



Recovering America's Wildlife Act Updates Will Benefit More Conservation Partners

The bipartisan amendment to S. 2372 offered in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee preserves the core of the original bill, while also ensuring that federal, state, tribal, and private partners have the resources to work together to recover federally endangered and threatened species and implement important infrastructure projects. The backbone of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act--dedicated funding for states, territories, and tribes to implement locally led, on-the-ground conservation projects—remains in place and is only enhanced by the additional resources to reduce the recovery backlog.

In the early years of the bill, some funding would be shifted into supporting recovery programs for endangered and threatened species, and important infrastructure and other projects. This change will help the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service keep pace with the considerably increased funding for state and tribal wildlife programs, and for infrastructure, restoration, public land, and other projects, which will add to the Service's workload as well.

Farmers, ranchers, and other private landowners and parties are among the primary beneficiaries of these changes, which invest in popular voluntary wildlife and habitat programs that help those that conserve wildlife on their lands with funding and other benefits.

The changes to S. 2372 are summarized below.

Creates an “Endangered Species Recovery and Habitat Conservation Legacy Fund”

This fund will facilitate the recovery of endangered and threatened species, and the implementation of infrastructure and other projects, with one-time investment of \$750 million, distributed evenly over four years (\$185.5 million from FY22-FY25).

- **Endangered Species Recovery Grants:**

The congressionally chartered National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will manage a new competitive matching grant program to expedite the recovery of endangered and threatened species. \$300 million will be available for grants to support the best proposals that reduce the growing backlog in finalizing and implementing species recovery plans, which are widely supported as effective and essential for recovering wildlife. 1/4 of ESA listed species do not yet have a recovery plan yet, and many existing recovery plans are outdated. Funding and implementation of recovery plans and related activities will recover endangered species more quickly, and create added certainty for private landowners, industry partners and other stakeholders.

- **Project Consultation Funding:**

\$75 million will be provided annually for four years, totaling \$300 million, to give the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service added capacity to keep up with the recent increases in funding for infrastructure, public land restoration, and other projects. The Service is responsible for making sure those projects do not jeopardize endangered and threatened species by consulting with the federal agencies in charge of those projects on their impacts. This funding will help prevent a backlog in consultation that could slow important projects down.

- **Expanded Wildlife & Habitat Partnership Programs:**

\$112.5 million will be provided for popular, voluntary partnership programs that benefit a wide range of wildlife and habitats, and provide financial support for private landowner conservation efforts on farms and forests. These programs include the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, the Coastal Program, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Migratory Bird Joint Ventures, and other programs. \$28,125 will be provided annually over four years.

- **Voluntary Conservation Agreements**

\$37.5 million will be provided to expand popular voluntary conservation agreements that help private landowners and others to implement and comply with the ESA, including [Habitat Conservation Plans](#), [Safe Harbor Agreements](#), and [Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances](#).

None of these funds can be used to list any species or designate any critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act. These funds may also not be used to acquire any federal land, to reintroduce or recover any non-essential experimental populations of endangered wildlife, or to recover any species outside the United States or its territories.

Funding these programs will not increase the overall cost of Recovering America's Wildlife Act because the funds come from a gradual ramp up in the states' funding. The following funding ramp is designed to give states time to accommodate the increased funding and meet the 25% match requirement.

- \$850 million in FY22
- \$1.1 billion in FY23
- \$1.2 billion in FY24
- \$1.3 billion in FY25

Unused and unmatched funds will be made available for programs conserving waterfowl and other migratory birds. Tribal wildlife funding will not be ramped up, it will be \$97.5 million per year.

Clarifies Application to Alaska Native Corporations and Tribes

The tribal aspects of an amendment added to the House bill at markup has been added to the Senate bill. It ensures Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations can receive funding, and that state management is limited to non-federal trust species. It will maintain the status quo on wildlife management jurisdiction throughout Alaska, and is supported by the Alaska Dept. of Game and Fish, Alaska Regional Association, and Alaska Native Village Corporation Association.

Additional Clarity and Accountability

- A "Statement of Purpose" was added to clarify the intent of this bill and reads, "...for the purpose of avoiding the need to list species, or recovering species currently listed as a threatened species or an endangered species, under the Endangered Species Act."
- The Innovation Grants review committee will now include a representative of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to provide technical assistance.
- Administrative fees for the Innovation Grants program will be capped at 3%, instead of 1.85%, to align the Senate bill with the House bill.
- Seven years after the bill is enacted the Government Office of Accountability (GAO) will conduct a study to examine the progress states, territories, tribes have made towards preventing fish and wildlife from becoming endangered.
- A change was made in the state and territory reporting requirements to streamline the process. Individual states and territories will now share their reports with the USFWS. The USFWS will consolidate and summarize these into one report that will be shared with the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and the House Natural Resources Committee.