The funds provide revenue for “repair, maintenance, and facility enhancement related directly to visitor enjoyment, visitor access, and health and safety; interpretation, visitor information, visitor service, visitor needs assessments, and signs; habitat restoration directly related to wildlife-dependent recreation that is limited to hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, or photography; law enforcement related to public use and recreation; direct operating or capital costs associated with the Recreation Fee Program; and a fee management agreement established under section 6(a) or a visitor reservation service.” [FLREA, 16 U.S.C. 6803(c)].

**Program Overview**

The Recreation Fee Program allows the collection of entrance fees at 32 National Wildlife Refuges and expanded amenity and special recreation permit fees at National Wildlife Refuges and National Fish Hatcheries. The Service retains 100% of all revenue under FLREA and returns at least 80 percent of the collections to the specific refuge site of collection to enhance visitor facilities and programs.

The Service has 177 approved Recreation Fee Program sites that collect fees for entrance, special permits (such as hunting) and commercial uses, such as guiding and outfitting. Revenues from passes are used to improve trails, boat ramps, and other facilities; manage hunt programs; develop and install signs; and provide other visitor amenities.

An additional 24 National Fish Hatchery, Ecological Service offices, or other refuge sites also sell the National Parks & Federal Recreational Lands Annual and Senior Passes. These sites also provide free passes for people with disabilities, members of the U.S. military, Gold Star Families, and Veterans. This provides a needed service in some communities that are far from other public lands.

Each year, the Service identifies days where entrance fees are waived nationwide. The schedule for 2024 is:

- January 15, 2024                      Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday
- February 19, 2024                    President's Day
- June 19, 2024                         Juneteenth
- August 4, 2024                        Great American Outdoors Act Signing
- September 30, 2024                 National Public Lands Day
- October 8, 2024                      First Sunday of National Wildlife Refuge Week
- November 11, 2024                 Veteran’s Day



*At Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge in Indiana, over 150 people participate in the annual youth hunt. Recreation fees from the hunt help fund the operations of the hunt program.*

### **Budget Estimate**

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The 2024 budget estimate for the Federal Lands Recreation Fee Program is \$7,000,000 and 25 FTE.

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# National Wildlife Refuge Fund



# National Wildlife Refuge Fund

## Appropriations Language

[For expenses necessary to implement the Act of October 17, 1978 (16 U.S.C. 715s), \$13,228,000.]

The budget proposes to eliminate discretionary funding for this program. Therefore, appropriations language is not necessary.

## Authorizing Statutes

*Refuge Revenue Sharing Act* (16 U.S.C. 715s). Authorizes payments to be made to offset tax losses to counties in which Service fee and withdrawn public domain lands are located.

*Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) Sections 1002 and 1008* (16 U.S.C. 3142 and 3148). Address the procedures for permitting oil and gas leases on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge coastal plain (Section 1002) and other non-North Slope Federal lands in Alaska (Section 1008).

**Appropriation: National Wildlife Refuge Fund**

		2022 Actual	2023 Estimate	2024				Change from 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Appropriations	(\$000)	13,228	13,228	0	0	-13,228	0	-13,228
Receipts*	(\$000)	8,829	8,055	0	0	-55	8,000	-55
<b>Total, National Wildlife Refuge Fund</b>	<b>(\$000)</b> <i>FTE</i>	<b>22,057</b> <i>3</i>	<b>21,283</b> <i>3</i>	<b>0</b> <i>0</i>	<b>0</b> <i>0</i>	<b>-13,283</b> <i>0</i>	<b>8,000</b> <i>3</i>	<b>-13,283</b> <i>0</i>

\* The amounts presented include sequestration in accordance with section 251(a) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act, 2 U.S.C. 901(a). In addition, the amounts include previously sequestered funding, which are now available in accordance with said Act.

**Program Overview**

The purpose of the Refuge Revenue Sharing Act is to share revenues derived from refuge lands with counties and other units of local government to compensate for lost tax revenues from Federal land acquisitions. The Act authorizes revenues and direct appropriations to be deposited into a special fund, the National Wildlife Refuge Fund (NWRF), and used for payments to counties in which lands are acquired in fee (fee land) or reserved from the public domain (reserved land) and managed by the Service for fish and wildlife purposes, minus any associated costs. These revenues are typically between \$6-\$8 million each year, and are derived from the sale or disposition of products (e.g., timber and gravel); other privileges (e.g., rights-of-way and grazing permits); and/or leases for public accommodations or facilities (e.g., oil and gas exploration and development) incidental to, and not in conflict with, refuge purposes.

The Act authorizes payments for Service-managed fee lands based on a formula that entitles counties to whichever is the highest of the following amounts: 1) 25 percent of the net receipts; 2) 3/4 of 1 percent of the fair market value of the land; or 3) 75 cents per acre.

The refuge revenue sharing payments made on lands reserved from the public domain and administered by the Service are always 25 percent of the net receipts collected from the reserved land in the county. If no receipts are collected, there is no revenue sharing payment. However, the Department of the Interior makes Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) (31 U.S.C. 6901-6907) on all public domain lands, including Service-reserved lands. The Service reports to the Department annually on all Service reserved land acres and the revenue sharing amounts already paid on those acres. The Department then calculates the PILT amounts, subtracts the amounts the Service has already paid, and makes the PILT payments to the local governments.



*Prescribed burns and thinning of longleaf pines enhance habitat for red-cockaded woodpeckers and other species at St. Marks NWR. Proceeds from timber sales are deposited into the National Wildlife Refuge Fund to be distributed to counties and other forms of local government. FWS photo.*

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) addresses procedures for oil and gas leasing on non-North Slope Federal lands in Alaska and for transportation and utility systems in and across the Alaska conservation system units. Applicants pay the costs to process applications or administer permits relating to utility and transportation systems or seismic exploration. These payments directly reimburse the Service for its management costs.

**Justification of 2024 Program Changes**

**Discretionary Appropriations (-\$13,228,000/ +0 FTE)**

The Service is not requesting funding for the appropriated (discretionary) portion of the National Wildlife Refuge Fund in order to support higher priorities. This Fund was intended to compensate communities for lost tax revenue from Federal land acquisitions, but fails to take into account the economic benefits refuges provide to communities.

Mandatory Receipts: The 2024 estimate for National Wildlife Refuge Fund revenue from activities, such as grazing leases and timber sales, is \$8,000,000. The table below shows how the Service derives the funding amount available for payments to counties and other units of local government.

**National Wildlife Refuge Fund Estimates for Payments to Counties (Dollars in Thousands)**

Category/Element	2022 Actual	2023 Estimate	2024 Estimate	Program Change (+/-)
<b>Receipts and Expenses</b>				
Receipts Collected	8,957	8,000	8,000	0
Sequestration	-511	-456	-456	0
Recoveries	7	50	50	0
Expenses for Sales	-2,351	-2,624	-2,624	0
ANILCA Expenses	67	-30	-30	0
Estimated User-Pay Cost Share	-56	-56	-56	0
<b>Net Receipts -- Available during the following year</b>	<b>6,113</b>	<b>4,884</b>	<b>4,884</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Payments to Counties</b>				
Receipts Available - collected previous year		6,113	4,884	-1,229
Sequestration Restored		511	456	-55
Appropriations		13,228	0	-13,228
<b>Total Available for Payments to Counties</b>		<b>19,852</b>	<b>5,340</b>	<b>-14,512</b>

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# Contributed Funds



# Contributed Funds

## Appropriations Language

Activities funded from this account do not require appropriation language since there is permanent authority to use the receipts.

## Authorizing Statutes

*Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act* (16 U.S.C. 661-668). This Act authorized the Secretary of the Interior to accept donations of land and contributed funds in furtherance of the purposes of the Act.

*Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956* (16 U.S.C. 743b-7421). This Act authorizes loans for commercial fishing vessels; investigations of fish and wildlife resources; and cooperation with other agencies. The Service is also authorized to accept donations of real and personal property. P.L. 105-242 amended this Act to authorize cooperative agreements with nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, or State and local governments to construct, operate, maintain, or improve refuge facilities and services, and to promote volunteer outreach and education programs. Funds contributed by partners from sales and gifts must be deposited in a separate account in the Department of the Treasury.

*Land and Water Conservation Fund Act* (16 U.S.C. 4601-1h). This Act authorizes donations of fund, property, and personal services or facilities for the purposes of the Act.

*National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Act* (16 U.S.C. 742). Authorizes cooperative agreements with nonprofit partner organizations, academic institutions, or State and local governments to construct, operate, maintain, or improve refuge facilities and services, and to promote volunteer, outreach, and education programs.

*National Fish Hatchery System Volunteer Act* (120 STAT 2058-2061). Authorizes cooperative agreements with nonprofit partner organizations, academic institutions, or State and local governments to promote the stewardship of resources through biological monitoring or research; to construct, operate, maintain, or improve hatchery facilities, habitat and services, and to promote volunteer, outreach, and education programs.

**Appropriation: Contributed Funds**

Program Element	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024				Change from 2023 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Estimate	
Contributed Funds (\$000)	3,004	5,000	0	0	0	5,000	0
FTE	15	15	0	0	0	15	0

**Program Overview**

The Service accepts unsolicited contributions from other governments, private organizations, and individuals. Once collected, the funds are used to support a variety of fish and wildlife conservation projects that contribute to fulfillment of the Department of the Interior’s goals and the Service’s mission.

Contributions are difficult to forecast accurately due to external events. In recent years, annual contributions have ranged from approximately \$3.7 million in FY 2014 to \$6.2 million in FY 2020.

**2024 Program Performance**

The Service uses contributed funds to address its highest priority needs in concert with other types of funding. The funds in 2024 will be used for projects similar to those planned and completed in previous fiscal years. For example, the Service used contributed funds for the following activities in 2021:

**Fish and Aquatic Conservation:** The Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program (FAC) has built a partnership with North Dakota, which has been identified as a national model for supporting sport fisheries, in a State that has no hatcheries of their own. In FY 2021 the State contributed close to \$374,000 to produce game fish species to support a nearly \$1 billion annual recreational industry important to many rural communities in the State. FY 2021 contributed funds were also used to maintain and improve fish rearing ponds. North Dakota is an active participant in the rearing and distribution of Brown Trout, Chinook Salmon, Tiger Muskellunge, Rainbow Trout, Northern Pike, and Walleye at the Garrison Dam and Valley City National Fish Hatcheries.

Since 2014 the Service has received a total of \$1.7 million in contributed funds to support the Leadville National Fish Hatchery. Leadville is one of two hatcheries that work collaboratively with private and state partners to rear endangered Wyoming toads. In FY 2021, the contributed funds financed the Wyoming toad program, supported staff positions to manage the program, provided maintenance and upgrades to the toad facility and equipment, and provided for trail signs. The hatchery, like many in the National Hatchery System, provides on-site opportunities to recreate outdoors that are an important part of the local community. The ski trails, interpretive signs and other visitor support infrastructure made possible by these funds also play a vital role in supporting the physical and mental health of area residents during the continuing COVID pandemic.

The Bozeman Fish Technology Center (BTC) is a leader in the development of specialized feed that meets the nutritional needs of a wide range of aquatic and terrestrial species. Contributed funds helped with finding environmentally conscious solutions to meet the feed needs of our hatcheries and supporting the efforts of our partners to include Oregon State University, Virginia Tech and Tethy’s Aqua. Contributed funds supported the development and manufacturing of feeds for two species of fish, the June sucker and the blue sucker.

**Ecological Services (Alaska):** Funds provided by The Conservation Fund (TCF) to the Service were used for multiple restoration projects. For example, funds were used to replace failing culverts under Chena Spur Road and construct a weir structure to redirect flow, improve fish passage, and restore Cripple Creek near downtown Fairbanks to its historic channel. Replacement of the failing culvert at Chena Spur Road will open approximately seven miles of stream as well as 3,169 acres of riparian wetlands of the upper Cripple Creek’s natural channel benefiting the natural rearing habitat for chub, grayling, Chinook salmon, chum salmon, burbot, longnose sucker and sculpin. In another project, TCF funds were utilized to eradicate, control and prevent the spread of known infestations of the invasive aquatic weed Elodea, and restore aquatic resources in the Yukon River Basin. The planned restoration activities will eradicate Elodea in 230 surface acres of clearwater stream habitat on Totchaket Slough and approximately 40 surface acres of Chena Lake. Eradication of Elodea in these waterways will once again provide for rearing and spawning habitat for Chinook salmon, chum salmon, grayling and whitefish.

### **National Wildlife Refuge System:**

**Missouri Grasslands for Monarchs Project:** This project was completed in three phases with distinct accomplishments for monarch habitat conservation. Each project included restoring both migrating and breeding habitat beginning with 293 acres on Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in association with newly restored wetland habitat. Loess Bluffs NWR hired one two-year term position to work with volunteers in collecting native seeds, then distributing the seeds for restoration of habitat on a 40-acre tract on the refuge. Finally, the Missouri Private Lands Office worked with our conservation partners to help 58 landowners with additional cost-share to restore and enhance diverse habitat for monarchs and pollinators within 1,066 acres of private land on the Missouri flyway in Missouri, with the commitment to maintain that habitat for 10 years through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. Funds were also used to tag monarchs and educate the public on the importance of pollinators reaching over 36,000 citizens.



Figure 1 Monarch tagging with local students (credit FWS)

Figure 2 Monarchs on native forbs during fall migration in native prairie habitat (credit FWS)

**Bridging the Gap with Native Communities:** Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge coordinates and collaborates directly with over 50 Alaska Native villages each year. Funds targeted to “Bridging the Gap Between Native Communities” in FY 2020 were used to support the Refuge Information Technician (RIT) program. This program strives to improve communications between the Refuge and numerous Yupik, Chupik, and Athabascan communities within and around the Refuge by hiring locally from within these communities. As National Wildlife Refuge System employees, RITs coordinate government-to-government Tribal consultations, translate between English and the respective Alaska Native languages, foster stronger relationships between the Refuge and villages, and serve as liaisons with Tribal

governments. Funds were used to fund RIT travel to reach more villages on behalf of the Refuge, attend the Elder and Youth conference to further relationships across the State of Alaska, and to purchase safety equipment allowing the RITs to travel between communities on snow machines during the winter.

**Budget Estimate**

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The 2024 budget estimate for Contributed Funds is \$5,000,000 and 15 FTE.

# Miscellaneous Permanent Appropriations



# Miscellaneous Permanent Appropriations

## Appropriations Language

Activities funded from these mandatory spending accounts do not require appropriation language since they were authorized in previous years.

## Authorizing Statutes

*Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, as amended*, (P.L. 98-473, section 320; 98 Stat. 1874). Provides that all rents and charges collected for quarters of agencies funded by the Act shall be deposited and remain available until expended for the maintenance and operation of quarters of that agency.

*Flood Control Act, as amended*, (16 U.S.C. 460d). Provides that receipts collected from the sales of timber and crops produced on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers land leased by another Federal agency for natural resources conservation may be used to cover expenses of producing these products and for managing the land for natural resource purposes.

*Truckee-Carson Pyramid Lake Water Rights Settlement Act*, (P.L. 101-618, section 206(f)), as amended by Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for FY 1998, (P.L. 105-277). Authorizes certain revenues and donations from non-Federal entities to be deposited into the Lahontan Valley and Pyramid Lake Fish and Wildlife Fund to support restoration and enhancement of wetlands in the Lahontan Valley and to restore and protect the Pyramid Lake fishery, including the recovery of two endangered or threatened species of fish. Payments to the Bureau of Reclamation for storage in Northern Nevada's Washoe Project that exceed the operation and maintenance costs of Stampede Reservoir are deposited into the Fund and are available without further appropriation, starting in FY 1996. Beginning in FY 1998, P.L. 105-277 provides that receipts from the sales of certain lands by the Secretary of the Interior are to be deposited into the Lahontan Valley and Pyramid Lake Fish and Wildlife Fund.

*Commercial Filming Fee*, (P.L. 113-287). This law authorizes a fee system for commercial filming activities on Service land and to use the fees for expenditure by the Secretary, without further appropriation.

*Community Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998*, (16 U.S.C.742f). This Act authorizes the cooperative agreements with nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, or State and local governments to construct, operate, maintain, or improve refuge facilities and services, and to promote volunteer outreach and education programs.

**Appropriation: Miscellaneous Permanent Appropriations**

		2022 Actual	2023 Estimate	2024			Budget Request	Change from 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Operations and Maintenance of Quarters	(\$000)	3,816	3,400	0	0	0	3,400	0
	FTE	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Proceeds from Sales	(\$000)	283	275	0	0	0	275	0
	FTE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lahontan Valley & Pyramid Lake Fish and Wildlife Fund	(\$000)	2,053	1,000	0	0	-500	500	-500
	FTE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community Partnership Enhancement	(\$000)	0	100	0	0	0	100	0
	FTE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total, Miscellaneous Permanent Appropriations</b>	<b>(\$000)</b>	<b>6,152</b>	<b>4,775</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-500</b>	<b>4,275</b>	<b>-500</b>
	<b>FTE</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

**Program Overview**

**Operations and Maintenance of Quarters**

The Operations and Maintenance of Quarters (Quarters) Account uses receipts from the rental of Service-owned quarters to pay for maintenance of those quarters. Certain circumstances, including a lack of off-site residences and site isolation, require Service personnel to occupy government-owned quarters. Such work includes protecting fish hatchery stock (e.g. maintaining water flow to fish rearing ponds during freezing temperatures), monitoring water management facilities, ensuring the health and welfare of visitors, responding to fires and floods, and protecting government property.

**Proceeds From Sales, Water Resources Development Projects**

As described in 16 U.S.C. 460(d), receipts collected from the sale of timber and crops from National Wildlife Refuge System lands leased or licensed from the Department of the Army may be used to pay the costs of production of the timber and crops and for managing wildlife habitat. Twenty-three National Wildlife Refuges were established as overlay projects on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers land, and they are administered in accordance with cooperative agreements. The agreements provide that timber and grain may be harvested and sold with the receipts returned for development, conservation, maintenance, and utilization of such lands. The Service has used these funds in the past for soil amendments; road construction and repairs; and ditch and fence construction and maintenance. These expenses cannot exceed the receipt amounts deposited as proceeds from sales.

**Lahontan Valley and Pyramid Lake Fish and Wildlife Fund**

Pursuant to the Truckee-Carson Pyramid Lake Water Rights Settlement Act of 1990, the Lahontan Valley and Pyramid Lake Fish and Wildlife Fund receives revenues and donations from non-Federal parties to support the restoration and enhancement of wetlands in the Lahontan Valley and to restore and protect the Pyramid Lake fishery. Payments received from the Bureau of Reclamation’s Washoe and Truckee Storage Projects in excess of operation and maintenance costs for Stampede Reservoir are available without further

appropriation, as are donations made for express purposes and State cost-sharing funds. In addition, the Secretary of the Interior is authorized to deposit proceeds from the sale of certain lands and interests in lands into the Fund. Land sales proceeds are used primarily to pay annual water delivery costs for Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge, Northern Nevada's premier waterfowl hunting destination and part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

**Community Partnership Enhancement**

The Community Partnership fund was established to encourage volunteer programs, donations, and other contributions by persons or organizations for the benefit of a particular National Wildlife Refuge or complex. The partnership between a refuge or complex and non-Federal organizations may promote public awareness of the resources of the National Wildlife Refuge System and public participation in the conservation of resources. Partnerships may be in the form of a non-profit organization (as described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and is exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of that Code), academic institution, or State or local government agency to carry out projects or programs for a refuge or refuge complex. Funds may be used to promote education and the conservation of fish, wildlife, plants, and cultural and historical resources on a refuge or refuge complex.

**2024 Budget Estimate**

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The 2024 budget estimate for Miscellaneous Permanent Appropriations is \$4,275,000 and 1 FTE.

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# Administrative Provisions and Legislative Proposals



## *Administrative Provisions*

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service may carry out the operations of Service programs by direct expenditure, contracts, grants, cooperative agreements and reimbursable agreements with public and private entities. Appropriations and funds available to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service shall be available for repair of damage to public roads within and adjacent to reservation areas caused by operations of the Service; options for the purchase of land at not to exceed one dollar for each option; facilities incident to such public recreational uses on conservation areas as are consistent with their primary purpose; and the maintenance and improvement of aquaria, buildings, and other facilities under the jurisdiction of the Service and to which the United States has title, and which are used pursuant to law in connection with management, and investigation of fish and wildlife resources: Provided, That notwithstanding 44 U.S.C. 501, the Service may, under cooperative cost sharing and partnership arrangements authorized by law, procure printing services from cooperators in connection with jointly produced publications for which the cooperators share at least one-half the cost of printing either in cash or services and the Service determines the cooperator is capable of meeting accepted quality standards: Provided further, That the Service may accept donated aircraft as replacements for existing aircraft: Provided further, That notwithstanding 31 U.S.C. 3302, all fees collected for non-toxic shot review and approval shall be deposited under the heading "United States Fish and Wildlife Service—Resource Management" and shall be available to the Secretary, without further appropriation, to be used for expenses of processing of such non-toxic shot type or coating applications and revising regulations as necessary, and shall remain available until expended[: Provided further, That the second proviso under the heading "United States Fish and Wildlife Service—Resource Management" in title I of division E of Public Law 112–74 (16 U.S.C. 7421–1) is amended by striking "2012" and inserting "2023" and striking "\$400,000" and inserting "\$750,000"]. *The Secretary may recover costs for response, assessment, and damages to Service resources from the unauthorized actions of private parties, including non-compliance with Service-issued permits, or for costs as otherwise provided by Federal, State, or local law, regulation, or court order as a result of the destruction, loss of, or injury to any living or non-living Service resource: Provided, That such damages may include compensation for the cost of replacing, restoring, or acquiring the equivalent of the damaged Service resource; the value of any significant loss of use of a Service resource pending its restoration, replacement, or the acquisition of an equivalent resource; or the value of the Service resource in the event the resource cannot be restored, replaced or re-acquired: Provided further, That response costs as described herein may include the following actions: preventing, minimizing, or abating destruction or loss of, or injury to, a Service resource; abating or minimizing the imminent risk of such destruction, loss, or injury; or monitoring the ongoing effects of any incident causing such destruction, loss, or injury: Provided further, That any instrumentality, including but not limited to a vessel, vehicle, aircraft, or other equipment or mechanism that destroys, causes the loss of, or injures any living or non-living Service resource or which causes the Secretary to undertake actions to prevent, minimize, or abate destruction, loss of, injury, or risk to such resource shall be liable in rem to the United States for response costs and damages resulting from such destruction, loss, injury, or risk to the same extent as a person would be liable under the same or similar circumstances: Provided further, That in addition to any other authority to accept donations, the Secretary may accept donations of money or services to meet expected, immediate, or ongoing response costs and damages: Provided further, That amounts and damages recovered by the Secretary for response and assessment costs, and donations collected pursuant to this provision, shall be credited to the "United States Fish and Wildlife Service — Resource Management" account, and shall remain available until expended for response costs and damage assessments conducted; restoration, replacement, or acquisition of Service resources; and monitoring and studying Service resources.*

(Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023.)

### **Justification of Language Change**

Deletion of the following wording:

Provided further, That the proviso under this heading in Public Law 112-74 is amended by striking “2012” and replacing it with “2023”; and striking “\$400,000” and replacing it with “\$750,000.”

This language is not necessary, as the change was incorporated in the 2023 Enacted Budget as permanent law.

Addition of the following wording:

The Secretary may recover costs for response, assessment, and damages to Service resources from the unauthorized actions of private parties, including non-compliance with Service-issued permits, or for costs as otherwise provided by Federal, State, or local law, regulation, or court order as a result of the destruction, loss of, or injury to any living or non-living Service resource: Provided, That such damages may include compensation for the cost of replacing, restoring, or acquiring the equivalent of the damaged Service resource; the value of any significant loss of use of a Service resource pending its restoration, replacement, or the acquisition of an equivalent resource; or the value of the Service resource in the event the resource cannot be restored, replaced or re-acquired: Provided further, That response costs as described herein may include the following actions: preventing, minimizing, or abating destruction or loss of, or injury to, a Service resource; abating or minimizing the imminent risk of such destruction, loss, or injury; or monitoring the ongoing effects of any incident causing such destruction, loss, or injury: Provided further, That any instrumentality, including but not limited to a vessel, vehicle, aircraft, or other equipment or mechanism that destroys, causes the loss of, or injures any living or non-living Service resource or which causes the Secretary to undertake actions to prevent, minimize, or abate destruction, loss of, injury, or risk to such resource shall be liable in rem to the United States for response costs and damages resulting from such destruction, loss, injury, or risk to the same extent as a person would be liable under the same or similar circumstances: Provided further, That in addition to any other authority to accept donations, the Secretary may accept donations of money or services to meet expected, immediate, or ongoing response costs and damages: Provided further, That amounts and damages recovered by the Secretary for response and assessment costs, and donations collected pursuant to this provision, shall be credited to the "United States Fish and Wildlife Service--Resource Management" account, and shall remain available until expended for response costs and damage assessments conducted; restoration, replacement, or acquisition of Service resources; and monitoring and studying Service resources.

This change adds language to provide the Service with the authority, similar to that of the National Park Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to seek compensation from responsible parties whose unauthorized actions injure or destroy Fish and Wildlife resources. Under current law, when Service resources are injured or destroyed, the costs of repair and restoration falls upon the appropriated budget for the affected field station or office. This is the case even when parties are ordered to pay restitution. Competing priorities can leave damaged Refuge System resources languishing until Congress appropriates funds to address the injury. This delay may result in more intensive injuries, higher costs of future redress of the injury, and long-term degradation of publicly-owned resources.

This provision would allow persons responsible for harm—not taxpayers—to pay for any injury they cause. Unlike some other land management agencies, the Service only has criminal penalties (fines) for those injuries occurring on Service property. In most cases, the injuries far exceed any fines recovered by the U.S. Government. With this authority, the recovery of damages for injury to Service resources would be used to reimburse assessment costs; prevent or minimize the risk of loss; monitor ongoing effects, and/or use those funds to restore, replace, or acquire resources equivalent to those injured or destroyed.

Significant examples suitable for damage recovery under this provision include a case of cutting the boundary fence at the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico where multiple sets of tire tracks were found indicating trespass by motor vehicle to the Refuge and damaging fragile desert habitat. The St. Mark's National Wildlife Refuge in Florida experienced damage to an entrance gate and its locking mechanism and the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico reported government signs that had been vandalized by spray paint rendering them unreadable.

Additionally, this language would also allow the Service to retain restitution payments ordered in cases prosecuted by the Justice Department such as in a recent case pertaining to illegal fishing and sale of lake trout from Lake Michigan, which was stocked by the FWS National Fish Hatcheries. In 2015 and 2016, the FWS Office of Law Enforcement conducted an undercover operation which resulted in dozens of citations. The U.S. Department of Justice prosecuted the defendants for illegally taking fish under the Lacey Act, in violation of underlying Michigan law, and many have already been ordered to pay restitution to the National Fish Hatcheries. The restitution order was based on actual fish counts of fish introduced by the hatchery and then illegally taken by the tribal fishers. In total, the restitution from all defendants will be over \$1 million. Some of the restitution payments have already been made, and the Service has sent those payments to Treasury. The Service anticipates receiving ongoing restitution payments as a result of this case.

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# 2023 Appendix



## Section 403 Compliance

**Purpose:** To fulfill legislative requirements for disclosure of program assessments used to support Government-wide, departmental, or agency initiatives or general operations. Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328):

*SEC. 403. The amount and basis of estimated overhead charges, deductions, reserves or holdbacks, including working capital fund and cost pool charges, from programs, projects, activities and subactivities to support government-wide, departmental, agency, or bureau administrative functions or headquarters, regional, or central operations shall be presented in annual budget justifications and subject to approval by the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Changes to such estimates shall be presented to the Committees on Appropriations for approval.*

Pursuant to the *Section 403* directive, the Service fully discloses its administrative costs as follows:

**NATIONAL COMMON PROGRAM SERVICES:** With the Administrative reorganization, the Service has consolidated all regional shared costs and national shared costs into a common program services charge. These charges account for specific administrative services for facilities management, procurement, human resources, financial and other services.

**NON-RESOURCE MANAGEMENT USER-PAY COST SHARE:** Non-Resource Management Programs continue to pay annually for the administrative services they consume. The funding received from Non-Resource Management Programs supplements central, regional and Servicewide support operations. Specifically, the Non-Resource Management Programs pay for their actual use of communication services and Workers' Compensation. Other costs, such as Washington and Regional office administration and Service-wide costs, such as Unemployment Compensation are measured through FTE usage.

**WORKERS' COMPENSATION:** The Service has historically paid workers' compensation costs centrally through the Servicewide bill paying account. As a result, programs were not aware of the costs that result from employee injuries. Since FY 2015, workers' compensation costs have been charged to the applicable programs. The Service made this change to address an audit finding and provide incentive for programs to participate in the Department's Return to Work initiative.

**ENTERPRISE-WIDE SERVICES:** In order to provide the necessary level of funding for Enterprise-wide and Working Capital Fund Direct Bill services, the Service assesses its resource management programs for costs that can be directly tracked back to users. This includes software licenses, cell phone costs, personnel system costs, employee badges and the like.

**RESERVES:** The Service Director may manage a deferred allocation fund of up to one-half of one percent of the current year Resource Management appropriation for each subactivity in excess of three million dollars. These management reserve funds are used for unanticipated requirements.

The Service strictly adheres to the policy that Congressional priorities must be funded in their entirety and are not subject to the deferred allocation or user-pay cost share.

Below shows administrative cost estimates for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024:

	<b>Fiscal Year 2023</b>
<b>External Administrative Costs</b>	
WCF Centralized Billings	\$27,253,817
WCF Direct Billings/Fee for Service	\$25,063,280
<b>Program Assessments</b>	
Holdbacks, Reserves, and Deductions	\$7,778,420
<b>Bureau Administrative Costs</b>	
National Common Program Services	\$32,407,294
Non-Resource Management User-Pay Cost Share	\$8,918,422
Workers' Compensation	\$4,124,000
Enterprise-Wide Services	\$28,802,264
	<b>Fiscal Year 2024</b>
<b>External Administrative Costs</b>	
WCF Centralized Billings	\$29,362,300
WCF Direct Billings/Fee for Service	\$25,897,500
<b>Program Assessments</b>	
Holdbacks, Reserves, and Deductions	\$9,220,290
<b>Bureau Administrative Costs/Central and Regional Operations</b>	
National Common Program Services	\$35,000,000
Non-Resource Management User-Pay Cost Share	\$11,918,422
Workers' Compensation	\$4,386,000
Enterprise-Wide Services	\$35,000,000

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

**Employee Count by Grade  
(Total Employment)**

	FY 2022 Actuals	FY 2023 Estimate	FY 2024 Estimate
Executive Level V .....	1	1	1
SES .....	21	23	23
<b>Subtotal.....</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>
SL - 00.....	0	0	0
ST - 00 .....	0	0	0
<b>Subtotal .....</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
GS/GM -15.....	138	139	140
GS/GM -14 .....	564	570	590
GS/GM -13 .....	1,480	1,495	1,520
GS -12 .....	1,845	1,864	1,950
GS -11 .....	1,527	1,543	1,696
GS -10 .....	6	6	7
GS - 9 .....	1,029	1,040	1,187
GS - 8 .....	113	114	125
GS - 7 .....	651	658	825
GS - 6 .....	201	203	223
GS - 5 .....	417	421	575
GS - 4 .....	121	122	134
GS - 3 .....	32	32	35
GS - 2 .....	4	4	4
GS - 1 .....	0	0	0
<b>Subtotal .....</b>	<b>8,128</b>	<b>8,211</b>	<b>9,011</b>
Other Pay Schedule Systems.....	641	679	789
<b>Total employment (actuals &amp; estimates) .....</b>	<b>8,791</b>	<b>8,914</b>	<b>9,824</b>

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE Allocations Received from Other Accounts						
Department Program	FY 2022 Actual		FY 2023 Enacted		FY 2024 Estimate	
	Budget Authority	Outlays	Budget Authority	Outlays	Budget Authority	Outlays
<b>Department of Agriculture:</b> Forest Pest Management x1105	85,240	96,963	85,000	85,072	85,000	85,000
<b>Department of the Interior:</b> <i>Office of Natural Resource                      Damage                      Assessment and                      Restoration</i> Damage Assessment 8300 x1618	2,123,318	1,657,393	2,000,000	2,036,996	2,000,000	2,000,000
Restoration 9800 x5198	30,000,000	49,801,155	30,000,000	30,000,000	30,000,000	30,000,000
<b>Office of Wildland Fire                      Coordination</b> Wildland Fire Management - 1125	129,220,141	98,408,869	130,000,000	129,766,042	130,000,000	130,000,000
<b>Office of the Secretary ,                      DOI</b> Bipartesan Infrastructure ERWG - X 0102.16	87,100,478	15,070,118	15,370,478	36,889,478	0	35,140,882
National Parks&Public Lands Mgmt (GAOA) Mgmt. of Land & Resources - Renewable Energy Coordination 22/23x1109	95,000,000	24,136,905	95,000,000	95,000,000	95,000,000	95,000,000
Energy Community Revitalization Program 22/30 14 X 02641.16 (Orphaned Wells Program)	2,150,000	29,641	0	645,000	0	0
15,996,000	22,301	0	4,798,800	0	0	
<b>Bureau of Land                      Management</b> Central Hazardous Materials Fund x1121	4,826,649	2,793,806	4,800,000	4,807,995	4,800,000	4,800,000
So. Nevada Public Lands Management X 5232	3,156,285	1,443,713	3,000,000	3,046,885	3,000,000	3,000,000
Energy Act - Permit Improvement x 5573	1,400,000	1,716,991	1,400,000	1,400,000	1,400,000	1,400,000
<b>Department of                      Transportation:</b> Federal Highway Administration-Discretionary 0500	325,219	1,492,064	300,000	307,566	300,000	300,000
Federal Highway Administration- Mandatory 8083	15,913,003	13,999,090	15,000,000	15,273,901	15,000,000	15,000,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>387,296,333</b>	<b>210,669,008</b>	<b>296,955,478</b>	<b>324,057,734</b>	<b>281,585,000</b>	<b>316,725,882</b>

# FWS BIL Spend Plan





## **Department of the Interior**

### **Fish and Wildlife Service**

## **Implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law**

### **Initial Spend Plan**

President Biden signed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law on November 15, 2021, making this once-in-a-generation investment in the Nation's infrastructure and economic competitiveness a reality. This Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will rebuild America's roads, bridges and rails, expand access to clean drinking water, ensure every American has access to high-speed internet, tackle the climate crisis, advance environmental justice, and invest in communities that have too often been left behind. The legislation will help ease inflationary pressures and strengthen supply chains by making long overdue improvements for our nation's ports, airports, rail, and roads. It will drive the creation of good-paying union jobs and grow the economy sustainably. The Department of the Interior will receive \$30.6 billion over five years in direct funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Of that, the Fish and Wildlife Service was directly appropriated \$455 million over five years for programs related to the President's America the Beautiful initiative. These funds will help address climate change and restore ecosystems to provide long lasting benefits to the American people and make America more resilient.

The following spend plan details how the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) plans to execute these investments adhering to the Administration's implementation priorities. The Department has articulated these priorities as:

- investing public dollars efficiently, working to avoid waste, and focusing on measurable outcomes for the American people;
- increasing the competitiveness of the United States economy, including through implementing the Act's Made-in-America requirements and bolstering United States manufacturing and supply chains;
- improving job opportunities for millions of Americans by focusing on high labor standards for these jobs, including prevailing wages and the free and fair chance to join a union;
- investing public dollars equitably, including through the Justice40 Initiative, which is a Government-wide effort toward a goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits from Federal investments in climate and clean energy flow to disadvantaged communities;
- building infrastructure that is resilient and that helps combat the crisis of climate change; and
- effectively coordinating with State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments in implementing these critical investments.



## Fish and Wildlife Service

### FWS Direct Appropriations

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides a total of \$455 million to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for the programs and activities shown in the table below. Funding is provided as emergency discretionary appropriations and is available for obligation until expended.

		<b>FWS Total Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funding</b>					
(\$ in 000s)		<b>FY 2022</b>	<b>FY 2023</b>	<b>FY 2024</b>	<b>FY 2025</b>	<b>FY 2026</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Account Name</b>							
22XF1611BL/FFRK40000	Klamath Basin	30,780	30,780	30,780	30,780	30,780	153,900
22XF1611BL/FGOK90000	Klamath Basin	1,458	1,458	1,458	1,458	1,458	7,290
Office of the Inspector General	Directed Transfer (only if specified in bill)	162	162	162	162	162	810
Account Name, Total		32,400	32,400	32,400	32,400	32,400	162,000
<b>Account Name</b>							
22XF1611BL/FFRT40000	Lake Tahoe	3,230	3,230	3,230	3,230	3,230	16,150
22XF1611BL/FGOT90000	Lake Tahoe	153	153	153	153	153	765
Office of the Inspector General	Directed Transfer (only if specified in bill)	17	17	17	17	17	85
Account Name, Total		3,400	3,400	3,400	3,400	3,400	17,000
<b>Account Name</b>							
22XF1611BL/FSCS10000	Sage-Steppe	9,500	9,500	9,500	9,500	9,500	47,500
22XF1611BL/FGOS90000	Sage-Steppe	450	450	450	450	450	2,250
Office of the Inspector General	Directed Transfer (only if specified in bill)	50	50	50	50	50	250
Account Name, Total		10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	50,000
<b>Account Name</b>							
22XF1611BL/FFRD40000	Delaware Basin	4,940	4,940	4,940	4,940	4,940	24,700
22XF1611BL/FGOD90000	Delaware Basin	234	234	234	234	234	1,170
Office of the Inspector General	Directed Transfer (only if specified in bill)	26	26	26	26	26	130
Account Name, Total		5,200	5,200	5,200	5,200	5,200	26,000
<b>Account Name</b>							
22XF1611BL/FFRF40000	Fish Passage	38,000	38,000	38,000	38,000	38,000	190,000
22XF1611BL/FGOF90000	Fish Passage	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	9,000
Office of the Inspector General	Directed Transfer (only if specified in bill)	200	200	200	200	200	1,000
Account Name, Total		40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	200,000
<b>FWS, Total</b>		<b>91,000</b>	<b>91,000</b>	<b>91,000</b>	<b>91,000</b>	<b>91,000</b>	<b>455,000</b>

These programs will provide habitat restoration, invasive species control, conservation of at-risk and listed species and other benefits to four significant ecosystems as well as opportunities to restore habitat connectivity for aquatic species around the country.

## FWS Implementation Strategy

### Bureau Governance Structure

The FWS implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding will be led by an Executive Team led by the FWS Deputy Director, and made up of the following personnel:

- Deputy Director
- Assistant Director Management and Administration
- Pacific Southwest Regional Director
- Northeast Regional Director
- Assistant Director Fish and Aquatic Conservation
- Mountain-Prairie Regional Director



- Assistant Director, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs
- Assistant Director, National Wildlife Refuge System
- Assistant Director, Ecological Services.

Staff support will be provided by the Division of Budget and Performance. The Communications lead is the Assistant Chief, Public Affairs.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Executive team will meet regularly to establish milestones and consider progress, as well as address implementation issues that may arise. Leads for services essential to successful implementation are on the team to allow for quick resolution of any issues related to grant administration, human resources, contracting and acquisition, and similar efforts. Monthly reports will be provided to the Executive Team by the Division of Budget and Performance.

### **Administration**

The Service will track administrative costs separately from program costs. There is no statutory limit for administrative costs. The Service intends to set aside sufficient funds each year for administration. The Service will also transfer 0.5 percent to OIG, per the statute.

## **Klamath Basin Restoration Activities**

### **Program Managers**

Pacific Southwest Regional Director, executive lead  
Klamath Basin Collaborative Coordinator

### **Program Description and Objectives**

Funding provided will be allocated for habitat restoration and water right acquisition to help restore the Klamath ecosystem, as well as for enhanced hatchery production of listed Klamath species (Lost River and shortnose suckers).

The Service's Klamath Basin Restoration Program will fund projects and activities identified through a collaborative, transparent and science-based process. The Service intends to use its science-based strategic conservation plans, coupled with input from Tribes and other conservation partners at annual stakeholder workshops to develop a yearly strategy for project selection. Examples of the plans the Service will use to guide this work include: *the multi-partner developed Integrated Fisheries Restoration and Monitoring Plan (IFRMP)*; *Klamath NWR Complex Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs)*; *Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program Strategic Plan, 2022-2026*; and *the Revised Recovery Plan for Lost River Sucker and Shortnose Sucker*. Funds will be distributed through a combination of competitive contracts, Tribal grants and other grants, and co-operative agreements. The activities that will be funded represent an expansion of existing activities that span multiple FWS programs.



The objectives of the Service's Klamath Basin Restoration Program include enhancing captive rearing of listed sucker species at the Klamath Falls National Fish Hatchery, addressing water quality/quantity issues throughout the Basin [e.g., water quantity at Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge and water quality in Upper Klamath Lake (UKL)] and supporting projects that will help improve conditions for waterfowl, salmon, suckers and other native fish species throughout the Klamath Basin.

### **Implementation Strategy**

The Fish and Wildlife Service will target projects that will maximize environmental benefits, can be initiated quickly, will create jobs in the Klamath Basin and improve conditions for the many Tribes and communities that depend on a healthy, resilient, and well-functioning watershed.

The Service intends to host/sponsor additional stakeholder workshops with Tribes, States and other stakeholders to help identify and evaluate candidate restoration projects and to develop annual spending plans based on restoration priorities. From these workshops, the annual spend plan and the details surrounding the specific restoration projects will be developed. The Service expects that funding will be available for on-the-ground restoration actions in late 2024 to early 2025.

### **Performance**

Monitoring plans will be required as part of project proposals and selected projects will be required to implement those monitoring plans. These plans will track progress during and after the proposed project period to ensure project success and adaptively address new challenges and opportunities as they arise. The Service is developing additional performance measures for this funding.

#### FY 2022 Activities and Accomplishments

For fiscal year 2022 allocated funds, more than 30 individual restoration projects and the construction of a new conservation hatchery are being funded totaling approximately \$30M in the Klamath Basin.

- Project selection followed an extensive period of Tribal and stakeholder engagement undertaken throughout the fiscal year. For Tribes, the Service held multiple Nation-to-Nation meetings with the six federally recognized Tribes of the Klamath Basin.
- The Service held multiple workshops in May and June with state and federal agencies, and local government, which included Siskiyou County, CA, Modoc County, CA, Humboldt County, CA and Klamath County, OR, to gather feedback on submitted projects.
- Project recommendations were made by a team of Service staff from offices in the Basin that thoroughly vetted projects based on Tribal/stakeholder feedback and objective criteria identified in the NOFO. Include significant accomplishments and announcements consistent with the milestone tracker.



- Most FY 2022 funds were obligated by September 30.

#### FY 2023 Planned Activities and Milestones

- NOFO/guidance release – issued March 2023
- Stakeholder engagements - Third quarter 2023
- FY 2023 Project solicitation/Project refinement process – Third quarter 2023
- Award/Project announcements – Fourth quarter 2023

#### FY 2024 Planned Activities

- NOFO/guidance release – Second quarter 2024
- Stakeholder engagements - Third quarter 2024
- FY 2023 Project solicitation/Project refinement process – Third quarter 2024
- Award/Project announcements – Fourth quarter 2024

## **Lake Tahoe Restoration Activities #2**

### **Program Managers**

Pacific Southwest Regional Director, executive lead

Pacific Southwest Assistant Regional Director, Fish and Aquatic Conservation staff lead

### **Program Description and Objectives**

The program objectives align with the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act Section 5(d)(2) which states *The Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in coordination with the Assistant Secretary, the Planning Agency, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Nevada Department of Wildlife, shall deploy strategies consistent with the Lake Tahoe Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan to prevent the introduction or spread of aquatic invasive species in the Lake Tahoe region.*

### **Implementation Strategy**

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are commonly spread by activities such as boating, fishing, hatchery releases, and aquarium dumping. The Lake Tahoe Region is not only threatened by new introductions of AIS to Lake Tahoe from other waterbodies, but also the expansion of existing populations within the lake that imperil Lahontan cutthroat trout (LCT) and other native aquatic species and the habitat on which they depend.

AIS control measures are permitted under the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act for established populations of invasive plants, fish, and invertebrates. Under the Lake Tahoe AIS Management Plan, these invasive species are targeted for removal to reduce their impact and limit their spread.



The FWS will primarily use funding in direct collaboration with the Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) and other partners, in support of implementation and evaluation of the Lake Tahoe AIS Management Plan. Priority actions include aquatic invasive fish removal such as management of tributaries to Lake Tahoe to remove and prevent migration invasive species into priority conservation waters; aquatic invasive invertebrate removal, research and monitoring plans, AIS Prevention and Biosecurity projects that will augment existing prevention programs under the Lake Tahoe Management Plan, and aquatic invasive plant removal, with emphasis in the Tahoe Keys.

## **Performance**

Program performance will be measured with existing metrics in the Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) Tracker, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Thresholds, and the additional metrics identified in the Lake Tahoe AIS Action Agenda. These metrics include acres treated, number of projects completed, percent increase or decrease of AIS infested acres, and reductions in biomass of invasive fish and invertebrates, and the response of LCT and other native species to the available habitat in Lake Tahoe.

### FY 2022 Activities and Accomplishments

For fiscal year 2022 allocated funds, cooperative agreements were awarded to the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) for high priority aquatic invasive species projects. The funding represents a historic effort dedicated to restoring the Lake Tahoe Basin ecosystem and emphasizes the Administration's commitment to inclusive engagement with Tribes, partners and stakeholders.

In selecting projects, we considered the following criteria:

- Shovel ready projects
- Engaging Tribal and underserved communities
- Importance of strengthening existing and developing new partnerships
- Alignment with existing AIS management plans

In fiscal year 2022 the Lake Tahoe BIL implementation used the longstanding partnership the USFWS Lahontan Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office has with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) and the multi-agency AIS Coordinating Committee to select highest priority projects through the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act. The BIL funded projects are consistent with the 2014 AIS Management Plan and the 2019 AIS Action Agenda.

### FY 2023 Planned Activities and Milestones

- Stakeholder meetings – Second quarter 2023
- Project selection – Third quarter 2023
- Project awards – Fourth quarter 2023

### FY 2024 Planned Activities

- Stakeholder meetings – Second quarter 2024



- Project selection – Third quarter 2024
- Project awards – Fourth quarter 2024

## **Sagebrush Ecosystem Conservation**

### **Program Managers**

Mountain-Prairie Regional Director, executive lead

Mountain-Prairie Assistant Regional Director, Migratory Birds/Science Applications, staff lead

Coordinator, Sagebrush Ecosystem Team, staff lead

### **Program Description and Objectives**

This program builds on an existing collaborative effort by the Service and our public and private partners to conserve the sagebrush ecosystem of the American West and the nationally significant biological, cultural and economic resources it supports. Working across 13 Western States and multiple jurisdictions, this partnership is using leading-edge science and a Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) approach to identify the most pressing threats to a sustainable sagebrush ecosystem, such as invasive species and wildfire, and investing in tangible, measurable actions to address those threats in the face of a changing climate.

Operating on a landscape that comprises one-third of the contiguous United States, the Service and our partners such as the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service and the States, are deploying innovative technical tools to identify the most intact, climate-resilient “core” geographies within sagebrush and target on-the-ground habitat conservation projects to defend those cores and the natural resources values they support.

The additional funding made available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will accelerate and scale up the work of this partnership. Through the Service’s Sagebrush Ecosystem Team (SET) – a cross-programmatic, multi-region working group – the Service will use cooperative agreements and related mechanisms to acquire mission-critical science and to deliver voluntary habitat conservation projects through Private Landowner Agreements, Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances and other partnership-driven work.

These projects will focus on (a) protecting sagebrush habitat against the spread of invasive annual grasses and the destructive wildfires they fuel (b) removing encroaching conifers from sagebrush habitat for the benefit of migratory birds and other native wildlife species and (c) restoring mesic (wet) habitat to combat the effects of extreme drought.

As discussed above, the Service is one partner in a larger constellation of public and private entities, all pulling together toward a common vision for a healthy sagebrush ecosystem working for wildlife and people. This is a multi-decade effort that began with efforts to conserve the Greater sage-grouse and has evolved into a larger, ecosystem-level initiative



guided by numerous, interlocking plans, strategies, and partnerships, including but not limited to:

- The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Sagebrush Conservation Strategy and associated landscape conservation design (which links directly to the Service's SHC approach in sagebrush).
- The Bureau of Land Management's ongoing efforts to revise land use plans for sagebrush habitats (which relates to various related products, such as the Department of the Interior's Science Framework for Conservation and Restoration of the Sagebrush Biome).
- The US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service's Sagebrush Biome: Framework for Conservation Action.
- The Intermountain West Joint Venture's Partnering to Conserve Sagebrush Rangelands campaign.
- Various tribes throughout the sage-steppe ecosystem.

## **Performance**

As mentioned above, the Service is employing an SHC approach to our sagebrush conservation work. Monitoring is an integral component of SHC and generates new information about species population response to habitat treatments, which the Service and our partners then use to adapt management actions. For our sagebrush conservation work, we have identified priority species (three sagebrush-obligate migratory bird species and Greater sage-grouse), set population objectives for these species, and are currently developing a robust monitoring scheme to gather, analyze data on how these priority species are responding, for example, to removal of invasive grasses in core geographies. Additionally, we will evaluate other existing performance measures for their utility in tracking this effort (e.g., acres/miles restored. The Service maintains several existing databases, including Habitat Information Tracking System (HabITS) (used by the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program), the Conservation Efforts Database (<https://conservationefforts.org/>), and a regional Project Tracking System (PTS), all of which will be leveraged to monitor and report on these funds.

### FY 2022 Activities and Accomplishments

Allocated \$9.5 million in strategic investments in on-the-ground conservation delivery projects, actionable science, and critical capacity, including:

- \$8 million in 42 priority, partner-driven sagebrush habitat conservation projects across 9 states in sagebrush range.
- \$1 million for 10 collaborative, co-produced science projects to inform and adapt habitat conservation and,
- \$500,000 in targeted capacity to support project execution, tracking and reporting, and communications.

### FY 2023 Planned Activities and Milestones

- In FY 2022 we selected projects for both FY 2022 and FY 2023.
- In FY 2023 we will continue to implement these projects.



### FY 2024 Planned Activities

- Because in FY 2022 we selected projects for both FY 2022 and FY 2023, FY 2024 will be similar to the process we used to select projects in FY 2022.
- NOFO/guidance release – We will continue to use existing NOFOs linked to our primary projects/activities to increase the efficiency of our process.
- Award/Project announcements – We anticipate project selection in the spring of FY 2024.

## **Delaware River Basin Restoration Program**

### **Program Managers**

Northeast Regional Director, executive lead  
Landscape Partnership Coordinator, staff lead

### **Program Description and Objectives**

The Delaware River Basin program provides competitive matching grants for habitat conservation to State and local governments, nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and other eligible entities in the Delaware River Basin in partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The Delaware River Watershed Conservation Collaborative includes more than 40 partner agencies and organizations.

Since 2018, the fund has awarded \$26.6 million to 123 projects, which generated \$46 million in match, for a total conservation impact of \$72.6 million. The Delaware River Basin Conservation Act (DRBCA) is synchronized with a complementary funding program, the Delaware River Restoration Fund, which is sponsored by the William Penn Foundation and invests an additional \$2 million to \$3 million annually in clean water programs.

With \$5.2 million in Federal funding, allocated in FY 2024 from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law we will fund projects that make natural systems, and the human and natural communities that depend upon them, more resilient to change, and protect ecosystem services, like clean water and flood protection. Priority will be given to projects that support the four main priorities of the DWCF program: fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flow management, and equitable access to nature for all communities.

### **Performance Metrics:**

The following metrics will be used to measure the success of BIL-funded projects occurring in the Delaware River watershed. These include:

- Total number of fish passage barriers removed or bypassed
- Fish passage improvements - miles of stream opened
- Instream restoration - miles restored



- MP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction – Lbs. sediment avoided annually
- Economic benefits – number of jobs created
- Acres under improved management (forested, agricultural)
- Acres of public access
- Wetland acres restored
- Volunteer participation

#### FY 2022 Activities and Accomplishments

- In fiscal year 2022, the [Delaware River Basin Restoration program](#) allocated BIL funds to 12 projects based on these projects technical merit, cost efficiencies, and alignment with BIL funding priorities.
- BIL funds supported a diversity of conservation and restoration projects that contribute to the social health and economic vitality of the communities in the Delaware River watershed. The 12 BIL projects will advance ecosystem resilience, aquatic organism passage, flood mitigation and improve community access and engagement, specifically in environmental justice communities in the Delaware River watershed.
- It is projected that these 12 projects will create 18 new jobs, open 65 miles of stream by removing 9 barriers to aquatic organism passage, improve 0.6 miles of instream habitat, improve management of 27.5 acres (5.34 acres of improved storm water management and 22.25 acres of improved forest management), and prevent 84,000 lbs. of sediment from entering the tributaries of the Delaware River. All while engaging over 200 volunteers in conservation programming.

#### FY 2023 Planned Activities and Milestones

- Meeting with the Federal Partners to discuss BIL investments throughout the watershed held in December, 2022
- Request for Proposal released , Proposals due – March 16, 2023
  - FY 2023 Grant Slate to be finalized in the Third Quarter of 2023
  - Award notifications, press release, and announcement event - Third Quarter 2023

#### FY 2024 Planned Activities

- Meeting with the Federal Partners to discuss BIL investments throughout the watershed - First quarter 2024
- Request for Proposal released, technical assistance “proposal labs,” applicant support webinars, and one-on-one meetings - Second Quarter 2024
- Proposals due - Second Quarter 2024
- Technical and programmatic reviews
- FY 2023 Grant Slate finalized - Third Quarter 2024
- Award notifications, press release, and announcement event - Third Quarter 2024



## **National Fish Passage Program**

### **Program Managers**

Assistant Director Fish and Aquatic Conservation, executive lead  
Branch of Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation, staff lead

### **Program Description and Objectives**

The National Fish Passage Program (NFPP) is an existing program that relies on a network of Service biologists and engineers stationed throughout the country to provide technical expertise, financial assistance, and coordination support to complete aquatic ecosystem restoration projects. The Service works with Federal agencies, State governments, private landowners, Tribes, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to restore fish passage and aquatic connectivity by removing or bypassing barriers. Projects range in size from large-scale dam removals, to the repair or removal of culverts at road-stream crossings, to the installation of fish screens at agricultural water diversions. The NFPP has reopened access to thousands of miles of habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms.

The NFPP is an essential element of Service efforts to tackle climate change, deliver environmental justice, and build our economy. In addition to providing benefits for fish and aquatic species, the NFPP's work to restore degraded and fragmented aquatic habitats decreases public safety hazards and improves infrastructure resilience by reducing flood risks, removing obsolete dams, and improving water delivery for local agriculture irrigation districts. This important work also creates construction, engineering, and other jobs, stimulating the local economy.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law requires that NFPP funds be used "for restoring fish and wildlife passage by removing in-stream barriers and providing technical assistance." A portion of the funding provided each year will be used to provide technical assistance (e.g., project management, biological expertise, engineering support, environmental compliance, and monitoring). Funding to external partners will be distributed via cooperative agreements and grants.

Each Service region works collaboratively throughout the year with a range of Federal and non-Federal partners to identify and develop fish passage projects. As such, a wide range of projects are currently in the pipeline through the existing collaborative efforts at the local and regional scale. For FY 2024, we will utilize these existing collaborative efforts and expand project solicitation to new potential partners through a variety of efforts. These efforts include, but are not limited to, Tribal listening sessions, increased outreach to new partners including disadvantaged communities via regional and field staff, and efforts to increase collaboration with other Federal agencies.

The Service also is currently facilitating ongoing efforts with Federal and non-Federal partners to increase collaboration and coordination in the delivery of fish passage funds through BIL.



Recommendations for consideration by Federal agency leadership are to be provided to the group next year. Some of these recommendations may influence the criteria, process, and/or timing for selecting projects and delivering/implementing BIL funds through NFPP in the future.

## **Performance**

Current performance measures for NFPP include the number of fish passage barriers removed, along with the number of miles of upstream habitat reopened for fish and other aquatic organisms. Other metrics include the number of partners involved and the amount of funding leveraged.

### FY 2022 Activities and Accomplishments

- In fiscal year 2022, National Fish Passage Program (NFPP) allocated funds (\$38 million) to 40 projects to restore rivers, protect wildlife, support communities, and improve climate resilience.
- These projects were selected to provide benefits for priority species and their habitat, climate resilience, and public safety.
- The 40 projects selected will remove a total of 100 barriers and reopen over 5,000 miles of river and streams once complete. The 40 projects encompass 50 culvert removals or retrofits, more than 25 dam removals, and other important projects ranging from restoration of headwater springs, to restoring connectivity to a tidal freshwater marsh.

### FY 2023 Planned Activities and Milestones

- Tribal listening sessions held in November and December, 2022
- Published NOFO in November, 2022
- NOFO Closed in December 2022
- FY 2023 project list to be selected in March, 2023

### FY 2024 Planned Activities

- Tribal listening sessions – First Quarter 2024
- Publish NOFO - First Quarter 2024
- NOFO Closing – First Quarter 2024
- FY 2023 project list selected – Second Quarter 2024