



BUDGET The United States
Department of the Interior
JUSTIFICATIONS

and Performance Information
Fiscal Year 2025

**FISH AND WILDLIFE
SERVICE**

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

Fiscal Year 2025 President's Budget

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Executive Summary

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is to work with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service is the oldest conservation agency, tracing its lineage back to 1871. It is the only agency in the Federal Government whose primary responsibility is management of biological resources for the American public. The backbone of the Service is its nearly 9,000 dedicated employees working across the country. This year the Service continues to work on developing a shared set of values to help employees deliver our conservation mission for the 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 570 refuges spanning the country, this system protects iconic species and provides some of the best hunting, fishing, recreational and wildlife viewing opportunities on Earth.

In 2023 the Service celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act. The ESA is our country's most important law for protecting domestic fish, wildlife and plants. The ESA provides a critical safety net for fish, wildlife and plants and has prevented the extinction of hundreds of imperiled species, as well as promoted the recovery of many others, and conserved their habitats. 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.



*35th Annual Catch A Rainbow Kids Fishing Derby
Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery
Photo Credit: USFWS*

Working in close collaboration with our Federal, State, and Tribal partners, the Service has achieved historic successes, recovering species from the brink of extinction, restoring critical habitat, and applying a balanced approach for building better natural and human communities.

The FY 2025 budget represents a holistic approach to conservation and our people, supporting the mental health, wellness, and capacity for law enforcement programs; the Native American Graves Protection and

Repatriation Act (NAGPRA); the National Seed Strategy, and improved customer service through a consolidated, modernized ePermits program.

The 2025 budget promotes investments to tackle climate change effects on Service trust resources, conserve American lands and wildlife, reconnect Americans with the outdoors, enable economic development, and create good-paying job opportunities.

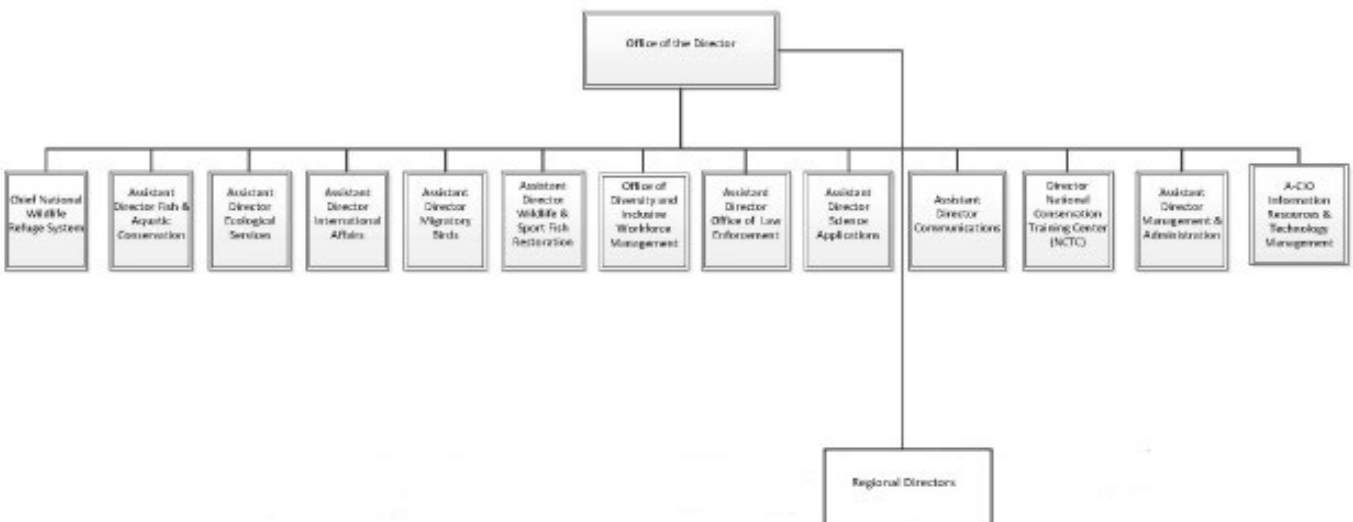
The Service's Organization

The Service has headquarters in Washington, D.C. and Falls Church, Virginia, with eight regional offices and almost 800 field stations. These stations include 570 National Wildlife Refuges, 71 National Fish Hatcheries, 51 Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices, 79 Ecological Services Field Stations, six 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 13 embassies overseas. The Service manages more than 850 million acres of lands and waters, including the national wildlife refuges, 38 wetland management districts, 48 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 and private organizations, and individuals. Partnerships are one of the most important activities the Service engages in as an agency. In fact, it is a key part of our mission, “working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.”

The Director reports to the Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretary for Fish, 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.

(See organizational chart, next page)



Overview of FY 2025 Budget Request

Budget Authority (\$000)	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025 President's Budget	Change from 2024 CR (+/-)
Current Authority without Supplementals	1,773,292	1,773,292	1,886,091	112,799
<i>Bipartisan Infrastructure Law*</i>	98,044	90,545	90,545	0
<i>Supplemental - Construction</i>	247,000			0
Current Authority with Supplementals	2,118,336	1,863,837	1,976,636	112,799
Permanent Authority**	2,118,762	1,921,632	2,022,745	101,113
Total – with supplementals	4,237,098	3,785,469	3,999,381	213,912
Discretionary	6,652	6,663	7,082	419
Mandatory	373	444	444	0
Transfers/Alloc.	1,617	1,652	1,657	5
TOTAL FTEs	8,642	8,759	9,183	424

*net of transfers

**net of sequestration and transfers

Overview

The 2025 President's Budget for the Service totals \$4.0 billion, \$213.9 million above the 2024 Continuing Resolution (CR), including current appropriations of \$2.0 billion, and \$2.0 billion available under permanent appropriations, most of which is provided directly to States for fish and wildlife restoration and conservation. In total, the Service estimates the budget request will support 9,183 full-time equivalents (FTEs). The budget for the principal Service operating account, Resource Management, is \$1.7 billion, an increase of \$150.9 million.

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 Service's mission is Conservation, and this budget supports the Service's core conservation work. For example, funding supports Service 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 Service conservation programs aimed at stemming the effects of climate change, and also provides increased support for endangered species recovery.

The Service's ability to address the threats that face wildlife and ecosystems relies on the capacity of its programs. This budget invests in that capacity, with additional funds for Endangered Species consultation and other environmental permitting work, as well as funding for migratory birds and native fish. Migratory bird funding is included to address the decline in bird populations and funding for the Service's fisheries program will help restore native fish and their habitat.

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 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 \$60.8 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 public is spending less time in nature but more time on outdoor activities, the budget funds opportunities for Americans in urban communities to more easily connect with nature 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 ESA and work to prevent at-risk species from becoming further imperiled, the Service is requesting \$338.2 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 \$146.6 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 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 also proposes \$126.4 million for Recovery. These funds will contribute to the recovery and delisting of species currently listed under the ESA. Endangered species recovery is complex and difficult work, often requiring substantial time and resources. Species today face ongoing threats like habitat loss as well as new threats like climate change and wildlife trafficking. We have a continued commitment as a Nation to protect imperiled species and 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 over 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 \$239.3 million for the Fisheries Program.

This budget builds on support in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law with \$18.6 million in the 2025 request 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 \$44.4 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 includes \$73.0 million for the Migratory Bird Management Program, and \$13.4 million for the Service's ePermits system. The Migratory Bird program is the manager of ePermits which currently provides web-based permit application and approvals for several Service permits. With funding increases proposed in 2025, 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 \$37.9 million. The Science Applications 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 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.

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 \$231.6 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 \$8.5 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.

Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness

The 2025 President's budget includes funding for a Mental Health and Wellness Coordinator for all DOI Law Enforcement programs including \$225,000 in the Service's Refuge Law Enforcement program and \$250,000 in the Service's Office of Law Enforcement program. This supports the DOI Law Enforcement Task Force recommendation that the Department proactively support the mental health, wellness, and resiliency of all DOI law enforcement officers from recruitment to retirement. Healthy law enforcement officers have effective interactions with the public and make sound operational decisions in the performance of their duties which positively impact the public's view of DOI law enforcement.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)

The request for the Service includes \$250,000 in the Refuge Visitor Services program to support implementation of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). NAGPRA requires museums and Federal agencies to identify Native American human remains, funerary items, and objects of cultural significance in their collections and consult with Tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations to repatriate the human remains and objects of cultural patrimony.

Federal NAGPRA regulations (43 CFR 10) provide a systematic process for returning Tribal artifacts to Native American and Alaska Native Tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations. On December 6, 2023, the Department announced a final rule effective on January 12, 2024, to revise regulations that implement NAGPRA. The final rule strengthens the authority and role of Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations in the repatriation process; eliminates the category "culturally unidentifiable human remains" and resets the requirements for cultural affiliation to better align the regulations with congressional intent; requires museums and Federal agencies to consult and update inventories of human remains and associated funerary objects within five years of this final rule; and increases transparency and reporting of holdings and collections. The 2025 President's Budget proposes additional funding for DOI NAGPRA programs to support and coordinate expedited repatriation and disposition of Tribal and Native Hawaiian ancestors and cultural property consistent with the final rule.

Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs)

The request for the Service includes \$2.1 million in the Construction program to support vehicle fleet lifecycle replacement, fleet requirements analysis, charging infrastructure planning and deployment, and fleet capabilities assessments. Across Interior, the 2025 request includes \$13 million for this purpose. This funding will continue Interior's efforts to right-size its fleet and replace vehicles with more efficient, mission capable, zero emissions vehicles (ZEV) at the right locations and with the right vehicle mix to deliver Interior's missions. The Service's fleet planning efforts will continue to ensure ZEVs are integrated into the overall fleet plan, prioritizing locations and appropriate missions for deployment of these vehicles. Additionally, this funding will assist the Service with adapting electric vehicle support equipment planning and deployment to address installation requirements which vary by geographic region. Finally, this funding provides the Service with the necessary support to coordinate fleet lifecycle replacement with infrastructure deployment.

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 2025 Service portion of the

LWCF permanent funding totals \$161.6 million. A detailed project list for the Federal land acquisition program is provided in the Land Acquisition Chapter.

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. As part of the \$162 million, five-year BIL investment in the Klamath Basin, the Service is providing \$72 million in 2024 for work to restore the regional ecosystem and repair local economies in the coming years. These investments will fully fund completion of the Klamath Falls National Fish Hatchery by 2027, secure reliable water for the National Wildlife Refuges, focus on innovative collaborative conservation in the Sprague River watershed, advance co-developed restoration projects with stakeholders, and continue implementation of Tribally led projects 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. The Lake Tahoe Basin faces ongoing threats from the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species. Common invasive weeds, like the Eurasian watermilfoil, can significantly disrupt aquatic ecosystems and crowd out native species. Aquatic invasive species management is a top priority of the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program, one of the most comprehensive restoration programs in the Nation.
- Working across 13 Western States and multiple jurisdictions, the Service 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 Services has invested over \$10 million per year for projects to combat invasive grasses and wildfire, reduce encroaching conifers, safeguard precious water resources for neighboring communities and wildlife, and promote community and economic sustainability.
- 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. Together with the discretionary funds appropriated for this purpose, the BIL funds provided \$55.1 million to 195 projects that support recreation, water quality, water management, and habitat. The grantees have generated \$79.2 million in match, for a total conservation impact of \$134.3 million. The projects have already resulted in tangible

conservation outcomes, including: 76 miles of streams restored, 1,339 acres of wetlands conserved and enhanced, and 29,321 acres of forest under improved management.

- 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. These restoration projects do more than reopen habitat for fish and other aquatic species, they also support high-paying jobs, reduce flooding risk, improve infrastructure resiliency, and revitalize the surrounding communities. For each \$1 million invested through BIL fish passage projects in 2022, an estimated 13 jobs were created and \$2.8 million in economic output went back into the economy. To date, the National Fish Passage Program has provided \$73 million in funding to 79 projects across the Nation.

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 is using the Inflation Reduction Act funding to support climate adaptation and resiliency projects in National Wildlife Refuge System and partnering State Wildlife Management Areas. The Service is targeting projects which align with and advance Service priorities related to climate resilience, conservation, and equity. These include:

- Albemarle-Pamlico Sound restoration, North Carolina (\$27.3 million)
- Northern Forests - a landscape conservation approach for a climate resilient Northern Forest in Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Wisconsin (\$25.0 million)
- Prairie Pothole Region - landscape conservation and restoration in Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota (\$23.0 million)
- Lower Mississippi River Valley nature-based resiliency projects in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee (\$20.0 million)
- Upper Mississippi and Illinois River nature-based resiliency and restoration in Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Minnesota, Wisconsin (\$10.0 million)
- Bison management and grasslands habitat improvements across several Service refuges (\$7.5 million)
- Nature-based solutions to support the endangered Yaqui fish species on San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge, Arizona (\$7.0 million)
- Acquisition of LiDAR Data over National Wildlife Refuge System lands in partnership with the 3D Elevation Program (3DEP), Nationwide (\$1.0 million)

In addition, 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 being fully addressed within annual appropriations. For Recovery planning, the Service is targeting species that do not have recovery plans or have outdated plans. 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 is implementing

the IRA Recovery implementation funding by 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 \$146.6 million within ecological services, an increase of \$25.8 million from the 2024 CR 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, 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 the Service to trade forest products for land management and services.

North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) and Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA): The budget supports revising administrative amounts for both NAWCA and NMBCA to better keep pace with administrative requirements. For NAWCA, this would mean increasing the administrative cap from four percent to seven percent to address increased administrative requirements and help our partners address threats to wetland dependent species and recover populations. For NMBCA, this would mean increasing the administrative cap from three percent to five percent and lowering match requirements from 3:1 to 1:1 to encourage a wider variety of bird conservation implementers.

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 \$338.2 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 \$146.6 million, \$25.8 million more than the 2024 CR 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 ESA. The request provides \$41.2 million, \$3.5 million above the 2024 CR amount, to support conservation of at-risk species and their habitats.

The 2025 budget for the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is \$68.1 million, \$7.8 million more than the 2024 CR level, and the Coastal Program request is \$14.6 million. 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 2025 budget for the refuge system is \$602.3 million, \$60.8 million above the 2024 CR level. 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 \$160.1 million, an increase of \$9.8 million from 2024 CR level. Refuge law enforcement capacity is a high priority of this year's budget request, with a request of \$63.4 million, an increase of \$17.1 million above

the 2024 CR level. Currently, there are seven states that have no officers stationed within their boundaries. This funding will allow the Service to hire 48 additional officers to enhance the protection of the NWRS and its visitors.

The budget includes \$73.1 million for Migratory Bird Management, \$19.2 million more than the 2024 CR level. The Joint Ventures program will support grants to improve the resilience of important habitats—and nearby communities—across the Nation’s four migratory bird flyways. Enduring conservation efforts involve local engagement and dovetail with the needs of people and the communities. 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.

In addition to 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 launch of ePermits 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 contains \$13.5 million, \$6.0 million more than the 2024 CR level, for ePermit system operations and enhancements 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 \$110.8 million in the budget, an increase of \$18.7 million from the 2024 CR level. This program investigates wildlife crimes and enforces the laws that govern the Nation’s wildlife trade. The Service 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.

The Service provides international conservation grants and technical support to assist other countries’ conservation and climate change adaptation and resilience efforts. The budget includes \$24.0 million 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 the Service’s 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 \$239.3 million to support the Fisheries program, including the National Fish Hatchery System, aquatic habitat conservation and restoration, and the prevention and control of aquatic invasive species. That amount includes \$80.3 million for operation of the National Fish Hatchery System and \$31.6 million for National Fish Hatchery maintenance, \$3.9 million and \$5.8 million more than the 2024 CR level, respectively.

The 2025 request for Science Applications is \$37.9 million, \$2.5 million above the 2024 CR 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 \$183.8 million, an increase of \$17.5 million from the 2024 CR level, including \$7.0 million to support the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Construction

The 2025 Construction budget totals \$32 million, \$2.3 million more than the 2024 CR level, including \$30.0 million for line-item construction projects and \$2.1 million to support vehicle fleet replacement, requirements analysis, capability assessment, and ZEV charging infrastructure planning and development.

Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund

The budget requests \$14.4 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 2025 budget is \$33.0 million, a reduction of \$17.0 million from the FY 2024 CR level, for the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund. Conservation grants from the fund support wetlands and waterfowl conservation.

Multinational Species Conservation Fund

The 2025 budget includes \$21.0 million, level with the 2024 CR 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 2025 request includes \$5.1 million for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, level with the 2024 CR 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 \$73.8 million, level with the 2024 CR and includes \$6.2 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 the Service.

Fixed Costs

Fixed-cost increases of \$33.2 million are fully funded. The request also includes \$53.1 million for baseline capacity, which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover the fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs will allow the Service to meet must-pay requirements without affecting program activities.

Good Accounting Obligation in Government Act Report

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>

Reception and Representation Funding

The 2025 budget proposes appropriations language to enable the Service to use up to \$15,000 of appropriated amounts for courtesy and social responsibilities associated with official duties, including outreach and engagement with Tribal partners to honor traditions. This request would provide the Service similar authority provided to other agencies to extend hospitality to official visitors without bureau employees bearing expenses from their own personal funds.

U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE									
MAJOR ACCOUNT SUMMARY OF FISCAL YEAR 2025									
Account	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025					2025 Request	Change from 2024 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)				
Current Appropriations									
Resource Management	\$000	1,555,684	1,555,684	+33,060	-10,789	+128,617	1,706,572	+150,888	
	FTE	6,470	6,470		-4	+422	6,888	+418	
Construction	\$000	29,904	29,904	+169		+2,092	32,165	+2,261	
	FTE	34	34			+1	35	+1	
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	24,564	24,564	0		-10,122	14,442	-10,122	
	FTE	11	11			0	11	0	
North American Wetlands Conservation Fund	\$000	50,000	50,000	0		-17,000	33,000	-17,000	
	FTE	6	6			0	6	0	
Multinational Species Conservation Fund	\$000	21,000	21,000	0		0	21,000	0	
	FTE	5	5			0	5	0	
Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation	\$000	5,100	5,100	0		0	5,100	0	
	FTE	1	1			0	1	0	
State and Tribal Wildlife Grants	\$000	73,812	73,812	0		0	73,812	0	
	FTE	19	19			0	19	0	
Total, Current Appropriations	\$000	1,773,292	1,773,292	+33,229	-10,789	+90,359	1,886,091	+112,799	
	FTE	6,546	6,546		-4	+423	6,965	+419	
Disaster Relief Act, 2023 P.L. 117-328		247,000	0			0	0	0	
		18	18			0	18	0	
Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) P.L. 117-58 (net of transfers)		98,044	90,545			0	90,545	0	
		88	99			0	99	0	
Total Current Appropriations with Supplemental	\$000	2,118,336	1,863,837	+33,229	-10,789	+90,359	1,976,636	+112,799	
	FTE	6,652	6,663	0	-4	+423	7,082	+419	

U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE								
MAJOR ACCOUNT SUMMARY OF FISCAL YEAR 2025 REQUEST								
Account	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change from 2024 (+/-)	
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	2025 Request		
<u>Permanent and Trust Accounts</u>								
National Wildlife Refuge Fund	\$000	8,014	7,998	0	0	+2	8,000	+2
	FTE	2	2		0	0	2	0
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund - Payment to Special Fund (TF)	\$000	100,313	86,196	0	0	+10,156	96,352	+10,156
	FTE	0	0		0	0	0	0
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund from LWCF	\$000	32,800	40,162	0	0	0	40,162	0
	FTE	0	0		0	0	0	0
Land Acquisition MG ML		114,017	118,952			+2,500	121,452	+2,500
	FTE	81	81			0	81	0
North American Wetlands Conservation Fund MR	\$000	1,866	142	0	0	-1	141	-1
	FTE	2	2		0	0	2	0
Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration	\$000	517,616	470,069	0	0	+67,539	537,608	+67,539
	FTE	60	60		0	0	60	0
Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration	\$000	1,262,417	1,088,566	0	0	+22,464	1,111,030	+22,464
	FTE	56	56		0	0	56	0
Migratory Bird Conservation Account	\$000	103,412	92,597	0	0	-597	92,000	-597
	FTE	86	86		0	0	86	0
Federal Lands Recreational Enhancement Act	\$000	6,781	7,000	0	0	0	7,000	0
	FTE	25	25		0	0	25	0
Contributed Funds	\$000	3,856	5,000	0	0	0	5,000	0
	FTE	15	15		0	0	15	0
Miscellaneous Permanent Appropriations	\$000	4,357	4,950	0	0	-950	4,000	-950
	FTE	2	2		0	0	2	0
Inflation Reduction Act	\$000			0	0	0		0
	FTE	13	114			0	114	0
ARPA	\$000	0	0			0	0	0
	FTE	30	0			0	0	0
Coastal Impact Assistance Program	\$000	0	0			0	0	0
	FTE	1	1			0	1	0
Subtotal, Permanent Appropriations	\$000	2,155,449	1,921,632	0	0	101,113	2,022,745	+101,113
	FTE	373	444	0	0	0	444	0

U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE								
MAJOR ACCOUNT SUMMARY OF FISCAL YEAR 2025 REQUEST								
Account	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change from 2024 (+/-)	
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	2025 Request		
Permanent and Trust Accounts	-							
Subtotal, Permanent Appropriations	\$000	2,155,449	1,921,632	0	0	101,113	2,022,745	+101,113
	FTE	373	444	0	0	0	444	0
Rescission of Prior Year Balances								
American Rescue Plan Act, P.L. 117-2		-36,687	0	0		0	0	0
Subtotal, Rescission of Prior Year Balances		-36,687	0	0		0	0	0
TOTAL, Permanent Appropriations with Rescission of Prior Year Balances. \$000		2,118,762	1,921,632	0		+101,113	2,022,745	+101,113
Reimbursements, Offsetting Collections, Allocations From Others								
RM Reimbursable	FTE	932	940			0	940	0
National Parks and Public Lands GAO	FTE	71	71			0	71	0
Wildland Fire Management (incl. reimb)	FTE	492	519			+5	524	+5
Southern Nevada Lands	FTE	3	3			0	3	0
Federal Aid - Highway ARP in Resource Management	FTE	15	15			0	15	0
FTEs	FTE	0	0			0	0	0
NRDAR	FTE	60	60			0	60	0
Central HAZMAT	FTE	8	8			0	8	0
Renewable Energy								
Coordination Offices (BLM)	FTE	15	15				15	
Disaster Relief	FTE	4	4			0	4	0
Orphaned Well BIL	FTE	1	1				1	
Ecosystem Restoration BIL	FTE	2	2				2	
Energy Act - Permit Processing	FTE	14	14			0	14	0
Subtotal, Other		1,617	1,652	0	0	+5	1,657	+5
TOTAL FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE without Rescissions/ Cancellation	\$000	4,273,785	3,785,469	+33,229	-10,789	+191,472	3,999,381	+213,912
	FTE	8,642	8,759	0	-4	+428	9,183	+424
Rescission of Prior Year Balances	\$000	-36,687	0	0	0	0	+0	0
TOTAL FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE with Rescissions/Cancellation of Balances	\$000	4,237,098	3,785,469	33,229	-10,789	191,472	3,999,381	+213,912
	FTE	8,642	8,759	0	-4	+428	9,183	+424

Budget at a Glance

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Budget At A Glance						
Dollars in Thousands (\$000)						
	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025 Fixed Costs (+/-)	2025 Internal Transfers (+/-)	2025 Program Changes (+/-)	2025 Request
Appropriation: RESOURCE MANAGEMENT						
ECOLOGICAL SERVICES						
LISTING	23,398	23,398	+543	0	0	23,941
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+1,000	
Listing Activities					-1,000	
PLANNING AND CONSULTATION	120,858	120,858	+3,501	0	+22,274	146,633
Planning and Consultation Activities					+17,775	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+4,999	
NEPA Permitting					-500	
CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION	37,653	37,653	+883	0	+2,662	41,198
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+1,541	
Candidate Conservation Activities					+371	
Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA) Activities					+500	
Marine Mammals Co-Stewardship					+250	
RECOVERY	114,124	114,124	+2,496	0	+9,761	126,381
Recovery Activities					+11,289	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+3,672	
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	
ECOLOGICAL SERVICES TOTAL	296,033	296,033	+7,423	0	+34,697	338,153
HABITAT CONSERVATION						
PARTNERS FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE	60,267	60,267	+1,036	0	+6,762	68,065
Nutria Eradication					-1,450	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+1,619	
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Activities					+6,593	
COASTAL PROGRAM	13,957	13,957	+270	0	+420	14,647
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+401	
Coastal Program Activities					+19	
HABITAT CONSERVATION TOTAL	74,224	74,224	+1,306	0	+7,182	82,712
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM						
WILDLIFE AND HABITAT MANAGEMENT						
Refuge Wildlife & Habitat Management	260,529	260,529	+5,217	-2,835	+17,485	280,396
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+9,177	
Wildlife and Habitat Management Activities					+4,870	
Seed Strategy					+1,900	
Tribal Co-Stewardship					+1,500	
FWS Subsistence Program					+525	
Refuge Information Technician Program					+500	
Inventory & Monitoring Activities					+500	
Nutria Eradication					-1,250	
Invasive Species Strike Teams					-237	
Transfer Office of Subsistence Management				-2,835		
Refuge Visitor Services	80,859	80,859	+1,669	0	+11,060	93,588
Visitor Services Activities					+7,406	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+3,204	
NAGPRA					+250	
Customer Experience					+200	
Urban Wildlife Conservation Program Activities					+500	
Arctic Youth					-500	
Refuge Law Enforcement	46,272	46,272	+1,003	0	+16,126	63,401
Refuge Law Enforcement Activities					+14,000	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+1,901	
Mental Health and Wellness Coordination					+225	

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Budget At A Glance						
Dollars in Thousands (\$000)						
	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025 Fixed Costs (+/-)	2025 Internal Transfers (+/-)	2025 Program Changes (+/-)	2025 Request
Refuge Conservation Planning	3,684	3,684	+80	0	+1,122	4,886
Conservation Planning Activities					+1,000	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+122	
Refuge Maintenance	150,211	150,211	+1,901	0	+7,948	160,060
Annual Maintenance Activities					+1,000	
Maintenance Support Activities					+3,000	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+2,948	
Deferred Maintenance Activities					+1,000	
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM TOTAL	541,555	541,555	+9,870	-2,835	+53,741	602,331
CONSERVATION AND ENFORCEMENT						
MIGRATORY BIRD MANAGEMENT						
Conservation and Monitoring	30,935	30,935	+708		+9,208	40,851
Conservation and Monitoring Activities					+8,058	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+1,150	
Permits	5,513	5,513	+137	0	+7,778	13,428
Permits Activities					+7,612	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+166	
Duck Stamp Office	591	591	+20	0	+527	1,138
Junior Duck Stamp and Urban Refuges					+500	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+27	
North American Waterfowl Management Plan	16,821	16,821	+200	0	+628	17,649
Strengthening Joint Ventures' Partnerships					+269	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+359	
Migratory Bird Management Total	53,860	53,860	+1,065	0	+18,141	73,066
EPERMITS						
ePermits	0	0	0	+7,500	+6,000	13,500
Operations and Maintenance				+5,000	+1,000	
Program Enhancements				+2,500	+5,000	
ePermits Total	0	0	0	+7,500	+6,000	13,500
LAW ENFORCEMENT						
Law Enforcement Operations	91,189	91,189	+1,997	0	+16,658	109,844
Wildlife Inspection Program					+10,000	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+3,674	
Law Enforcement Operations					+1,234	
Body-Worn Cameras					+1,000	
Law Enforcement Task Force Priorities					+500	
Mental Health Coordinator					+250	
Equipment Replacement	910	910	0	0	0	910
Law Enforcement Total	92,099	92,099	+1,997	0	+16,658	110,754
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS						
International Conservation	10,098	10,098	+190	0	+881	11,169
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+256	
Eurasia Regional Conservation					+800	
Human Dimensions of International Wildlife Conservation					+825	
Theodore Roosevelt Genius Prize					-1,000	
International Wildlife Trade	18,981	18,981	+274	-7,500	+1,086	12,841
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+439	
Wildlife Health and Preventing Zoonotic Disease					+647	
Transfer to ePermits				-7,500		
International Affairs Total	29,079	29,079	+464	-7,500	+1,967	24,010
CONSERVATION AND ENFORCEMENT TOTAL	175,038	175,038	+3,526	0	+42,766	221,330

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Budget At A Glance						
Dollars in Thousands (\$000)						
	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025 Fixed Costs (+/-)	2025 Internal Transfers (+/-)	2025 Program Changes (+/-)	2025 Request
FISH AND AQUATIC CONSERVATION						
National Fish Hatchery Operations	76,356	76,356	+1,373	-6,000	+8,575	80,304
Transfer to Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation				-6,000		
Hatchery Operations					+12,848	
Columbia River Basin					+3,000	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+2,217	
Fish Health and Technology Centers					+1,410	
Yukon River Salmon Agreement					-1,000	
Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Program					-400	
Warm Springs Fish Health Center					-8,000	
Pacific Salmon Treaty					-1,500	
Maintenance and Equipment	26,314	26,314	+228	0	+5,565	32,107
Annual Maintenance Activities					+3,742	
Deferred Maintenance Activities					+1,437	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+386	
Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation						
Habitat Assessment and Restoration	51,826	51,826	+344	+3,000	-6,894	48,276
National Fish Habitat Action Plan Activities					+500	
Transfer from Hatchery Operations				+3,000		
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+612	
Habitat Assessment and Restoration Activities					+494	
Delaware River Basin Conservation Act					-1,500	
Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement Activities					-7,000	
Population Assessment and Cooperative Mgmt.	36,932	36,932	+1,051	-4,954	+1,240	34,269
Transfer from Hatchery Operations				+3,000		
Transfer to Office of Subsistence Management				-7,954		
FWS Subsistence In-Season Management					+750	
Subsistence Managers					+2,000	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+1,001	
Population Assessment and Cooperative Management Activities					+2,267	
Great Lakes Fish & Wildlife Restoration Program					-2,110	
Snakehead Eradicator					-1,000	
Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey					-818	
Pacific Salmon Treaty					-150	
Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission					-700	
Aquatic Invasive Species	50,143	50,143	+398	0	-6,152	44,389
Prevention Activities					+4,075	
Aquatic Invasive Species and Rapid Response					+2,600	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+623	
Invasive Carp					-10,000	
Contract Fishing (Invasive Carp)					-1,000	
Lake Tahoe Restoration					-950	
Hydrilla, Eel and Milfoil Invasive Grasses					-1,500	
Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation Subtotal	138,901	138,901	+1,793	-1,954	-11,806	126,934
FISH AND AQUATIC CONSERVATION TOTAL	241,571	241,571	+3,394	-7,954	+2,334	239,345
SCIENCE APPLICATIONS						
Science Partnerships	26,400	26,400	+458	0	+416	27,274
Science Partnerships Activities					+7,698	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+718	
Chesapeake WILD					-8,000	
Service Science	8,972	8,972	+87	0	+1,569	10,628
Climate Science					+1,471	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+98	
SCIENCE APPLICATIONS TOTAL	35,372	35,372	+545	0	+1,985	37,902

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Budget At A Glance						
Dollars in Thousands (\$000)						
	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025 Fixed Costs (+/-)	2025 Internal Transfers (+/-)	2025 Program Changes (+/-)	2025 Request
GENERAL OPERATIONS						
Central Office Operations	31,077	31,077	+1,360	0	+2,935	35,372
Headquarters and Regional Management Offices					+917	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+2,018	
Management and Administration	51,249	51,249	+3,540	0	+4,669	59,458
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+4,974	
Customer Experience					+500	
Information Resources and Technology Management Activities					-805	
Servicewide Bill Paying	46,581	46,581	+1,592	0	+2,146	50,319
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+2,503	
Communication, Information Technology and Security Activities					-357	
Aviation Management	3,296	3,296	+36	0	+68	3,400
Aviation Management Activities					+4	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+64	
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation	7,032	7,032	+6	0	0	7,038
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+10	
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation					-10	
National Conservation Training Center	27,015	27,015	+462	0	+735	28,212
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+890	
Annual Maintenance Activities					+801	
National Conservation Training Center Operations Activities					-956	
GENERAL OPERATIONS TOTAL	166,250	166,250	+6,996	0	+10,553	183,799
Stewardship Priorities	25,641	25,641	0	0	-25,641	0
Damage Recovery Provision	0	0			+1,000	1,000
TOTAL - RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	1,555,684	1,555,684	+33,060	-10,789	+128,617	1,706,572

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Budget At A Glance						
Dollars in Thousands (\$000)						
	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025 Fixed Costs (+/-)	2025 Internal Transfers (+/-)	2025 Program Changes (+/-)	2025 Request
Appropriation: CONSTRUCTION						
Nationwide Engineering Services	5,821	5,821	+169	0	+701	6,691
Core Engineering Services					+387	
Baseline Capacity - 2024 Fixed Costs					+314	
Dam, Bridge and Seismic Safety	2,427	2,427	0	0	0	2,427
Construction Projects	21,656	21,656	0	0	+1,391	23,047
Electric Vehicle Charging Stations Projects					+2,092	
					-701	
TOTAL - CONSTRUCTION	29,904	29,904	+169	0	+2,092	32,165
Appropriation: NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE FUND						
National Wildlife Refuge Fund	13,228	13,228	0	0	-13,228	0
					-13,228	
Appropriation: COOPERATIVE ENDANGERED SPECIES CONSERVATION FUND						
HCP Assistance Grants	24,564	24,564	0	0	-10,122	14,442
Conservation Grants					-4,622	
					-5,500	
Appropriation: NORTH AMERICAN WETLANDS CONSERVATION FUND						
NAWCA Grants	50,000	50,000	0	0	-17,000	33,000
					-17,000	
Appropriation: MULTINATIONAL SPECIES CONSERVATION FUND						
	21,000	21,000	0	0	0	21,000
Appropriation: NEOTROPICAL MIGRATORY BIRD CONSERVATION FUND						
	5,100	5,100	0	0	0	5,100
Appropriation: STATE & TRIBAL WILDLIFE GRANTS						
	73,812	73,812	0	0	0	73,812
TOTAL, FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (Current Disc.)	1,773,292	1,773,292	+33,229	-10,789	+90,359	1,886,091

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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, \$1,705,572,000, to remain available until September 30, 2026, of which not to exceed \$15,000 may be for official reception and representation expenses: Provided, That not to exceed \$23,941,00,000 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).

Note.--A full-year 2024 appropriation for this account was not enacted at the time the Budget was prepared; therefore, the Budget assumes this account is operating under the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2024 and Other Extensions Act (Division A of Public Law 118–15, as amended). The amounts included for 2024 reflect the annualized level provided by the continuing resolution.

Justification of Language Change

Addition of the following wording:

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

The 2025 budget proposes appropriations language to enable the Service to use up to \$15,000 of appropriated amounts for courtesy and social responsibilities associated with official duties, including outreach and engagement with Tribal partners to honor traditions. This request would provide the Service 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 develops 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.

Duck Stamp Modernization Act of 2023, (P.L. 118-25). Allows an individual to carry an electronic stamp, rather than a paper stamp, at the time of taking waterfowl.

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 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey, to lead a multiagency effort to slow the spread of Invasive 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 U.S. Army 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, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. 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.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Resource Management
Justification of Fixed Costs Changes**

(Dollars In Thousands)

Fixed Cost Element	2024 Annualized CR or Change	2024 Annualized CR to 2025 Request Change	Description
Change in Number of Paid Days	+4,000	0	Total paid days for FY 2025 is 261 (2088 hours) which is the same number of days as FY 2024.
Pay Raise	+50,425	+26,334	The President's Budget for 2025 includes one quarter (October-December 2024) of the 5.2% pay raise for 2024 and three quarters (January-September 2025) of the estimated 2.0% pay raise for 2025.
FERS Employer Contribution Increase	+314	0	The estimates do not reflect increases to the employer contribution for FERS or Law Enforcement FERS for FY 2025.
Departmental Working Capital Fund (WCF)	+2,043	+2,045	The estimates reflect final decisions of the Working Capital Fund Consortium on the FY 2025 Working Capital Fund Central Bill.
Workers' Compensation Payments	+262	-257	The amount reflects final chargeback costs of compensating injured employees and dependents of employees who suffer accidental death while on duty. This amount reflects the final Workers Compensation bill for 2025 payable to 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	-196	The amount reflects 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. This estimate reflects an applied annual inflation factor of 3.0% to the 5-year average of actuals between 2018-2022.
GSA and Non-GSA Rents	+102	-1,815	This estimate reflects the FY 2025 President's Budget Exhibit 54s as submitted. 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 estimates reflect MIB rent, Security, Federal Reserve Parking, and Operations and Maintenance, distributed by bureau and office, based upon OFAS provided MIB occupancy levels. 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	+1,048	+6,949	This adjustment captures the associated increase to baseline operations and maintenance requirements resulting from movement out of GSA or direct-leased (commercial) space into Bureau-owned space. During these transitions, 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.
Total, Account 2025 Fixed Costs	+58,320	+33,060	

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Resource Management
Justification of Internal Realignments**

(Dollars In Thousands)

Internal Realignments and Non-Policy/Program Changes (Net-Zero)	2025 (+/-)	Description
Fish and Aquatic Conservation: National Fish Hatchery Operations: General Program Activities	-6,000	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.
Fish and Aquatic Conservation: Habitat Assessment and Restoration: General Program Activities	+3,000	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.
Fish and Aquatic Conservation: Population Assessment and Cooperative Management: General Program Activities	+3,000	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.
International Affairs: International Wildlife Trade: Permitting Modernization	-7,500	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.
EPERMITS	+7,500	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.

Internal Realignments and Non-Policy/Program Changes (Net-Zero)	2025 (+/-)	Description
Fish and Aquatic Conservation: Population Assessment and Cooperative Management: Subsistence Management	-7,954	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.
National Wildlife Refuge System: Wildlife and Habitat Management: Subsistence Management	-2,835	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.
Net Account Total, Internal Transfers	-10,789	

Ecological Services

Ecological Services

Activity: Ecological Services

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Budget Request	Change from 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Listing	(\$000) FTE	23,398 123	23,398 123	+543 0	0 0	0 0	23,941 123	+543 0
Planning and Consultation	(\$000) FTE	120,858 613	120,858 613	+3,501 0	0 0	+22,274 +93	146,633 706	+25,775 +93
Conservation and Restoration	(\$000) FTE	37,653 160	37,653 160	+883 0	0 0	+2,662 +6	41,198 166	+3,545 +6
Recovery	(\$000) FTE	114,124 466	114,124 466	+2,496 0	0 0	+9,761 +30	126,381 496	+12,257 +30
Total, Ecological Services	(\$000) FTE	296,033 1,362	296,033 1,362	+7,423 0	0 0	+34,697 +129	338,153 1,491	+42,120 +129

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”¹ and enacted the Endangered Species Act (ESA). For over 50 years, the Ecological Services Program has implemented 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”² is placed on all Federal agencies and we are to encourage 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.

¹ Endangered Species Act of 1973, 16 U.S.C. 1531-1544.,

² *ibid.*



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

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 January 25, 2023, we celebrated the recovery and removal, of five species on the U.S. Navy-owned San Clemente Island (San Clemente Island paintbrush, lotus, larkspur and bush-mallow plants and San Clemente Bell's sparrow) from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Wildlife (50 CFR 17.11). The delisting marks the conservation success of these species and four decades of partnership between the Service and the Navy. "The recoveries we celebrate[d] in this unique place demonstrate what is possible when partners work together under the Endangered Species Act," said Service Director Martha Williams with the announcement. "Across the Nation, the Service and partners have ensured hundreds of species are stable or improving. We are grateful for the Navy's leadership and long-term commitment to recovery efforts that have enabled us to bring these species back from the brink of extinction."

Yet, according to experts involved in a 2019 Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) report, up to one million species are threatened with extinction, many within decades.³ "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 IPBES. "We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide."⁴ The

³ Source: IPBES, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3553579>.

⁴ Source: The Extinction Crisis | Tufts Now

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, and promotes conservation that ensures access to nature for all, alleviates a variety of crises facing wildlife worldwide, and ensures 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 increase in funding provided in this budget request is needed. The ESA is the collaborative tool that meets the conservation challenges of today and tomorrow. Most immediately, this budget request invests in rebuilding 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 Service 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. The Service often targets its investments to leverage the recovery of avian species under the ESA with the Service's Migratory Bird program to be powerful agents of change for conserving imperiled species.

This Administration is leading the way in tackling the loss of biodiversity. In 2023, we celebrated the accomplishments of the first 50 years of the ESA and reviewed the lessons learned through implementation of the ESA 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 overarching goal: to prevent species from becoming extinct.

As we move forward, the Ecological Services program is 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.

Program Elements

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 animal species in danger of extinction or 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; protects and restores habitat important to Federal trust species; and provides databases and mapping products that are essential tools for conservation and restoration of species and habitats by landowners, 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, Acts, and Orders

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 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 \$30 million 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 works with other natural resource trustees to quantify injury to the environment caused by the release of hazardous substances, ensure polluters pay the cost of restoring the environment, and implement projects to restore the environment to the condition it would have been in if the release had not occurred.
- *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 continue with the National Wetlands Inventory.
- *Federal Power Act*, (16 U.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 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 response plans that promote the protection, rescue, and rehabilitation of, and minimization of damage to, fish and wildlife resources and habitat harmed or jeopardized by an oil spill.

Activity: Ecological Services
Subactivity: Listing

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Change from 2024 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Listing	(\$000)	23,398	23,398	+543	0	0	23,941	+543
	FTE	123	123	0	0	0	123	0

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Listing

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Listing Activities	-1,000	-0
Baseline Capacity	+1,000	+0
Program Changes	0	0

Program Description

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> A species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.	<i>Threatened</i> 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 species do not need the protection of the ESA.⁵ 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 the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (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.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 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 2025, the Service plans to publish 12-month findings, proposed listing rules, and proposed critical habitat rules for 68 species in FY 2025. Listing determinations will be based on SSAs.
- Support staff work on SSAs, petition findings, rules, public hearings, printing, and economic analyses for critical habitat.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Listing is \$23,941,000 and 123 FTE, no net program change from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Listing Activities (-\$1,000,000/-0 FTE) – This reduction will have an impact on the Service's ability to list domestic species. The Service will be unable to complete the identified actions on the National Listing Workplan for FY 2025, and will have to reschedule at least six actions.

⁵ <https://fws.gov/project/national-listing-workplan>

Baseline Capacity (+\$1,000,000 / +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$1.0 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Activity: Ecological Services
Subactivity: Planning and Consultation

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Change from 2024 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Planning and Consultation	(\$000) FTE	120,858 613	120,858 613	+3,501 0	0 0	+22,274 +93	146,633 706	+25,775 +93

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Planning and Consultation

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
NEPA Permitting	-500	-3
Baseline Capacity	+4,999	+0
Planning and Consultation Activities	+17,775	+96
Program Changes	+22,274	+93

Program Description

Within Planning and Consultation, the Service works with stakeholders at the planning stages of federally-authorized, licensed, or funded development projects—from highway expansions to energy development—to ensure that development has minimal impact on wildlife and habitats, and development can proceed. The Service provides expertise in 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 and streamline project approval. 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. Our 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. Nationally, every Service regional office and Ecological Services field office is working to adapt to growing consultation workloads and a declining workforce. Since 2003 through 2023, our environmental review staff has decreased by 20 percent, while the number of species listed as endangered or threatened under the ESA has risen by 39 percent (*Report to Congress on the Section 7 Consultation Workload*, March 2023). This degradation of capacity has made it increasingly difficult to achieve our mission and meet the needs of Federal agencies and applicants in a timely manner.

To meet the growing demand for environmental reviews, the Service is 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 generate ESA section 7 species lists; (2) provide conservation recommendations that minimize impacts to ESA-listed species and other trust resources; (3) deliver concurrence letters for implementation of programmatic consultations; 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 2023, IPaC delivered 43,813 streamlined consultation documents and generated 121,769 official species lists in response to user requests. The Service estimates that IPaC-delivered documents saved the equivalent of 37 full time employees' time. On average, the Service 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 approximately 25 percent 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 continues to improve the Consultation Package Builder (CPB) in IPaC and provide helpful species data for other Federal agencies. The CPB guides Federal agencies through the development and creation of thorough biological evaluations and assessments, required documents for Federal agencies and applicants to comply with section 7 of the ESA. Additionally, IPaC's delivery of species lists and documents is fully integrated with the new ECOSphere⁶ platform to populate project data that improves consultation reporting and expands our delivery of consultations to cover more species and locations. Relatedly, the Service has refined over 1,100 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 ensuring environmental reviews focus where listed species and trust resources are most likely to be affected by proposed projects.

⁶ 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. IPaC is one of the many applications within ECOSphere.



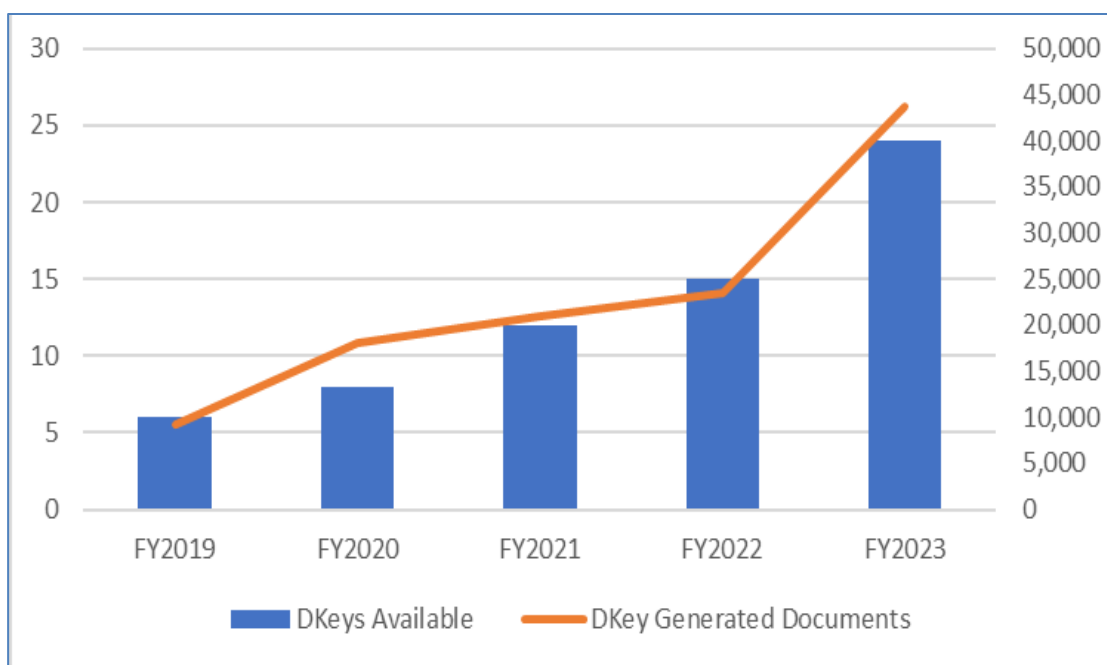
Service biologists visit the Pine Knob Conservation Partnership area to explore opportunities for working with a private landowner. Photo by USFWS.

Using the incidental take permit authority under section 10 of the ESA, the Service works in partnership with non-Federal entities to develop incidental take permit applications that include Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), and issue 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.

IPaC Improving Section 7 Consultations

One of the ways the Service is using IPaC to increase the efficiency of section 7 consultations is through the use of determination keys (DKeys), logically structured sets of questions that assist users in complying with programmatic section 7 consultations. DKeys can cover both species and critical habitat and can even deliver concurrence letters for qualifying projects.

Three pilot DKeys launched in 2016; today there are 25 DKeys available and more in development. DKeys provide consistent and transparent outcomes, and significantly reduce the time to complete consultation for qualifying projects. In the last 5 years, IPaC users generated over 115,000 documents using DKeys, and over half required no further action on the part of the Service or IPaC user. DKeys typically result in a final document in less than 30 minutes and all administrative logging for Service project tracking is completed automatically. This is a huge time savings and win-win for the Service, consulting Federal Agencies, and project proponents.



Water Quality and Pesticide Consultations

As part of our ESA consultations process, the Service works with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 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 improves 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 plays 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 of Service engagement include review of traditional and renewable energy projects, including the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's review of proposed offshore wind energy projects through technical assistance, ESA Section 7 consultation, and NEPA review; working with the DOE's Solar Energy Technologies Office to promote studies on the interaction of birds and other wildlife with photovoltaic solar projects; and participating in initiatives such as the Bat and Wind Energy Cooperative to represent agency interests in the protection of wildlife and development of renewable energy, while also engaging in constructive dialogue with partners. Other major ongoing efforts include serving as a cooperating agency on the Bureau of Land Management's Solar Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement; supporting the National Renewable Energy Lab's modeling and projection of renewable energy buildout on Federal lands; ensuring Service training and preparedness for Federal Energy Regulatory Commission hydropower relicensing projects; and providing ESA Section 7 consultation on new and rebuilt large-scale transmission lines.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 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.
- Increase capacity by hiring staff to (1) consult with Federal agencies on their actions in a timely manner; (2) work with Federal agencies to develop programmatic consultations to streamline the consultation process; (3) automate decision-making and reporting processes where appropriate; and (4) ensure our decisions are based upon the best scientific and commercial data available.
- Support further development of IPaC functionality and data population to support 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.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Planning and Consultation is \$143,633,000 and 706 FTE, a program change of +\$22,274,000 and +93 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

NEPA Permitting (-\$500,000/ -3 FTE) – The decrease will reduce technical assistance for agencies in support of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Planning and Consultation Activities (+\$17,775,000 / +96 FTE) – Increased capacity will:

- Increase our ability to engage early in environmental reviews (thereby improving our ability to balance conservation needs and economic development).
- Increase our ability to streamline environmental reviews and increase transparency and predictability for Federal agencies and applicants.
- Increase our ability to consider the needs of local underserved communities while conducting environmental reviews.

On average, the Service completes about 1,002 formal section 7 consultations each year, with an average of 118 days for completion, and 78 percent of consultations completed in 135 days or less. On average, the Service also completes about 11,123 informal section 7 consultations each year, with an average of 35 days for completion. Additional funding for staff and decision support tools, such as Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC), will decrease the review time for formal and informal consultations.

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 Service 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.

Increased funding will also provide more automated tools to facilitate environmental reviews and coordination. This includes expanding functionality and capacity of the IPaC system to streamline the

Section 7 consultation process in a transparent and consistent way as well as continued development of ECOSphere, which hosts IPaC, into a robust tracking and transactional workflow system that 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 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. Additional funding for staff and decision support tools, such as IPaC and determination keys (DKeys), will decrease the review time for formal and informal consultations.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act re 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 and permitting under sections 7 and 10 of the ESA and other conservation 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 BIL and IRA projects. For example, the Service received BIL transfer funding for the purposes of Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation support in implementing activities related to Sections 40803 (Wildfire Risk Reduction) and 40804 (Ecosystem Restoration). The legislative proposal below will allow for more transfers of funds from non-DOI agencies for environmental review of their BIL funded projects. 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.

Baseline Capacity (+\$4,999,000 / +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service's mission. The budget includes \$5.0 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

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.

Activity: Ecological Services
Subactivity: Conservation and Restoration

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Budget Request	Change from 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Conservation and Restoration	(\$000) FTE	37,653 160	37,653 160	+883 0	0 0	+2,662 +6	41,198 166	+3,545 +6

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Conservation and Restoration

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Baseline Capacity	+1,541	+0
Coastal Barrier Resources Act	+500	+2
Candidate Conservation Activities	+371	+2
Marine Mammals Co-Stewardship	+250	+2
Program Changes	+2,662	+6

Program Description

Through the Conservation and Restoration program, the Service supports collaborative species conservation efforts, works to protect and restore habitats 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 further the Administration’s priorities in multiple areas and provide technical experts to improve habitat connectivity and protect wildlife and habitat; provide 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; align conservation with the needs of landowners through different working models for partnerships; reduce the potential of harm to the environment through planning and preparedness for oil and hazardous materials spill response; encourage mitigation/adaptation efforts for riverine or coastal projects and provide information and tools to advance community planning in order to prevent repeated damage from natural disasters; and support land acquisition and restoration projects that connect underserved communities with their local natural resources and wildlife.

As the Service moves 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:

- Supporting restoration projects that connect underserved communities with their local natural resources and wildlife;
- 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 considered for listing under the ESA. Candidate Conservation uses all available information to conduct a scientifically rigorous assessment process that identifies species that warrant listing and publish a Candidate Notice of Review identifying those species. The Service uses a species status assessment framework (SSA), which is an analytical approach to deliver foundational science for informing all ESA decisions. The 2022 Candidate Notice of Review, published on June 27, 2023, identified 4 domestic species as candidates for listing.

The ESA not only inspires diverse partnerships to prevent species extinctions and recover listed species, but 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 prevent the need to list the species in the future. Proactive conservation for at-risk species requires close engagement with communities and landowners because 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 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 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 eastern population of the gopher tortoise, Arctic grayling, Virgin River spinedace, San Fernando Valley spineflower, and Chapin Mesa milkvetch, but have the potential to do even more. Increasing the number of these place-based agreements helps to protect not only the covered candidate species, but also their habitat and other species as well. By continuing to increase 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, walrus, sea otters, 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 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 MMPA implementation 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



Wetlands are one of the most productive and biodiverse habitats in the world. Although they cover only 6 percent of the Earth's land surface, 40 percent of all plant and animal species live or breed in wetlands. Photo of Horicon Marsh by Courtney Celley/USFWS.

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.

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, conservation, and infrastructure funding. Wetlands filter surface run-off, 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, characteristics, and distribution of America's wetlands. The NWI website is the most visited in the Service, and over 311,000 wetland maps were downloaded in 2023 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 percent 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 2025, the Service will continue to partner with other Federal and State agencies to update priority wetland data through cost sharing, in part using the information provided in 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. In FY 2025, the Service will

continue to work with other Federal agencies, Tribes, States, and others to address status and trends report strategies and recommendations identified in the 2009-2019 Report on Status and Trends of America's Wetlands and will initiate planning for the next decadal report.

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 2025, the Service will conduct comprehensive remapping projects for certain units in Alabama, Florida, and Texas (accounting for about 4 percent of the CBRS acreage) and conduct the 5-year review for geomorphic change (accounting for about 2 percent 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 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 EPA 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 nearly 90 percent of the 421 active Departmental 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 to restore injured natural resources and support local communities, rural economies, States, and Tribes.

In FY 2023, the Service put more than \$24 million of recovered funds on the ground to restore habitat, fish and wildlife for the American people, enhancing, restoring, or protecting over 120,000 acres and 17 stream miles. As a result, 22 restoration projects with direct benefits to threatened and endangered species were completed, and more than 770 acres and 17 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.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget request will:

- Allow review and process section 10 enhancement of survival permit applications for candidate and other at-risk species.
- Help update national wetlands data by working 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.
- Contribute to participation 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.
- Conduct comprehensive remapping projects for certain units in Alabama, Florida, and Texas (accounting for about 4 percent of the CBRS) and conduct the 5-year review for geomorphic change (accounting for about 2 percent of the CBRS acreage).
- 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.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Conservation and Restoration is \$41,198,000 and 166 FTE, a program change of +\$2,662,000 and +6 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Candidate Conservation Activities (+\$371,000/ +2 FTE) – Increased capacity will be directed towards working with private landowners to implement voluntary conservation on private lands. Candidate Conservation provides technical assistance to private landowners, States, Tribes, and Federal agencies for developing Candidate Conservation Agreements (CCA) and Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAA) for candidate and other at-risk species, such as the monarch butterfly. Candidate

Conservation is an important element of the Administration's America the Beautiful initiative, which sets a goal of conserving 30 percent of the Nation's lands and waters by 2030. Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners often look to the Service to provide technical assistance with developing these agreements since each agreement is unique and requires knowledge of the Service's policies and regulations in order to result in regulatory predictability while achieving conservation goals.

CBRA Consultation Reviews (+\$500,000/ +2 FTE) – The proposed increase would be used to develop guidance and provide technical assistance 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 Co-Stewardship (+\$250,000/ +2 FTE) – The Service has responsibility for 10 marine mammal stocks protected under the 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 advance the conservation of southern sea otters, including continued consideration of reintroduction to currently unoccupied areas along the Pacific Coast.

Baseline Capacity (+\$1,541,000 / +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service's mission. The budget includes \$1.5 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Activity: Ecological Services

Subactivity: Recovery

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Budget Request	Change from 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Recovery	(\$000)	114,124	114,124	+2,496	0	+9,761	126,381	+12,257
	FTE	466	466	0	0	+30	496	+30

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Recovery

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Recovery Activities	+11,289	+30
Baseline Capacity	+3,672	+0
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
Program Changes	+9,761	+30

Program Description

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 actions, 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 to participate in a substantive way when ensuring that species ready for delisting or downlisting meet their recovery plan objectives.



A Programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement for the California Red-Legged Frog was finalized on June 30, 2023. This agreement spans three counties within the historical range of the frog and provides a framework for the reintroduction of the species to where it is currently extirpated. Photo by Brad Nissen/USFWS.

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. We currently have 118 active agreements providing conservation for 125 species.

Under the Inflation Reduction Act, the Service received funding for recovery planning and implementation. IRA funding for recovery planning is focused on the backlog of listed species without recovery plans at the time of IRA's passage. This increase is being used to prioritize completion of species status assessments, recovery plans, and recovery implementation strategies for 326 listed species without final recovery plans as of February 2023. As of January 2024, the Service has published final recovery plans for 96 species (15 recovery plans) in the backlog. Conservation organizations have evaluated Service recovery plans and estimate that fully implementing recovery plans for all listed species would require over \$2 billion per year. IRA implementation funding is focused on supporting high-priority recovery actions for focal species and developing a standardized prioritization approach to promote recovery of historically underfunded listed species. In fiscal year 2023, the Service announced \$5 million in awards across four focal groups to achieve impactful conservation for historically underfunded listed species following a strategic approach to identify recovery implementation actions. Additional funding is needed to continue to update recovery plans for species already listed, prepare and update 5-year reviews on the status of listed species, and support more recovery action on the ground for historically under-funded species.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will:

- Support work to complete the recovery responsibilities required by statute - preparing recovery plans for newly listed species, reducing the recovery plan backlog for listed species that do not yet have recovery plans, completing 5-year reviews for approximately 20 percent of listed species annually, acting on recommendations to reclassify or delist species, and encouraging collaborative partnerships with others for recovery implementation.
- Allow the Service to propose or finalize an estimated 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.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Recovery of Listed Species is \$126,381,000 and 496 FTE, a program change of +\$9,761,000 and +30 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Recovery Challenge Activities Continuing Partnerships (-\$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.

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.

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

Wolf Livestock Demonstration Program (-\$1,000,000/ -0 FTE) – The budget does not request funding for this program in order to focus on 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.

Florida Grasshopper Sparrow Activities (-\$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.

Recovery Activities (+\$11,289,000/ +30 FTE) – While the IRA implementation funding is significant, the Service estimates that implementation of priority one recovery actions for all of our listed species requires more resources than those provided through IRA. There are over 15,000 priority one actions identified in recovery plans, most of which need additional funding to achieve the intended outcome. The Service will

use the increase to meet the highest priority needs of listed species, with a focus on preventing extinctions and recovery.

As the most recently published report on ESA expenditures documents, less than \$5,000 was reported by any Federal or State agency for 26 percent of the species in 2020 ([Federal and State Endangered and Threatened Species Expenditures Fiscal Year 2020 \(fws.gov\)](#)). 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 also 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, which was delisted in February 2021.

These funds will also implement a new multi-year investment to 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



Achieving a major conservation milestone following decades of conservation and large-scale restoration work, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed removing the wood stork from the Federal list of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife in 2023. Photo by USFWS.

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 Ecosphere to create recovery workflows that will support planning and recovery implementation.

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 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 both 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 information so decision-making is based on the best available science and continually updated to reflect the status of a listed species.

Baseline Capacity (+\$3,672,000/+0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$3.7 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Habitat Conservation

Habitat Conservation

Activity: Habitat Conservation

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Change From 2024 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Partners for Fish and Wildlife	(\$000)	60,267	60,267	+1,036	0	+6,762	68,065	+7,798
	FTE	219	219	0	0	+9	228	+9
Coastal Program	(\$000)	13,957	13,957	+270	0	+420	14,647	+690
	FTE	43	43	0	0	+0	43	+0
Total, Habitat Conservation	(\$000)	74,224	74,224	+1,306	0	+7,182	82,712	+8,488
	FTE	262	262	0	0	+9	271	+9

Program Elements

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) and Coastal Programs work through collaborative partnerships to promote, identify, and support approaches that use nature-based solutions for conservation and restoration in an ecologically-connected network of lands and waters. These programs deliver 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. 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

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**

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Change From 2024 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Partners for Fish and Wildlife	(\$000)	60,267	60,267	+1,036	0	+6,762	68,065	+7,798
	FTE	219	219	0	0	+9	228	+9

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Partners for Fish and Wildlife

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Nutria Eradication	-1,450	-0
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Activities	+6,593	+9
Baseline Capacity Adjustment	+1,619	+0
Program Changes	+6,762	+9

Program Overview

The 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 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The PFW Program’s conservation actions are guided by a five-year national strategic plan that incorporates the goals and priorities of other Service programs, our partners and stakeholders.

In FY 2023, the PFW program worked with private landowners and partners to complete 1,896 projects across the Nation that enhanced and restored over 167,000 acres of uplands, 15,500 acres of wetlands, and 215 miles of stream for fish and wildlife. PFW staff also worked with partners to complete 67 fish passage projects. 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, leading delivery of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding (Sage, Fire and Ecological Restoration), 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.

Funds spent in support of restoration projects create jobs, generate tax revenues, and spur economic activity in local economies. The Service's 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. A recent report developed by the Jobs Through Restoration and Resilience Sub-Team of the Service's National America the Beautiful Team identified that every \$1.0 million in FY 2022 PFW spending supported 12.28 jobs and \$1.95 million in economic output nationwide. 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, properties with habitats restored by PFW can have increased property values, which greatly benefit the American people.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Restoring Habitat for Rare Species at Kaupo Ranch, Maui, Hawai'i

The mesic forests of leeward Haleakala on Maui contain a significant quantity of Hawai'i's endemic biodiversity but continue to experience declines due to invasive plant and animal species. Currently, only five to ten percent of these forests remain. This project focused on planting three endemic tree species, including the endangered 'Aiea (*Nothocestrum breviflorum*). The plantings helped to reestablish forest canopy and provide sources of nectar and pollen to support native forest birds, bats, and invertebrates. Through a cooperative agreement with the Leeward Haleakala Watershed Restoration Partnership, field staff collected seeds from native trees in the region, oversaw propagation, and planted the native seedlings across a 215-acre fenced unit. Also, part of the project, incipient populations of priority invasive species were controlled within the restoration area to maximize the success of native plant restoration.

Partners in the regional effort included the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, Haleakalā National Park (a Biosphere Reserve), Nu'u Mauka Ranch, and Kipahulu Forest Reserve. The public access trail to enter Haleakalā National Park traverses this site, offering the public a rare opportunity to experience restoration and observe the obvious distinction between pasture and invasive species dominated ecosystems and native ecosystems. In addition, volunteers and students were incorporated into the restoration efforts.



The left photo shows a movable electric fence dividing an enclosure so goats could graze the area shown on the right before planting. Photo credit: Leeward Haleakalā Watershed Restoration Partnership

Photo credit: Leeward Haleakalā Watershed Restoration Partnership

Right: Boundary fence of the project was modified to exclude cattle and invasive axis deer.

Photo credit: Leeward Haleakalā Watershed Restoration Partnership

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Yellow Brick Road – Leading the Way to Success in North Carolina

An innovative fish passage project on the Dan River at the Lindsey Bridge Dam near Madison, North Carolina allowed the endangered Roanoke Logperch and other important species to overcome this obstacle, reconnecting 48 miles of desirable river habitats that were inaccessible and unoccupied by the fish since the dam's construction. However, a portion of the impounded reach had filled with sand and coarse materials, destroying necessary complex habitats. Enter Project Yellow Brick Road!

A team of partners from the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Piedmont Conservation Council, Kris Bass Engineering, Pine Hall Brick Company, and the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program realized it was essential to install five fish habitat structures made of natural stone to provide resting, feeding, and refuge areas between the dam and natural reaches further upstream.

In addition to benefits for the Roanoke Logperch, the habitat created is also suitable for rare aquatic mussels including the endangered James River Spiny mussel (*Pleurobema collina*) and the threatened Atlantic pigtoe (*Fusconaia masoni*) and their host fish.



*The Yellow Brick Road Project provided in-stream habitat structure for the endangered Roanoke Logperch.
Photo credit: K. Bass/BIA*



*Fish seek refuge around the habitat structures on the Dan River in Rockingham County, North Carolina.
Photo credit: K. Bass/BIA*

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will:

- Enable the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program to engage in voluntary conservation efforts. Landowners will voluntarily assist in execution of the America the Beautiful initiative, deliver Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding, implement work on species migration corridors and landscape connectivity, enhance biodiversity and help to conserve pollinators, and work with Tribes and other underserved communities.
- Restore and enhance 38,000 wetland acres, 234,000 upland acres, 687 river miles, and 127 fish passage structures.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Partners for Fish and Wildlife is \$68,065,000 and 228 FTE, a program change of +\$6,762,000 and +9 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Nutria Eradication (-\$1,450,000/-0 FTE) This reduction funds nutria eradication at \$1.75 million in FY 2025. The budget request does not include full funding for Congressionally Directed Spending included in the FY 2023 enacted bill in order to advance the Administration's priorities.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Activities (+\$6,593,000/ +9 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 4,200 wetland acres, 26,000 upland acres, 77 river miles, and 14 fish passage structures.

At least \$2.0 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, Tribes, 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, focusing on these culturally significant species and habitats has a broader beneficial impact for the other species sharing the landscape.

Baseline Capacity (+\$1,619,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay

requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service's mission. The budget includes \$1.6 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Activity: Habitat Conservation
Subactivity: Coastal Program

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Budget Request	Change From 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Coastal Program	(\$000)	13,957	13,957	+270	0	+420	14,647	+690
	FTE	43	43	0	0	+0	43	+0

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for the Coastal Program

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Coastal Program Activities	+19	+0
Baseline Capacity Increase	+401	+0
Program Changes	+420	+0

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 with 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 is guided by a five-year national strategic plan incorporating goals and priorities of our partners and stakeholders that use a landscape approach for the conservation of Federal trust species.

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 co-administering the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program that helps States and U.S. territories protect and restore coastal wetlands which also contributes towards conserving 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. The Service's 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: Restoring Wild Rice in Wisconsin

Native wild rice was once an important part of the coastal ecosystems along the Great Lakes. However, habitat loss and poor habitat conditions have caused a significant decline in this keystone species. Wild rice provides habitat structure and stability, nutrient uptake, and food for fish and wildlife. Also, a staple of native communities, such as the Ojibwe, wild rice continues to be culturally and ceremonially important to local communities.

Since 2015, conservation partners have been working to reintroduce wild rice along the western shore of Green Bay. The Coastal Program, Ducks Unlimited, University of Wisconsin, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, and other partners are also supporting Wild Rice in the Classroom – a local education initiative that incorporates the topic of wild rice into environmental science and social studies lessons and other subjects. The lessons also foster a sense of stewardship among students and the community.

At the Barkhausen Waterfowl Preserve, 35 students from the Menominee Indian High School learned about wild rice harvesting and seeding wild rice (pictured). In addition, 40 volunteers from the Appleton Breakfast Rotary Club, Pulaski Community Middle School, and Howard-Suamico Elementary School planted wild rice at the Preserve.



Students harvesting and seeding wild rice (Menominee Indian High School)

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: A Great Marsh in Connecticut

Once more than 1,400 acres, the Great Meadow Marsh has lost more than 50 percent of its tidal wetlands. Considered to be among the best coastal bird habitats, the marsh also provides important ecosystem services and functions, such as flood attenuation and carbon sequestration. The Coastal Program is working with communities to reverse the decline of tidal wetlands and expand ecosystem services and functions.

The Coastal Program and other Service programs worked with Audubon Connecticut, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Town of Stratford to restore a 34 acre remnant of the Great Meadow Marsh located on the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge. The restoration project involved removing invasive plants, re-grading the marsh, planting native marsh plants, and creating tidal channels to allow for regular flooding of the marsh. Volunteers and local high school students hired as Salt Marsh Stewards were critically important to the success of the project by planting more than 165,000 marsh grasses and other native plants. Restoration efforts will continue next year on six acres of salt marsh adjacent to this project.

Designed to adapt to sea-level rise, the tidal marsh will continue to provide critical habitat for coastal breeding birds as well as rare plants and animals, including the marsh pink and saltmarsh sparrow. The

Coastal Program is conducting monitoring to evaluate conservation outcomes, such as saltmarsh sparrow use and nesting success.



Volunteers planting native marsh grasses, Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge (Corrie Folxom-O'Keefe, Audubon)

2025 Program Activities

- In FY 2025, 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 2025 increase will build the capacity of regional programs and provide 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 2025 funding level, the Coastal Program will restore or protect approximately 34 miles of stream/shoreline, 9,780 wetland acres, 16,900 upland acres, and remove 24 fish passage barriers.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for the Coastal Program is \$14,647,000 and 43 FTE, a program change of +\$420,000 and + 0 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Coastal Program Activities (+\$19,000/+0 FTE) –The request provides additional capacity to complete conservation projects. The increase will restore and enhance an additional 13 wetland acres and 23 upland acres benefitting fish, wildlife, their habitats, and the people that depend on them.

Baseline Capacity (+\$401,000 / +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$0.4 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

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National Wildlife Refuge System

National Wildlife Refuge System

Activity: National Wildlife Refuge System

Program Element		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change From 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Wildlife and Habitat Management	(\$000)	260,529	260,529	+5,217	-2,835	+17,485	280,396	+19,867
	FTE	1,178	1,178	0	-11	+22	1,189	+11
Refuge Visitor Services	(\$000)	80,859	80,859	+1,669	0	+11,060	93,588	+12,729
	FTE	457	457	0	0	+30	487	+30
Refuge Law Enforcement	(\$000)	46,272	46,272	+1,003	0	+16,126	63,401	+17,129
	FTE	205	205	0	0	+51	256	+51
Conservation Planning	(\$000)	3,684	3,684	+80	0	+1,122	4,886	+1,202
	FTE	19	19	0	0	+4	23	+4
Refuge Operations	(\$000)	391,344	391,344	+7,969	-2,835	+45,793	442,271	+50,927
	FTE	1,859	1,859	+0	-11	+107	1,995	+96
Refuge Maintenance	(\$000)	150,211	150,211	+1,901	0	+7,948	160,060	+9,849
	FTE	494	494	0	0	+23	517	+23
Total, National Wildlife Refuge System	(\$000)	541,555	541,555	+9,870	-2,835	+53,741	602,331	+60,776
	FTE	2,353	2,353	0	-11	+130	2,472	+119

Program Mission

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

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 856 million acres of lands and waters and includes 570 national wildlife refuges, 38 wetland management districts, 48 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 ensures 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 in collaboration with a host of local, state, and national partners.

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 2023, the Refuge System hosted a record breaking 67 million visits to national wildlife refuges, an increase of 46.6 percent since FY 2011. According to the Banking on Nature 2017 report, the economic impact on local communities from recreation visits totaled \$3.2 billion, and the Refuge System generates \$1.1 billion in job income and over 41,000 jobs nationally. The Refuge System is targeting investments to underserved communities and addressing racial inequalities in recreational access and conservation participation through its groundbreaking Urban Wildlife Conservation Program.

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 air and water quality improvement, soil erosion reduction, soil health improvement 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 with Executive Order 14112, "Reforming Federal Funding and Support for Tribal Nations to better Embrace Our Trust Responsibilities and Promote the Next Era of Tribal Self-Determination. Additionally, the Administration also supported 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 of Tribes, the Federal trust responsibility to 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 provides oversight, guidance, expertise, and leadership through the integration of our programs and participates 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

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Change From 2024 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Wildlife and Habitat Management	(\$000) FTE	260,529 1,178	260,529 1,178	+5,217 0	-2,835 -11	+17,485 +22	280,396 1,189	+19,867 +11

Summary of 2025 Program Changes and Internal Transfers for Wildlife and Habitat Management

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Nutria Eradication	-1,250	-12
Invasive Species Strike Teams	-237	-2
Inventory & Monitoring Activities	+500	+1
FWS Subsistence In Season Management	+525	+3
Alaska Subsistence – Refuge Information Technician program	+500	+3
Tribal Co-Stewardship	+1,500	+3
Seed Strategy	+1,900	+0
Wildlife and Habitat Management Activities	+4, 870	+26
Baseline Capacity	+9,177	+0
Program Changes	+17,485	+22
Internal Transfer to Operation of Indian Programs – Office of Subsistence Management Activities	-2,835	-11
Total Changes	+14,650	+11

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. The Refuge System is entrusted to manage more than 856 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 supports 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. Refuges are managed in a continuous iterative adaptive management cycle (planning, design, implementation of actions, and monitoring the effectiveness of those actions) to address our greatest challenge of a changing climate and achieve specific outcomes that improve resiliency and sustainability. Our priority is to ensure that our conservation strategies complement and build on those of our partners while fulfilling the Service’s stewardship responsibilities. This science-driven work requires significant investment in our capacity to carry out planning, design, and monitoring.

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 and ensuring native seed sources; managing habitats through activities such as 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 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 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 which help 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. This approach is transparent, science-driven, and maximizes efficiency in achieving conservation outcomes for priority resources. However, adaptive management is also labor intensive, specifically for the planning and monitoring responsibilities. It relies on an inter-disciplinary team coordinated by the Natural Resource Program Center to leverage the activities of the Refuge System and partners and ensure collected data are consistent and relevant at multiple scales, and data analysis and storage achieve the highest scientific standards.

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 the monarch butterfly and American bumblebee, have captured the public's attention and 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. In collaboration with the Service's Center for Pollinator Conservation, Refuge System Inventory and Monitoring developed five overarching pollinator conservation goals. These shared goals increase cross-divisional and cross-regional cohesion to maximize pollinator conservation delivery across the Refuge System.

Currently, over 150 pollinator inventory and monitoring projects across the System conducted in FY 2023 and 2024 contribute to the highest priority identified goal of "documenting pollinator species"

richness, diversity, and abundance including rare and imperiled pollinator species on Refuge lands.”

The Inventory and Monitoring program of the Refuge System also supports data curation, services, and the systems to ensure preservation of data. Integrated systems ensure both preservation and access to information for Service employees, partners, academia, and the public.

Wildlife Health

One Health is a multi-disciplinary approach that operates on the idea that the health of ecosystem, animal, and human health are inextricably linked and addressing health issues holistically will help us overcome some of the greatest infectious disease challenges of our generation. The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreak 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 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 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. 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. The Refuge System’s Wildlife Health office provides national leadership within the Service, across DOI and beyond for coordinated disease prevention, monitoring, detection, and response.

The Refuge System remains committed to the implementation of the Wildlife Health Initiative developed through the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) with Federal, State, and Tribal partners. In FY 2023, the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society and the AFWA Regional Associations received three-year funding to hire coordinators for cross-jurisdictional monitoring, detection, and response to wildlife disease, including those that may threaten livestock, pets, and humans. The Wildlife Health office works closely with the four regional coordinators and one Tribal coordinator to ensure consistency in addressing wildlife disease problems across the nation.

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 Tribal ecological and cultural restoration of bison. In FY 2023, the Refuge system provided 145 healthy, wild bison to eight different Tribes contributing to ecological and cultural restoration, including food security.

The Wildlife Health office made history in FY 2023 by being the first entity in the United States to vaccinate birds for protection against highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). In response to a request from the Wildlife Health office, the U.S. Department of Agriculture agreed that the endangered status of the California condor warrants extraordinary action to offer potential

protection for this population of birds and approved the emergency use/authorization for HPAI vaccination of birds. The Wildlife Health office and a large team of condor and vaccine specialists worked to evaluate the safety and efficacy of the vaccine in trials with a small group of black vultures and condors before beginning a broader vaccine campaign in captive and free-ranging condors. Ninety-five condors were vaccinated by the beginning of February of 2024, and ongoing administrations are planned for 2024.

Invasive Species Management

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, invasive species and habitat loss are the two greatest threats to federally listed threatened and endangered species and biodiversity of native species throughout the United States. The Refuge System experiences first-hand the threats to native plants, fish, and wildlife populations from the negative impact of invasive species such as habitat modification, competition, predation, and pathogenic vectors. Funds are annually used to support critical management activities to prevent the introduction and secondary spread of invasive species through systematic early detection surveillance, rapid response, eradication, containment, and control. The Refuge System utilizes integrated pest management strategies that can include combinations of mechanical, chemical, physical or biological control methods on refuge and adjacent lands to protect native ecosystems, food security, and infrastructure. Refuges utilize integrated pest management strategies that can include combinations of mechanical, physical, chemical or biological control methodologies.

The success of this comprehensive framework has become a national model and has resulted in catalytic investments through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to enhance the capacity of the Refuge System's collaborative management approach. This includes piloting the management of an Interjurisdictional Invasive Species Rapid Response Team program with funds for coordination and response team deployments as well as additional resources for asset-based early detection surveillance from FY 2024 - 2026. The interjurisdictional rapid response team program will result in expedited and efficient management responses to new invasions.

Two core components of the Refuge System's invasive species management framework include the Invasive Species Strike Teams (ISST) program and the Large Invasive Species project funding. The Refuge System works with partners to implement invasive species management and ecosystem restoration projects by using ISSTs for Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) on and adjacent to Refuges. 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. As of FY 2023 there were 21 ISSTs with at least one team in each Service Region. This is approximately half of the ISSTs envisioned to achieve the program's full effectiveness across the country. Distribution of any new allocations will be guided by a structured decision-making process developed in 2019.

Since 2009, the Refuge System has competitively allocated \$1 million of Refuge System invasive species funding to one refuge each year to fund complete eradication or 99 percent maximum control of one or more invasive species. This Large Invasive Species project funding has catalyzed 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. Due to operational logistics and inflation, total project costs often exceed the available \$1 million of Refuge System funding. For example, the anticipated costs for invasive mouse eradication on Farallon Islands NWR increased by 41 percent between 2019 and 2023. While the success of this program has become a model for potential project funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the cost of these projects has exceeded the \$1 million available allocation for many years and the Service will need to account for cost overruns as it evaluates future proposals.

The Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), located in the Northern Forest of New Hampshire/Maine, is about 25,000 acres in size. The Refuge has taken proactive measures to prevent invasive plant species by working with adjacent private landowners since 2021 to address the highly invasive Japanese knotweed and Phragmites. As of 2023 there were 45 participating landowners with these plants on their property (89 percent participation). Infestations were documented spatially, and treatments were conducted by a contractor. The Refuge secured a new landowner agreement in the summer of 2023 and documented the presence of wood turtles in a stream on this property. The wood turtle is currently in status review for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Japanese knotweed is known to be damaging to wood turtle



Wood turtle (Glyptemys insculpta), discovered while conducting herbicide treatments in 2023 on private property adjacent to Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge, Errol, New Hampshire. Eradicating invasive vegetation, primarily Japanese knotweed (Reynoutria japonica), from this site will maintain the optimal wood turtle habitat found there. Work was completed through an agreement with the landowner.

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 percent 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 have provided for basic regional stewardship of these tremendous marine resources for years, 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. Since the inception of dedicated Marine National Monument funding allocation, these threats have 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. Specifically, 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, ensuring these marine resources remain intact and healthy for generations to come.



The NWRS protects 72 percent of the coral reefs within U.S. jurisdiction, including this reef at Palmyra Atoll. Corals that provide ecosystem services and benefits for the entire world (Image: Kydd Pollock)

Tribal Co-Stewardship

In September 2022, Director's Order 227 (DO 227) - Fulfilling the Trust Responsibility to Tribes and the Native Hawaiian Community, and Other Obligations to Alaska Native Corporations and Alaska

Native Organizations, in the Stewardship of Federal Lands and Waters was signed. This directive reaffirmed our commitment to relationship building and knowledge-sharing with federally recognized Tribes (Tribes), Alaska Native Corporations (ANC), Alaska Native Organizations (ANO), and the Native Hawaiian Community (NHC) in the co-stewardship and conservation of our invaluable natural resources. DO 227 serves as a vital complement to existing Service policy, enhancing our Native American Policy and forthcoming Alaska Native Relations Policy.

The Service has a unique role and responsibility to manage lands within the Refuge System while safeguarding the treaty, religious, subsistence, and cultural interests of Indigenous Groups. The Refuge System is committed to engaging in robust processes that makes space for the priorities of Indigenous Groups within the Refuge System. In September 2022, the Chief of the Refuge System issued Leaders' Intent aimed at building enduring relationships for co-stewardship of the Refuge System with Tribes, ANC, ANO, and NHC and redefining our approach to proactive and strategic collaboration. This call to action inspired the establishment of the Refuge System Co-Stewardship Committee which is developing the foundational tenets, values, and principles for meaningful and enduring collaboration; the strategies to create the cultural paradigm shift required to operationalize and enact these changes; a plan for meaningful collaboration and consultation; a process to demonstrate the outcomes of our efforts and to learn from and build upon our successes; and an assessment of the capacity, training, tools, and resources needed for implementation.

Alaska Subsistence Management Program

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Subsistence in Alaska 2017 Update¹ 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 the Service, has implemented an annual regulatory program and fishery monitoring program, supported 10 regional advisory councils, and provided administrative and technical support to five Federal agencies and the Federal Subsistence Board.

The Service 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,

¹ [subsistence_update_2017.pdf\(alaska.gov\)](#)

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.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 funding level will:

- Enable the Refuge System to recruit and retain a talented workforce 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 fully embrace 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, expanding access for outdoor recreation, and using science to identify best practices to manage land and water resources. This includes using traditional management actions, such as water level manipulation and prescriptive grazing, as well as nature-based solutions focused on addressing impacts from changing climate regimes across the country. Healthy lands and waters within the Refuge System 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.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Wildlife and Habitat Management is \$280,396,000 and 1,189 FTEs, a program change of +\$17,485,000 and +22 FTE from the 2024 CR.

Nutria Eradication (-\$1,250,000/ -12 FTE) – This reduction funds nutria eradication at \$1.75 million in FY 2025. The budget request does not include full funding for Congressionally Directed Spending included in the FY 2023 enacted bill in order to advance the Administration's priorities.

Invasive Species Strike Teams (-\$237,000/ -2 FTE) – The funding level requested will support 21 invasive species strike teams, with at least one in each Service region. This level will continue to support invasive species management goals through prevention, and EDRR. These EDRR actions are the most cost-effective means to prevent invasive species from reaching refuge lands and waters and impact native biodiversity, including threatened and endangered species.

Inventory and Monitoring Activities (+\$500,000/ +1 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 and utilizing decision frameworks such as the Resist, Accept, or Direct (RAD) approach, the Refuge System can better target management activities for desired outcomes and inform effective strategies on changing landscapes.

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

Alaska Subsistence – Refuge Information Technician (RIT) Program (+\$500,000/ +3 FTE)

– Additional resources will be used to support additional RIT positions. These positions are the on-the-ground Alaska Native liaisons for the Service’s Alaska Region who live and work in their home communities and support Tribal engagement and relationships in villages across the State, including outreach support for the Office of Subsistence Management. These RITs are a link between the people of the villages, the Refuge, and other Service managers within the bureau, 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.

FWS Subsistence In-Season Management (+\$525,000/ +3 FTE) – Additional resources will support implementation of legislated subsistence fish and wildlife management responsibilities in coordination and communication with Tribes, subsistence users, the State of Alaska, and other agencies. These funds will go towards building capacity for 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.

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 and Native Groups. Funding will be used to hire two FTEs that will coordinate planning and engagement across the NWRS to improve relationships and model future efforts that make space for the priorities of both the Tribes and the mission of Service. An additional FTE will focus on implementing an efficient and streamlined process for promptly addressing requests from Tribes and other eligible entities for Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act (P.L. 93-638, as amended) contracts and annual funding agreements to enhance transparency, collaboration, and accountability.

Seed Strategy (+\$1,900,000/ +0 FTE) – The National Seed Strategy is a collaborative inter-agency effort to develop a reliable supply of native seed for ecosystem stabilization, rehabilitation, and restoration treatments. The Service works with States, Tribes, private landowners, and other Federal agencies to strategically plan and implement native seed collection and production, critical

information development, and deployment of seed. This work improves climate resilience by supporting wildfire rehabilitation, improved ecosystem strength and adaptability, Endangered and Threatened species recovery, and implementation of nature-based solutions on public and private lands. This funding would allow the Service to establish core functionality for ecoregional seed hubs to coordinate and analyze seed needs, develop species and ecotype priorities, create joint ecoregional seed collection, and identify warehouse and logistics requirements for storage and distribution. In addition, this funding would support planning projects that address gaps in restoration knowledge.

Wildlife and Habitat Management Activities (+\$4,870,000/ +26 FTE) – The number of units in the Refuge System has increased over the past ten years, changing staffing and expertise needed to fulfill the Service’s stewardship responsibilities. The request will add 26 FTEs to fill critical vacancies in Wildlife and Habitat Management that support scientific studies, habitat restoration and management, landscape conservation, and climate resiliency. Staffing will prioritize expertise in spatial ecology, biology, botany, and hydrology to help integrate Service lands into large landscape conservation priorities. Recruitment will focus on entry level positions to attract the next generation workforce to career opportunities in conservation and civil service with 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 humans, wildlife and domestic animals. Additional funding will be used to conduct surveillance and monitoring activities on and around Refuges, as well as leverage those of other Federal agencies, States, Tribes, and non-governmental organizations. This funding will also allow staff to complete disease contingency planning to ensure Refuge System efforts are done in coordination with and contribute to a broader landscape-level strategy. Additional funds will be used to hire wildlife veterinarians, wildlife health experts, biologists, technicians, and conservation social scientists necessary to move towards a more proactive One Health approach and support intra-agency coordination to ensure the Service is addressing emergent infectious diseases collaboratively to contain disease outbreaks and limit impacts.

Pollinator Conservation – 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. 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.

Baseline Capacity (+\$9,177,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes

\$9.2 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

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	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change From 2024 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Refuge Visitor (\$000)	80,859	80,859	+1,669	0	+11,060	93,588	+12,729
Services FTE	457	457	0	0	+30	487	+30

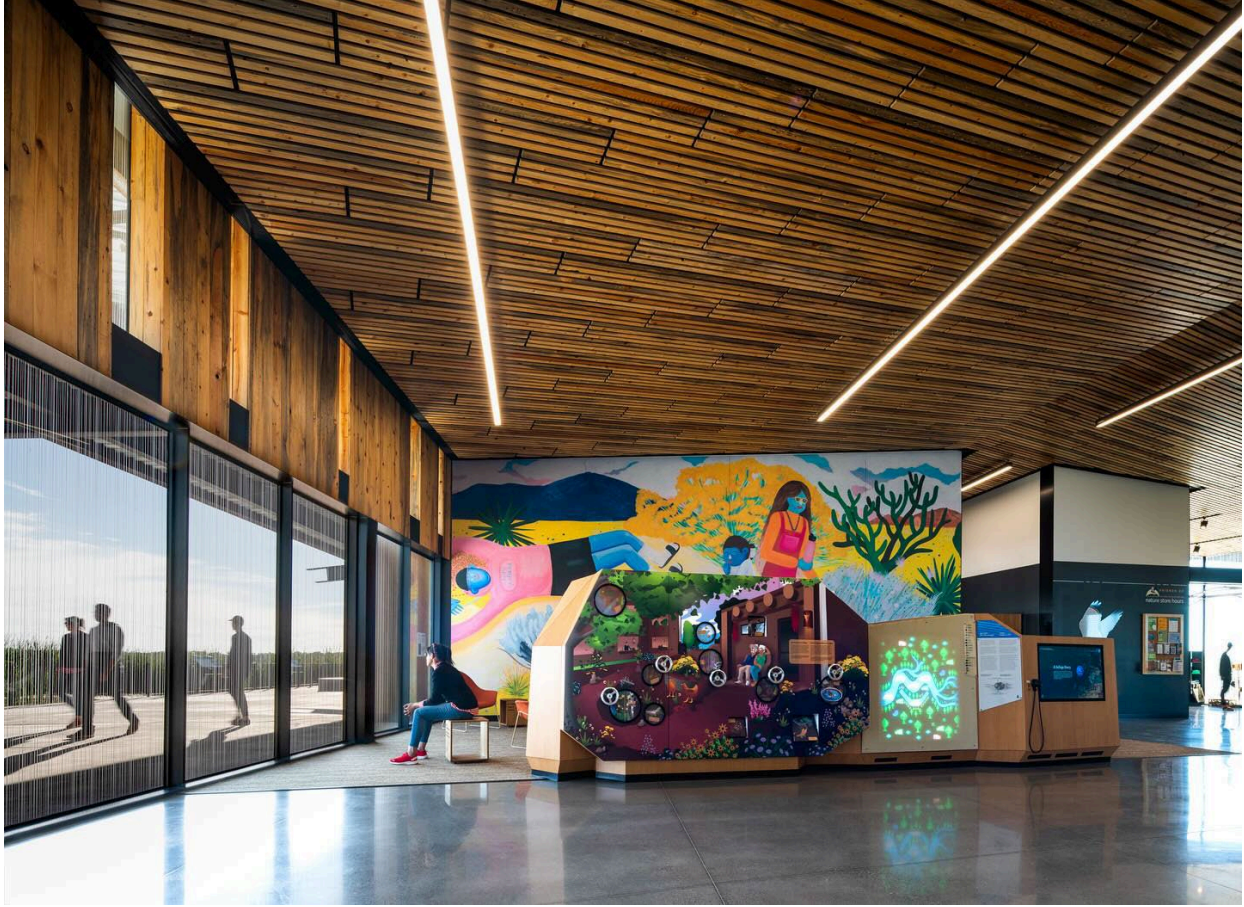
Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Refuge Visitor Services

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Youth and Careers in Nature – Arctic Youth	-500	0
NAGPRA	+250	+1
Customer Experience	+200	+1
Urban Program Activities	+500	0
Refuge Visitor Services Activities	+7,406	+28
Baseline Capacity	+3,204	
Program Changes	+11,060	+30

Program Overview

The Visitor Services Program is dedicated to upholding high standards of customer satisfaction by prioritizing improvements in a range of recreational opportunities. These activities encompass trip planning, wildlife viewing, photography, fishing, hunting, and both guided and unguided nature programs and the number of visits has steadily increased by an average 3.8 percent annually.

As a designated Customer Experience High Impact Service Provider, the program strives to provide safe and welcoming digital and in-person recreational experiences for people of all ages and backgrounds through in-person and online trip planning tools, recreation management, and engaging interpretive and educational programming. The Refuge System recognizes the importance of in-person customer experiences, when staffing capacity permits, and delivering equitable access to recreational opportunities through our Urban Wildlife Conservation Program.



Visitor and community hub at Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, Albuquerque, NM where visitors reflect and connect with nature and community. Image: Formative Architecture

Community Engagement

National wildlife refuges, frequently accessed by local residents, are often a community's gateway to nature and the outdoors, particularly for underserved communities. Refuge lands tell the stories of communities through archaeological and historic sites. As a result, the Visitor Services Program takes a leading role in various agency-wide community engagement actions, including Youth and Careers in Nature, the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program, Volunteers and Friends programs, and the Cultural Resources Program. These activities are dedicated to fostering authentic and positive connections with local communities by removing socioeconomic, physical, and programmatic barriers to engagement and addressing environmental justice issues. In addition, Volunteers and Friends programs provide local communities with the opportunity to contribute their time and talents to support the Service, as individuals (volunteers) or as part of a non-profit organization formed to support local field stations (Friends). The Service enhances public trust in government by actively listening, establishing transformational partnerships, and investing in long-term protection of resources. These actions increase the connection with the conservation constituency, while concurrently improving the overall management of the agency.



*An angler casts from fishing pier at Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge near New Orleans, LA.
Image: USFWS/Ian Shive*



The Visitor Services Program manages an extensive sign program to ensure visitors feel welcome. Newly designed entrance signs make sites more distinctive and approachable, Great Swamp, Basking Ridge NJ. Image: USFWS/Northeast Regional Refuge Chief

Cultural Resources

The Cultural Resources program began in the mid-late 1970s in response to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 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 and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and for which the Service is now a steward. Continued successes will require an increase in investment and capacity 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.

Youth and Careers in Nature

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 Visitor Services program builds upon existing, proven youth engagement programs with new and creative approaches to offer public service opportunities, support education and outdoor learning laboratories, 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, who engage in important functions of wildlife conservation and refuge operations including trails maintenance, invasive species response, habitat restoration, greet visitors, and perform other necessary tasks. To maximize engagement, the visitor services program manages more than 50 partnerships with non-profit youth serving organizations to recruit and employ youth in entry level internships and temporary employment.



*Participants in Spanish-language tour Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge led by local partner.
Photo credit Mauricio Valadrian*

Urban Wildlife Conservation Program

The Urban Wildlife Conservation Program (UWCP) is one of the Service's priorities 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, 32 designated Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership cities, and 30 Urban Bird Treaty cities. The program includes eight flagship urban national wildlife refuges that innovate scalable solutions for the broader conservation community.

The UWCP creates opportunities for the 80 percent 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 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.



Fall MobilizeGreen conservation youth crew at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum near Philadelphia, PA, Image: Peter Tran/MobilizeGreen, Shahid Jackson-Murphy/MobilizeGreen

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 Budget will:

- Continue to improve Refuge System customer feedback mechanisms including online and in-person visitor satisfaction surveys to further work completed as a designated Customer Experience High Impact Service Provider. Feedback will be used to improve virtual recreational trip planning on website, and the agency will continue to migrate recreational permits and passes to more user-friendly online processes. The Service will continue to strategically balance the expected increases in public demand for services while ensuring the continued conservation of plants, animals, and habitat.
- Continue work with urban communities, furthering the Department's priorities of restoring and building on a tradition of trust through community-centered conservation efforts in support of E.O. 13985 *Advancing Racial Equity in Support of Underserved Communities through the Federal Government*. The Refuge System will increase training and mentoring

opportunities with local communities and provide needed capacity through youth partnership hires. The Refuge System will also work to increase access for urban communities through transportation incentives and trails network enhancement.

- 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 its requirements under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and conduct formal Tribal consultation; improve education, monitoring, and to protect cultural resource sites under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA); and enhance the Service's Museum property management, including items protected by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Visitor Services is \$93,588,000 and 487 FTE, a program change of +\$11,060,000 and +30 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Youth and Careers in Nature – Artic Youth (-\$500,000/ -0 FTE) – 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.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) (+\$250,000/ +1 FTE) – The request for the Service includes \$250,000 in the Refuge Visitor Services Subactivity to support implementation of NAGPRA. NAGPRA requires museums and Federal agencies to identify Native American human remains, funerary items, and objects of cultural significance in their collections and consult with Tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations to repatriate the human remains and objects of cultural patrimony.

Federal NAGPRA regulations (43 CFR 10) provide a systematic process for returning Tribal artifacts to Native American and Alaska Native Tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations. On December 6, 2023, the Department announced a final rule effective on January 12, 2024, to revise regulations that implement NAGPRA. The final rule strengthens the authority and role of Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations in the repatriation process; eliminates the category “culturally unidentifiable human remains” and resets the requirements for cultural affiliation to better align the regulations with congressional intent; requires museums and Federal agencies to consult and update inventories of human remains and associated funerary objects within five years of this final rule; and increases transparency and reporting of holdings and collections. The 2025 President's Budget proposes additional funding for DOI NAGPRA programs to support and coordinate expedited repatriation and disposition of Tribal and Native Hawaiian ancestors and cultural property consistent with the final rule.

Customer Experience (+\$200,000/ +1 FTE) – Funding will support hiring one customer experience strategist within the Service as well as enhance field support. The Service will support the focus on expanding the use of digital recreational permits and passes to cover additional National Wildlife Refuges as articulated in the Service's Customer Experience Action Plan.

Urban Wildlife Conservation Program Activities (+\$500,000/ +0 FTE) – The requested funds will allow the Service to further its goals of supporting the Urban Wildlife program. This increase in funding will provide training and additional community engagement at urban refuges. It will also enable the Service to create a culturally relevant and welcoming environment for visitors and expand youth and local hiring opportunities.

Refuge Visitor Services (+\$7,406,000/ +28 FTE) – In FY 2023, visitation reached 68 million stressing Refuges capacity and our ability to safely manage and welcome visitors. At current funding levels, the Service maintains 125 visitor facilities, most of which are wholly volunteer-operated, have limited hours of operation, or are staffed by administrative officers or refuge managers as collateral duties. Funding will ensure safer operations at existing facilities and contribute to rebuilding the visitor services workforce, focusing on entry-level positions to greet visitors, teach students, engage communities, and coordinate volunteer programs. The structure of these positions will also provide career opportunities for diverse applicants.

The increase will also further youth corps programs that introduce 300 high school students from local and underserved communities to conservation and resiliency work and careers in nature and science. Youth will gain valuable summer job experience, earn livable wages, and learn more about their local natural and human communities.

Baseline Capacity (+\$3,204,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$3.2 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Activity: National Wildlife Refuge System

Subactivity: National Wildlife Refuge System Law Enforcement

Program Element	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change From 2024 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Refuge Law Enforcement (\$000)	46,272	46,272	+1,003	0	+16,126	63,401	+17,129
FTE	205	205	0	0	+51	256	+51

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

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Refuge Law Enforcement Activities	+14,000	+50
Mental Health and Wellness Coordination	+225	+1
Baseline Capacity	+1,901	
Program Changes	+16,126	+51

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 68 million wildlife-dependent recreational visits in FY 2023. 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.

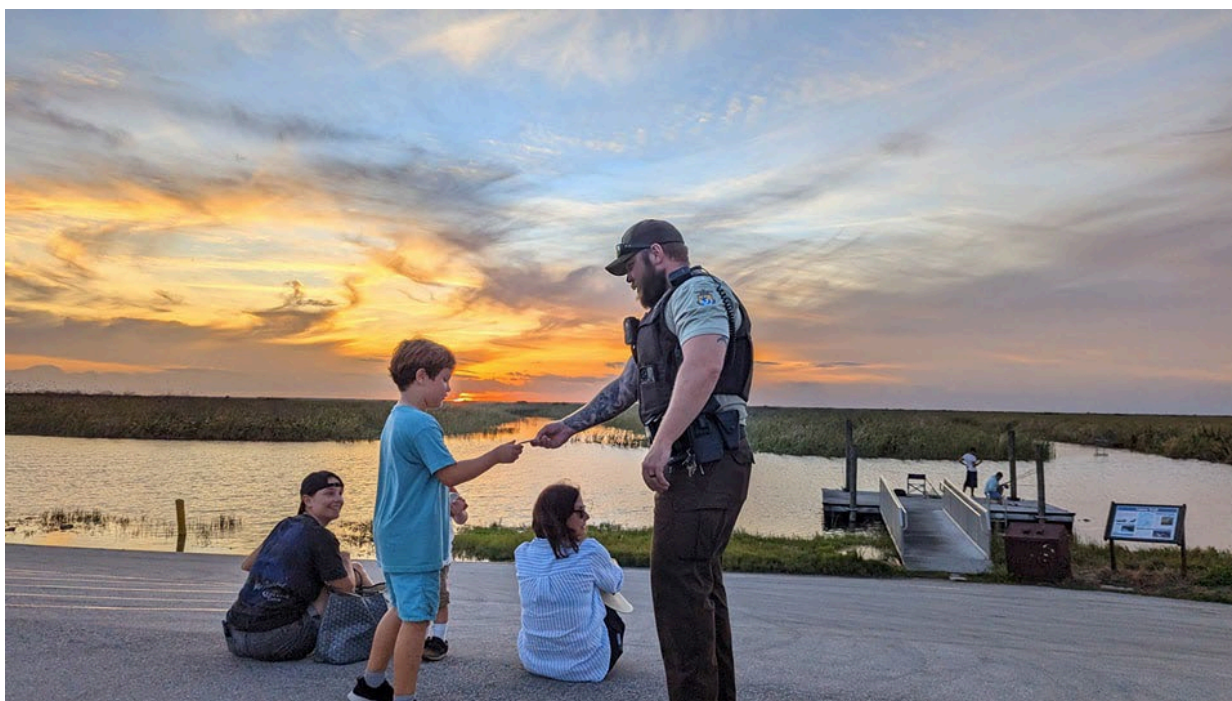
As leaders in the law enforcement community in building trust with local communities, the Refuge System actively recruits and hires Federal Wildlife Officers (FWOs) from diverse and underrepresented communities. The program has increased the diversity of its workforce while creating a community of practice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

FWOs 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 and other incident responses. FWOs are usually stationed in rural areas where supporting their local law enforcement is vital; these local agencies support the FWO, who work alone, when there is a need, and in return, the FWO is often requested to assist their partners when incidents occur adjacent to their patrol areas.

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 strives to work with non-profit groups that focus on creating access to the outdoors for urban

communities to build trust between National Wildlife Refuge System FWOs and communities of color and create opportunities for internal reflection and training on relationship building and intervention.

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. In 2022, NWRS LE established a national contract to outfit all officers with the same, up to date body-worn cameras to allow for consistency, transparency, and effective use of BWCs. 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, the Department of the Interior's policy, and the Service's policy.



Federal Wildlife Officer interacting with visitors at urban wildlife refuge Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, FL. Image USFWS/Maria Perez.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will:

- Increase Refuge Law Enforcement capacity which will improve wildlife and habitat protection, staff and visitor protection, and community engagement across the Refuge System. Additional Refuge Law Enforcement staff will begin to address the concerns and needs outlined in the DOI Law Enforcement Task Force 2023 Report, including “the lack of adequate funding and the declining staffing levels within DOI law enforcement [that has] resulted in numerous impacts to the DOI law enforcement workforce, visitors, residents, and communities near public lands managed by DOI Bureaus.”
- Embrace the principles of Executive Order 14074, *Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety*, to strengthen trust within our communities, evolve our training and hiring practices to specifically address intervention and bias, and incorporate organizational values and ethics

into all aspects of law enforcement.

- Continue to provide Archeological Resource Protection Act (ARPA) and NAGPRA investigative training to all of the commissioned law enforcement of the NWRS to enhance monitoring and protection of cultural resources and 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 restore transparency and integrity, to the decision-making process by supporting the enforcement of ARPA and NAGPRA.
- Emphasize diversity and inclusion in the workforce and explore nontraditional avenues of recruiting. NWRS LE will continue to recruit, hire, and train new FWOs using 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 percent 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. The Service will also develop a Pathways internship/recent graduate program to provide tangible recruitment and diversity benefits in NWRS LE.
- Pursue Equity – NWRS LE will expand FWO training in connecting and creating meaningful partnerships with the communities we serve and promote equity in the delivery of public safety services. Federal Wildlife 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.



A Federal Wildlife Officer investigating waterfowl hunters. Photo taken by FWS employee.



A Federal Wildlife Officer on patrol at Plum Tree Island NWR. Photo taken by FWS employee.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for National Wildlife Refuge System Law Enforcement is \$63,401,000 and 256 FTEs, a program change of +\$16,126,000 and +51 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Mental Health and Wellness Coordination (+\$225,000/ +1 FTE) – The 2025 President’s budget includes funding for a Mental Health and Wellness Coordinator for all DOI Law Enforcement programs including \$225,000 in the NWRS LE program. This supports the DOI Law Enforcement Task Force recommendation that the Department proactively support the mental health, wellness, and resiliency of all DOI law enforcement officers from recruitment to retirement. Healthy law enforcement officers have effective interactions with the public and make sound operational decisions in the performance of their duties which positively impact the public’s view of DOI law enforcement.

National Wildlife Refuge System Law Enforcement Activities (+\$14,000,000/ +50 FTE) – This funding increase will support the hiring of 48 FWOs. These FWOs will be embedded in local communities, 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. Currently, NWRS LE is expecting at least 22 percent of its work force to retire within the next 5 years due to the mandatory retirement of law enforcement officers at the age of 57. In order to prepare for this large decrease in workforce, NWRS LE needs to hire officers well in advance of pending retirements due to the nearly year-long training required.

The Department of the Interior’s Law Enforcement Task Force found that NWRS LE has had a 28 percent reduction in its officer base over the last 15 years, the highest of all the bureaus. These additional FWOs will move the NWRS LE program 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 workforce strives to protect NWRS staff, resources, and over 68 million visitors annually. Currently, there are seven States with no officers stationed within their boundaries, and the average response time to an incident within an officer’s patrol area could exceed four hours. The additional FWOs will enhance the protection of the NWRS and its visitors.

The Service will continue leading by example in the use of body worn cameras by modernizing the body worn camera program established in 2014. NWRS LE will continue to improve data management and storage capacity, increase training for Federal Wildlife Officers and managers, develop standard practices for transparent reporting of law enforcement activities to the public, and hire two FTEs to support equipment, data, and evidence management of body-worn cameras. This funding request also continues to support the deployment of a consistent and singular model of body worn cameras, improved data management, and conducted electrical weapon systems in order to increase transparency in law enforcement and provide reliable equipment.

NWRS LE will also purchase computers for each new officer and allow for replacement of 10 percent of the current officers’ laptops and other equipment to ensure officers are able to remain in the field.

Baseline Capacity (+\$1,901,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$1.9 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Activity: National Wildlife Refuge System
Subactivity: Conservation Planning

Program Element	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change From 2024 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Conservation Planning (\$000)	3,684	3,684	+80	0	+1,122	4,886	+1,202
FTE	19	19	0	0	+4	23	+4

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Conservation Planning

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Conservation Planning Activities	+1,000	+4
Baseline Capacity	+122	
Program Changes	+1,122	+4

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*², 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, 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 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; are resilient to climate fluctuations; restore ecosystem processes; integrate partnerships; and integrate with future acquisition efforts.

The 1997 National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act mandates that the Service complete a CCP for every unit of the Refuge System and revise the CCP every 15 years. The backlog of CCP revisions and new CCPs required is significant and growing. More than 300 CCPs need revision and more than seventy refuges have yet to develop a CCP.

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

The Service's policies guiding development of CCPs and step-down management plans were updated in 2024 to modernize the management of the Refuge System by incorporating landscape conservation planning and design and consideration of climate change and other anthropogenic forces in refuge decisions and management. Additionally, the policy updates provide for the reorganization of CCPs to make them easier to update, as well as emphasize Service coordination with States, Tribes and other partners on refuge planning.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Conservation Planning is \$4,886,000 and 23 FTEs, a program change of +\$1,122,000 and +4 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Conservation Planning Activities (+\$1,000,000/ +4 FTE) – Additional funding will be utilized to continue to support current planning efforts as well as build capacity to help achieve the Service's obligation to conduct inclusive CCPs for units of the Refuge System. The addition of 4 FTE 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.

Baseline Capacity (+\$122,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service's mission. The budget includes \$0.1 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Activity: National Wildlife Refuge System
Subactivity: Refuge Maintenance

Request Component		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Change From 2024 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Refuge Maintenance	(\$000)	150,211	150,211	+1,901	0	+7,948	160,060	+9,849
	FTE	494	494	0	0	+23	517	+23

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Refuge Maintenance

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Annual Maintenance	+1,000	+0
Deferred Maintenance	+1,000	+0
Maintenance Support	+3,000	+23
Baseline Capacity	+2,948	+0
Program Changes	+7,948	+23

Program Overview

The Refuge Maintenance subactivity underpins every aspect of Refuge System operations. 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 Maintenance and Infrastructure Fellowship Program (MIFP).

The Refuge System maintains over 44,000 assets representing over \$58 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.

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 MIFP fellows, are a critical component of proactively maintaining refuge facilities for employees, visitors, and the trust resources the Service protects. 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 preventative maintenance to keep assets in good condition, including: annual maintenance of furnaces; painting and upkeep of buildings and recreational infrastructure; grading trails, roads, and parking lots to support safe and reliable access; proactively maintaining boardwalks, piers, docks, and other recreational assets; 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. 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.



Rehabilitation of six cabins at Kenai NWR in Alaska by NWRS maintenance professionals saved the Service over \$166,000 compared to traditional contracting costs. Completed in December 2023.

- 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 Service guidance that supports 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 first-hand the field-based mission impacts, return on investment, and outside funding opportunities available. The Services’ DM backlog annual financial reports are incorporating recommendation #4 of the GAO report (GAO-24-105485) to provide Congress and the public with explanations of major changes in the Service’s DM backlog from one year to another and identify each project’s mission support/criticality rating.

For FY 2023, the Service reported a deferred maintenance and repair estimate (DM&R) of \$2,650,415,627 which aligned with the amount reported as ‘Repair Needs’ in the FY 2023 Federal Real Property Profile (FRPP). As reference and context, the Service, inclusive of all asset-owning programs, is responsible for a real property portfolio with a Current Replacement Value of \$58,850,056,889. This DM&R number represents 4.5 percent of the Service’s portfolio.

The generalized categories of assets with corresponding DM&R amounts include the following:

Categories of Assets Included in the DM&R Estimate as of September 30, 2023

Category	FY 2023 Deferred Maintenance
Operational Buildings	\$552,382,451
Housing Assets	\$115,049,029
Recreational Visitor Experience Assets	\$161,162,203
Transportation Assets	\$650,831,449
Water Infrastructure and Utilities	\$991,471,974
All Other Assets	\$179,518,521

The status of assets included in the DM&R estimate include assets that are currently utilized (99.7 percent), assets which are for future mission need (<1 percent). The Service has no assets categorized as surplus or excess.

Status of Assets Included in the DM&R Estimate as of September 30, 2023

Asset Status	Deferred Maintenance DM&R
Active-Current Need	\$2,641,893,442
Inactive-Future Mission Need	\$8,522,185
Excess-Report of Excess Submitted	0

In FY 2023, the estimated DM&R for Transportation Assets increased by more than 10%

from FY 2022. Transportation assets include road systems, bridges, boardwalks, and trails. The cyclical condition assessment inspections for these assets are performed by either the Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, or specialized external consultants. The Service Transportation program had an internal deadline of FY 2023 to process all existing Condition Inspection data remaining from previous multi-year inspection cycles. The incorporation of these deficiencies into the Service's asset management system resulted in the increase in the transportation DM&R data.

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, partnering with non-profit volunteer organizations for labor, emphasizing proactive investments, revising policies, improving data quality, and increasing focus on preventative and routine maintenance investments. 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 comprehensive life cycle infrastructure management program that will provide a favorable return on investment.

- **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 fleet management 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 by repairing and replacing infrastructure before repairs are deferred and cause additional damage would avoid 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.

The Service receives up to \$95 million annually from the Great American Outdoors Act (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 resilience 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 a safe and 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, the Service develops environmentally context-sensitive transportation assets and road treatments, improves and constructs alternative transportation systems and connectivity to other public systems, and repairs hydrologic flows with improved culverts and bridges to prevent flooding and damages to public lands and neighboring communities.

The Service receives \$36 million in Federal Lands Transportation Program funding through the Highway Trust Fund. The Service's transportation program is also integral to breaking down racial inequities to improve safe, reliable access to public lands for all Americans. The Service is analyzing different ways to help visitors and local communities know about their lands, how to reach them, and be safe while doing so. Local refuges and hatcheries 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 providing the needed match funding for the Federal Land Access Program (FLAP) awards provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation. These awards are specifically intended to improve 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.

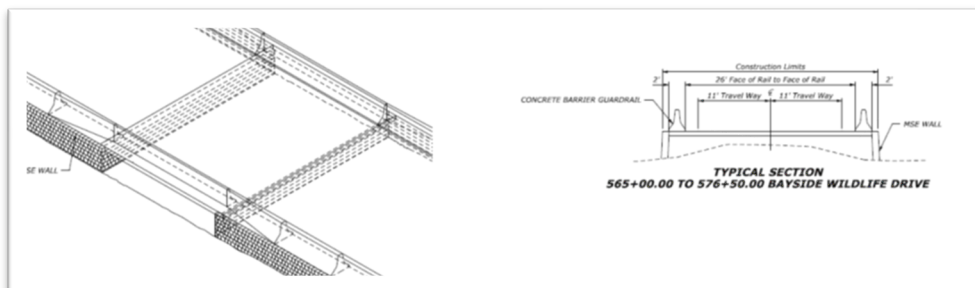
The Service's network has over 5,600 miles of public use roads, 6,000 public use parking lots, over 300 public bridges, 25 on-refuge transit systems, and 3,215 miles of public terrestrial trails and boardwalks. The Service leverages a variety of funding sources to manage this extensive system, including 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 169 FLAP awards totaling over \$321 million, and provided almost \$22 million in FLTP matching funds. These investments, along with successfully leveraging 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 Service’s 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

At Laguna Atascosa Refuge in south Texas, the Steve Thompson Wildlife Drive (Wildlife Drive) was closed due to wildlife vehicle collisions (WVCs) with ocelots and other wildlife. Prior to the road closing, the average annual count for visitors that used the route was approximately 350,000. In partnership with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), the Refuge initiated actions to mitigate and/or eliminate WVCs with a multiphase approach to road improvements which included installation of multiple crossings along FM-106 through the preferred thorn-scrub habitat of the ocelot. TxDOT received a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant in 2018 to reconstruct Buena Vista Road, a main access point into the Refuge and Wildlife Drive. Mitigation protections were embedded in the project with construction of speed reduction measures, and remote cameras documented the successful passage of ocelots using these new crossings. In FY 2023, the Service invested \$2 million of FLTP funds to construct two additional wildlife crossings at the Refuge. Leveraging other funding sources, the station was awarded \$1.8 million from the Wildlife Crossing Pilot Program (WCPP) in December 2023 to construct multiple wildlife underpass crossings alongside Wildlife Drive, and \$445,000 of FLTP funds will be used as match. WCPP grant funding will help secure the safety of visitors and wildlife with additional wildlife underpass crossings and taken together with the measures already in place, will address both a major habitat fragmentation issue and prevent roadway mortality, the leading cause of known ocelot deaths.



Proposed Wildlife Crossing Design along Steve Thompson Wildlife Drive at Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge

Multimodal Beach Access at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge

Chincoteague Refuge in Virginia received a Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Project (NSFLTP) program grant award of \$17.7 million for phase one to relocate public recreational beach assets to a more resilient section of the island and construct a multimodal trail for beach access. Chincoteague and Assateague Islands are cited as a top tourist destination in Virginia, receiving over 1 million visitors annually. This project will mitigate the impacts of frequent, recurring storm damage to critical transportation infrastructure. The island is moving westward and experiencing significant shoreline erosion, which is jeopardizing the future operation of a major economic generator. This project will prevent recurring storm damage, reduce maintenance costs, and continue to provide safe public access to the shoreline.



*Eroding Beach at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge,
Source: USFWS*

Constructing a Boardwalk at Kenai National Wildlife Refuge

The Russian River Angler Access Trail project at Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska was designed to improve visitor experience by redesigning the boardwalk for this high outdoor recreational use area to provide angler access to pristine salmon fishing areas along the Kenai and Russian Rivers. The Russian River confluence with the Kenai River receives over 250,000 visitors annually. The riverbank is unintentionally damaged by visitors due to angling and other activities. Construction is projected to begin in FY 2025 and \$1.8 million of FLTP funds will be applied for the construction of the boardwalk, which should prevent further damage to sensitive vegetation and prevent angler access to sensitive cultural areas, preserving this vital natural resource. Two eco-friendly toilets will also be installed to provide visitors with an accessible rest area. The economic impact of this area is estimated to be over \$500 million as documented by the Kenai River Center.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Refuge Maintenance is \$160,060,000 and 517 FTE, a program change of +\$7,948,000 and +23 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution. The requested funding for NWRS maintenance balances the operational needs across the Service, ensuring that the highest priority mission assets are receiving lifecycle investments, while also ensuring that other critical mission delivery occurs. At the requested funding level for maintenance, inclusive of all sources, the Service estimates that it will continue accrue deferred maintenance and repairs in some assets, while addressing critical maintenance requirements on other assets.

Annual Maintenance (+\$1,000,000/ +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.

Deferred Maintenance (+\$1,000,000/ +0 FTE) – This funding will help slow the rate of growth of the Service’s deferred maintenance backlog. With inflation, supply, and labor shortages pushing construction contract costs up 30 percent to 50 percent over the past few years, maintenance investments must increase to offset these costs. The Service will use these funds to offset construction cost inflation of some projects that are planned for FY 2025 rather than pushing projects to future years and adding more to the deferred maintenance backlog.

Maintenance Support (+\$3,000,000/ +23 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 1,050 maintenance professionals to provide adequate capacity to maintain Refuge System assets using a life-cycle investment model and prevent growth of the deferred maintenance backlog. The 23 FTE will help the Service continue to recruit and retain a talented, diverse workforce to maintain the Service’s asset and habitat portfolio.

Baseline Capacity (+\$2,948,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$2.9 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Migratory Bird Management

Migratory Bird Management

Activity: Conservation and Enforcement

Program: Migratory Bird Management

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Budget Request	Change From 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Conservation and Monitoring	(\$000)	30,935	30,935	+708	0	+9,208	40,851	+9,916
	FTE	115	115	0	0	+10	125	+10
Permits	(\$000)	5,513	5,513	+137	0	+7,778	13,428	+7,915
	FTE	38	38	0	0	+17	55	+17
Federal Duck Stamp	(\$000)	591	591	+20	0	+527	1,138	+547
	FTE	3	3	0	0	+1	4	+1
North American Waterfowl Management/ Joint Ventures	(\$000)	16,821	16,821	+200	0	+628	17,649	+828
	FTE	41	41	0	0	+0	41	+0
Total, Migratory Bird Management	(\$000)	53,860	53,860	+1,065	0	+18,141	73,066	+19,206
	FTE	197	197	0	0	+28	225	+28

Program Overview

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 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.

As a driving force in bird management and habitat conservation, the program conducts surveys, coordinates with public-private bird-conservation partnerships, provides matching grants for partner-based conservation efforts, administers conservation laws, develops policies and regulations, issues permits that allow individuals and organizations to participate in migratory bird conservation in a variety of ways, and manages the harvest of migratory birds to provide sustainable hunting opportunities for all Americans.

The program collaborates with other Federal agencies, States, Tribes, and non-governmental organizations to manage migratory bird species using partnerships that deliver local, regional, national, and international management plans that conserve habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife.

Over the last century the Service and our partners ended the purposeful over-exploitation of migratory birds and conserved millions of acres of habitat. Yet, today the Service faces a new set of challenges as the loss of migratory birds continues. In 2019, a report published in *Science*¹ found that three billion breeding birds have been lost since 1970 in North America. Habitat loss, invasive species, climate change, disease and human-caused mortality (i.e., incidental take) are among the leading the drivers for bird declines. The mission of the Migratory Bird Program is as relevant and important as it was at the inception of the Fish and Wildlife Service: to ensure a legacy of healthy bird populations for the American people.

Program Elements

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 – Migratory bird permitting promotes long-term conservation of migratory birds and encourages joint stewardship with others through efficient permitting programs with a strong biological foundation. Permitting includes a wide range of activities, from research and education to rehabilitation, propagation, taxidermy, and many others. Permits are used as a conservation tool to engage the public in specific activities consistent with our laws while providing a means to balance use and conservation. Permits also allow the Service to build partnerships and monitor activities to determine how they affect migratory bird populations.
- Federal Duck Stamp Office – Conducts the annual Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (Duck Stamp) Contest. The winning artwork from the contest is turned into the Duck Stamp and is required for anyone 16 years of age and older to hunt waterfowl; the stamp is also purchased by many others to support habitat protection. Proceeds from the sale of the stamp are deposited into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund and used to conserve wetland habitats within the National Wildlife Refuge System. The office also coordinates the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design program, which provides 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 habitats.

Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders

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

¹ Rosenberg, K. et al. (2019) "Decline of the North American avifauna." *Science*, 366(6461). 120-124.
https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aaw1313?adobe_mc=MCORGID%3D242B6472541199F70A4C98A6%2540AdobeOrg%7CTS%3D1707758580

- 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 impacts of 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.
- The *Duck Stamp Modernization Act of 2023* (P.L. 118-25) allows an individual to carry an electronic stamp, rather than a paper stamp, at the time of taking waterfowl.

Subactivity: Migratory Bird Management
Program Element: Conservation and Monitoring

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Change From 2024 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Conservation and Monitoring	(\$000)	30,935	30,935	+708	0	+9,208	40,851	+9,916
	FTE	115	115	0	0	+10	125	+10

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Conservation and Monitoring

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Conservation and Monitoring Activities	+8,058	+10
Baseline Capacity	+1,150	+0
Program Changes	+9,208	+10

Program Description

Over the last 50 years, North America has lost nearly three billion birds. Many species of birds, including grassland birds, seabirds, forest birds, shorebirds, and aerial insectivores, are experiencing population declines due to increased threats across the landscape. Working with partners, the Service’s comprehensive migratory bird conservation and monitoring activities are helping to stop further losses of migratory birds.

Conservation

The health of bird populations serves as an important indicator of the health of our environment. Birds play a vital role in our economy and society by controlling agricultural pests, acting as pollinators, and providing aesthetic, recreational, and religious benefits to the public. The Service works with partners—in the U.S. and internationally across migratory bird ranges—to understand how changes in habitat, climate, pesticide use, collisions, and other threats affect migratory bird populations, and identify conservation actions that can bring birds back.

The Service’s Migratory Bird Program provides expertise in the conservation and management of over 1,100 species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and 269 species included in the Birds of Conservation Concern. Staff throughout the country provide technical assistance on bird conservation issues to other Service programs, other Federal and State agencies, Tribes, industry, and private partners. Additionally, the program works with others to implement bird partnerships under Partners in Flight and the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Partnership; gathers data to build scalable tools (site-level, regional level, and national level); and develops 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.

The Service's Migratory Bird Program provides leadership at all levels (e.g., regionally, nationally — and sometimes at the continental or hemispheric level) to organize partnerships focused on Birds of Conservation Concern or ecosystems in which migratory birds serve as indicators of system health. The Birds of Conservation Concern identifies 269 migratory and non-migratory bird species beyond those already designated as federally threatened or endangered that represent our highest conservation priorities. The program regularly works 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, the program leverages the power of partnerships, prioritizes actions (research, monitoring, habitat conservation), avoids duplication of efforts, and catalyzes investments of time and resources 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](https://partnersinflight.org/resources/pinyon-jay-working-group/)¹ 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](http://gwwa.org/)², [Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative](https://atlanticflywayshorebirds.org/)³).

¹ <https://partnersinflight.org/resources/pinyon-jay-working-group/>

² <http://gwwa.org/>

³ <https://atlanticflywayshorebirds.org/>

Wings (and partnerships) of hope

A drab and elusive grassland songbird. A colorful warbler of young forests. A noisy Western jay. What do these birds have in common? They are all species at-risk, birds of conservation concern that illustrate examples of how proactive and collaborative conservation efforts can preclude the need for contentious and costly regulatory processes to guide their recovery. Each of these three species provide a window into how the Service's Migratory Birds Conservation and Management team works with its partners, finding creative solutions and leveraging resources to find win-win outcomes for industries, landowners, communities, and species.

In 2008, the Service received a petition to list Sprague's pipit as endangered. The Migratory Bird Program initiated a collaborative partnership to gather data, analyze information, and develop new tools to address gaps in our knowledge about the species. This information helped support the Service's "warranted, but precluded from listing" finding in 2010. Similarly, and with leadership from (and partially resourced by) the Migratory Bird program, the Golden-winged Warbler Working Group (GWWG) formed in 2003 because the species had declined by over 60 percent since 1966. Research findings and rangewide monitoring data gathered by GWWG partners across the species' multi-national range have provided tremendous information that will be used to guide the Service's upcoming Species Status Assessment and listing decision. Most recently, the Migratory Bird program led the formation of the Pinyon Jay Working Group (PJWG), to better understand why the species has declined by 80 percent in the last 50 years. State, Federal, non-governmental, and university partners are following the species' conservation strategy to help inform our future listing decision for pinyon jays in response to a 2022 petition.

These collaborative efforts drive on-the-ground management actions. For example, the PJWG developed survey protocols that are now being used by partners range-wide, creating a shared data set critical for management. Investments like these will maintain diverse, resilient landscapes that meet the needs of many stakeholders, from at-risk birds to Tribal Nations, ranchers, and recreationists.



Sprague's pipit. Credit: John Carlson/USFWS



Golden winged warbler. Credit: Alan Schmierer/USFWS



Pinyon jay. Credit: Anna Weyers Blades/USFWS

Reducing Impacts to Birds

The Service works with partners to reduce the incidental take—take that results from otherwise lawful activities but is not the purpose of the activity—of migratory birds through both regulatory and non-regulatory means. For example, the Service works with partners to develop and promote beneficial practices for different industries to reduce impacts on birds. The Migratory Bird Program also offers decision-support tools to inform the siting, design, and operation of projects to improve the conservation of migratory birds. Recent efforts include 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.⁵

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 alleviate problems associated with some bird species (e.g., crop and livestock depredation, damage to buildings or equipment, human safety, and health).



Waterfowl banders display blue-winged teal and cinnamon teal. Credit: USFWS

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

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

consistent, rigorous methodology. Waterfowl population and harvest information 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.

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>.



*Banders preparing to remove ducks from a trap in northern Alberta.
Credit: USFWS*

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

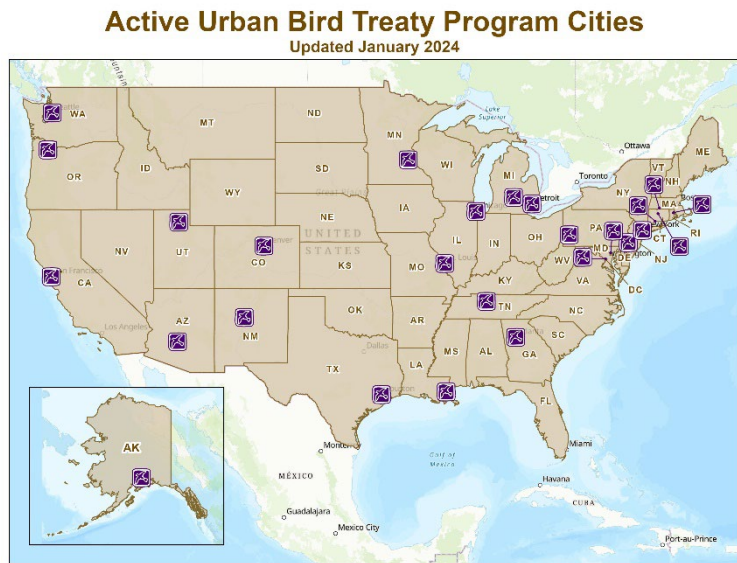
Councils), Tribes, and in some cases the Canadian Wildlife Service. In collaboration with our partners, the Service uses waterfowl and other migratory bird monitoring data in an adaptive resource management framework to set and evaluate hunting seasons in the United States. This is an iterative process 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.

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 are currently 26 Urban Bird Treaty Program cities across the U.S. with active urban bird partnerships. The program benefits the health and well-being of birds and people and is key to serving under-resourced and underserved communities.



2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will:

- Monitor migratory game bird species population status and harvest to provide the scientific basis to 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.
- Work with various industry sectors to reduce the incidental take of migratory birds through the development and implementation of avoidance and minimization measures.
- 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.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Conservation and Monitoring is \$40,851,000 and 125 FTE, a program change of +\$9,208,000 and +10 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Conservation and Monitoring Activities: Conservation, Capacity and Regulatory Enhancements (+\$8,058,000/ +10 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. This increase will provide targeted investments in partner engagement, monitoring, technical assistance, conservation planning, on-the-ground conservation delivery and promoting bird-friendly practices. In combination with the resources of other Service programs and other Federal, State, Tribal, and private conservation partners, this work will dramatically increase the pace and scale of habitat conservation for birds of conservation concern. This work will directly contribute to the America the Beautiful initiative, by identifying important climate-resilient places on the landscape to conserve and expanding conservation and restoration on the most important lands and waters for birds and other wildlife.

The Service is struggling to maintain its critical role in monitoring migratory game bird species abundance and establishing annual hunting regulations due to funding and workforce constraints. To continue fulfilling its monitoring obligations the Service needs to examine migratory bird harvest management with an eye towards change. However, harvest management is complex and involves other entities like state wildlife agencies and the Canadian Wildlife Service. Therefore, any change would need to preserve the co-management and cost-sharing of operational bird surveys and assessments of those data. A portion of this funding will address capacity gaps and allow the Service to pursue enhancements and efficiencies in its monitoring activities and current harvest management processes.

The Service will also use the request 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 public partners) receive a consistent message about how to interpret Service regulations and policies.

Baseline Capacity (+\$1,150,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service's mission. The budget includes \$1.2 million in this program which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Subactivity: Migratory Bird Management
Program Element: Permits

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Change From 2024 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Permits	(\$000)	5,513	5,513	+137	0	+7,778	13,428	+7,915
	FTE	38	38	0	0	+17	55	+17

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Permits

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Permits Activities	+7,612	+17
Baseline Capacity	+166	+0
Program Changes	+7,778	+17

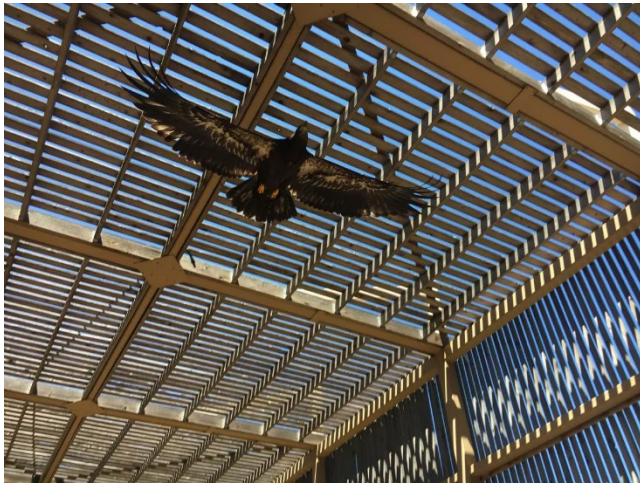
Program Description

The Migratory Bird Program uses permits and other authorizations as important tools in implementing the 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. Permits not only provide a means to balance human activities with conservation, but they allow the Service to monitor activities and build partnerships to determine how these activities affect birds. Each law uses permits in specific ways to protect species. The Migratory Bird Program implements more than 30 regulations and administers more than 40 permit types. Regulations contain information on the types of permits available, application procedures, and issuance criteria under a particular law or treaty.

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 help build capacity to monitor and respond to the effects of climate change on bird populations.

Supporting Native American Tribes and honoring Tribal trust responsibilities is also a key goal for the Migratory Bird Program. Recently, 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. The program is also working to pursue new opportunities in partnership with Native American Tribes.



Eagle flying in a cage at the Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma's Grey Snow Eagle House. Credit: Tell Judkins/Grey Snow Eagle House

Permits as a Conservation Tool

Birds provide significant benefits to the human world. They are pollinators, control pests, and are indicators of ecosystem health. In addition to the ecosystem services birds provide, they fuel our economy. The 2022 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation Report estimated that the 2.8 million migratory bird hunters and 96 million bird watchers in the United States spent billions of dollars participating in these activities. Despite the critical role birds play across the planet, birds are experiencing significant population declines and warrant conservation action. In 1918, the MBTA was enacted to implement the first of four international

treaties to protect migratory birds. Recognizing the need to protect and manage birds that were both injurious and beneficial to humans, the MBTA established a system of regulations and permits. Today, permits are the primary touchpoint we have with the public allowing the Service to authorize the take of migratory birds, but also achieve greater conservation awareness and implementation. Permits are an important conservation tool that allow the Service and its partners to monitor activities to balance societal needs with maintaining sustainable migratory bird populations. For example, the Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma's Grey Snow Eagle House provides long-term care to permanently injured bald and golden eagles, rehabilitation care to Oklahoma bald eagles and golden eagles, offers on and offsite educational opportunities, and participates in nationwide research endeavors. The Grey Snow Eagle House operates under several permits, which allows the facility to successfully conduct these efforts. As of August 2023, the Grey Snow Eagle House has successfully released 45 eagles back into the wild.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 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 permit application processes.
- Implement new incidental take regulations.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Permits is \$13,428,000 and 55 FTE, a program change of +\$7,778,000 and +17 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Permits Activities: Improving Permitting for the Future (+\$7,612,000/ +17 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. The regions have long needed this capacity and these funds will allow them 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 and concentrate staff time on areas with the most conservation

benefit. Additional technical capacity is needed to build capacity to efficiently deliver the required economic and environmental analyses. Through these actions, the Service will be well positioned for the migratory bird permitting demands of today and into the future.

Baseline Capacity (+\$166,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$0.2 million in this program which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Subactivity: Migratory Bird Management
Program Element: Federal Duck Stamp

	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change From 2024 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Federal Duck Stamp (\$000)	591	591	+20	0	+527	1,138	+547
FTE	3	3	0	0	+1	4	+1

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Federal Duck Stamp Office

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Junior Duck Stamp and Urban Refuges	+500	+1
Baseline Capacity	+27	+0
Program Changes	+527	+1

Program Description



The 2023-2024 Duck Stamp features Minnesota artist Joseph Hautman's painting of three tundra swan in flight. 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 \$1.2 billion and have been used to conserve over 6 million acres of habitat for birds and other wildlife species.

The Migratory Bird Program conducts the Federal art contest and 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. Duck Stamp dollars have created or expanded more than 300 National Wildlife Refuges.

In 2023, 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, it has become 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 2024-2025 stamp will mark the eighteenth year 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 2024, 30 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 over one million in 2023. The E-Stamp is a valuable customer service tool, making Federal 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.

In addition to the Federal Duck Stamp, the Service also coordinates the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program. Since 1993, the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program for students in



Virginia student Mila Linyue Tong's painting of a hooded merganser won first place at the 2023 National Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest.

K-12th grade has helped encourage students to explore their natural world, study wildlife and their habitats, and 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.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will:

- Conduct the art contest and oversee the production and sale of the Federal Duck Stamp.
- Promote the Duck Stamp to increase participation in the program and generate revenues for habitat conservation.
- Promote and diversify participation in the Junior Duck Stamp Program to target under-resourced/served and urban populations.
- Implement the Duck Stamp Modernization Act of 2023 to facilitate hunter access.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Federal Duck Stamp Office is \$1,138,000 and 4 FTE, a program change of +\$527,000 and +1 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Junior Duck Stamp and Urban Refuges (+\$500,000/ +1 FTE) – With the requested funding, the Service would implement the Duck Stamp Modernization Act of 2023 by updating agreements with States to make the E-Stamp valid for the entire waterfowl hunting season. Additionally, the Service would seek greater

participation in the Junior Duck Stamp program across the Nation, with an initial focus in States that are home to urban refuges.

Baseline Capacity (+\$27,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$27,000 in this program which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Subactivity: Migratory Bird Management

Program Element: North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP)/Joint Ventures

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change From 2023 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
North American Waterfowl Management/ Joint Ventures	(\$000)	16,821	16,821	+200	0	+628	17,649	+828
	FTE	41	41	0	0	+0	41	0

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for NAWMP/Joint Ventures

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Strengthening Joint Ventures' Partnerships	+269	+0
Baseline Capacity	+359	+0
Program Changes	+628	+0

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 (NAWMP or 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 Plan has sustained abundant duck, goose, and swan populations across North America by conserving habitats through partnerships for the nearly 40 years. The Plan has been updated over time and today strives to increase public awareness and understanding of both ecological and economic benefits provided by waterfowl conservation to as wide an audience as possible.

The habitat goals of the 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 public and private resources to ensure 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 report⁶ outlining steps to achieve the America

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

the Beautiful initiative, JVs were identified as an example of effective collaborative conservation partnerships that could be expanded to benefit migratory bird habitat.

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 habitat conservation and other management activities, and then tailor conservation plans for those populations. These plans employ landscape-level conservation strategies, and use a human dimensions lens about people's knowledge, values, and behaviors toward the landscape, to 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 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 connect bird conservation with new partners and stakeholders to adapt 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 JV partnerships are well-poised to meaningfully contribute to the recommended areas of focus.

Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture – Building Partnerships That Conserve Private Forest Lands for Birds, Wildlife, and People



A team of conservationists worked with landowners in West Virginia to improve young forest habitat for the Golden-winged Warbler. Credit: Liz Brewer, AMJV

Private landowners are vital stewards of our Nation's landscapes and wildlife. Roughly 83 percent of land in the Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture (AMJV) is privately owned and are often working forests that provide a source of income and livelihood to landowners. AMJV works with partners to promote sustainable working forests that provide critical wildlife habitat while maintaining, and even enhancing, the land's productivity and value, benefiting a variety of birds and other wildlife while also improving forest health and resilience to climate

change. Operational funding provided by the Service's Migratory Bird Program is key to leveraging additional government and private funds for project implementation. This funding has allowed AMJV partners to implement conservation projects throughout Appalachian forests and build a framework for boosting private lands forestry that provides opportunities for collaboration with a variety of stakeholders to conserve critical wildlife habitat.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 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.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for NAWMP/Joint Ventures is \$17,649,000 and 41 FTE, a program change of +\$628,000 and 0 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Strengthening Joint Ventures' Partnerships (+\$269,000/ +0 FTE) – Joint Ventures 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. The Service has, over the last few years, targeted budget increases to achieve target funding levels for all 21 Joint Ventures. Funds have been strategically invested among the Joint Ventures to strengthen partners' ability to respond to a variety of pressures, including climate change, drought and flooding, invasive species, and habitat change. The proposed funding will help offset rising costs but will not allow for meaningful improvements in the smaller Joint Ventures.

Baseline Capacity (+\$359,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service's mission. The budget includes \$0.4 million in this program which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

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ePermits

ePermits

Activity: Conservation and Enforcement
Subactivity: ePermits

	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change From 2024 (+/-)
			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	+29	+15	44	+44

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for ePermits

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
ePermits Operations	+1,000	+5
Program Enhancements	+5,000	+10
Program Changes	+6,000	+15

Note: As it did in the FY 2024 President’s Budget, 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. Internal Transfer of FTEs into ePermits is higher than the Internal Transfer of FTEs out of International Affairs (the previous estimate in the FY 2024 President’s Budget) because the Service will shift away from a pay-for-service model toward hiring FTEs to develop and manage ePermits.

Program Overview

In 2020, the Service launched the first version of ePermits to modernize Fish and Wildlife Service permitting with an online permitting platform and provide exceptional customer service to the American public. Permitting is a critical conservation tool and the ePermits system allows the Service to educate the public

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- **Program Enhancements:** Development of the ePermits system beyond its base capabilities. Current Program Enhancements include continued work on Secure Paperless CITES Permitting. The Service is requesting additional resources in FY 2025 to enhance the system for the Migratory Bird Program's recent regulatory changes around incidental take and a subset of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) Special Use Permits. The Service envisions using the existing and requested funds to accomplish the specific enhancements described above, then incorporate them into base operations to ensure the new capabilities are maintained effectively. This highlights the need for enhancement funding on a continual basis and reflects the dynamic nature of ePermits. As regulatory and technological changes occur, the system must also be changed 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 *21st 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 international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants do not threaten the survival of the species.
- The *Wild Bird Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 4901-4916) helps ensure 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.
- The *National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act* (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.) establishes a formal process for determining compatible uses of refuges.

Outreach and Customer Engagement

Since the launch of ePermits in October of 2020, more than 5,000 members of federally recognized Tribes have applied for a lifetime permit to obtain eagle parts and feathers from the National Eagle Repository (NER) for religious and cultural purposes. Previously, applicants could only submit their applications and request orders by mail. In 2022, the Service partially digitized the application to help meet demand. Later that year the Service collected feedback from applicants and permittees about their customer experience using the new application. More than 84 percent of respondents said they were somewhat or extremely satisfied with their experience. One respondent said: “The process was easy, and I have felt more confident in doing this process than in the past twenty years attempting to submit. Thank you so much for updating the way we do this.” Some respondents noted areas for improvement. Many applicants still submit applications by mail and are not yet familiar with the convenience of ePermits.

To continue improving the Tribal customer experience, the Service initiated a strategy to get face-to-face feedback from Tribal members. In collaboration with the NER, ePermits staff attended their first Tribal event in November of 2023, hosting a booth during the 80th Annual Convention of the National Congress of American Indians. Conversations with more than 250 people revealed additional insights that will help improve the application and ordering experience once implemented.



Service employees speak with attendees during the 80th Annual Convention of the National Congress of American Indians. Credit: Levi Novey / USFWS

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will:

- Improve functionality for external and internal users. For external users, improve interaction with the website through better account management and fee payment capabilities. For internal users, stabilize and enhance how the system produces reports and streamlines permit renewals for Ecological Services, International Affairs, Migratory Birds, and Office of Law Enforcement.
- Provide needed operational capacity to support the proposed enhancements of the project.
- Add new features to ePermits to 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.

Proposed Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for ePermits is \$13,500,000 and 44 FTE, a program change of +\$6,000,000 and +15 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

In fiscal year 2025, the Service will continue its efforts to improve, stabilize, and enhance the functionality of ePermits to modernize the permitting activities of Ecological Services, International Affairs, Migratory Birds, and the Office of Law Enforcement so they are streamlined, efficient, and responsive. Beginning in FY 2024, the Service will shift away from a pay-for-service model and move toward hiring FTEs to develop and manage ePermits. This will allow the Service to achieve more consistency, stability, and scalability in developing, operating, and managing the system. With the cost savings associated from this shift, the Service will retain the flexibility to utilize contract support when special skills or short-term assistance are needed.

ePermits Operations (+\$1,000,000/ +5 FTE) – With the requested funding, the Service will invest the resources needed to enhance customer experience when the public applies for permits. Public feedback is clear that navigating the permit application process is frustrating, which often results in incomplete applications. The Service takes this feedback seriously and is dedicated to improving the overall ePermits experience. The requested FTE will focus on helping applicants submit complete applications to reduce frustration and increase permit processing efficiency. Additionally, the Service will continue to invest in the continual improvement and streamlining of its permitting activities.

Program Enhancements (+\$5,000,000/ +10 FTE) – The requested funding will allow the Service to add the following new features to ePermits beyond the original scope:

National Wildlife Refuge System Customer Experience (+\$2,500,000 / +5 FTE) – The Service will transform the application process for National Wildlife Refuge System’s Special Use Permits (SUPs), which cover a range of commercial (grazing, recreation), extractive (oil and gas leases), research, and general activities. This will impact thousands of applicants by transitioning the existing laborious and time-consuming application process that relies on email, to a modernized application process via ePermits. Upon receipt of funding, this enhancement should be complete within 2-3 years, after which time there will be an ongoing need for refinement, support, and maintenance.

Migratory Birds Permits (+\$2,500,000/ +5 FTE) – The Service will digitize and enhance the application and permit process for new regulatory requirements under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and MBTA. The regulatory changes provide common sense guidance and policies that protect migratory birds and provide regulatory certainty to industry and the affected public, affecting up to 100,000 applicants. Upon receipt of funding, this enhancement should be complete within 2-3 years, after which time there will be an ongoing need for refinement, support, and maintenance.

Internal Transfer from International Affairs (+\$7,500,000/ +29 FTE) –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 beginning-to-end process for all Service permits. This funding includes building base system functionality of a fully operational and integrated system that meets the basic needs of external and internal users and costs associated with designing, building, maintaining, and supporting the system. Funding also supports a variety of activities and functions including Service positions engaged in management, implementation, and monitoring of the ePermits system and activities.

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Law Enforcement

Office of Law Enforcement

Activity: Law Enforcement

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Change From 2024 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Law Enforcement Operations	(\$000)	91,189	91,189	+1,997	0	+16,658	109,884	+18,655
	FTE	330	330	0	0	+21	351	+21
Equipment Replacement	(\$000)	910	910	0	0	0	910	0
Total, Office of Law Enforcement	(\$000)	92,099	92,099	+1,997	0	+16,658	110,754	+18,655
	FTE*	330	330	0	0	+21	351	+21

*Does not include 107 FTE funded by port inspections.

Program Mission



The Service is the only agency in the Federal government with primary responsibility for fish and wildlife management 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 wildlife imports inspections are 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.

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, Wildlife Inspectors 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.

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 2023, the Service conducted over 9,600 wildlife crime investigations, which resulted in ordered restitution of \$1.9 million in fines, \$1.0 million in civil penalties, 64 years in prison, and 222 years of probation. Wildlife Inspectors processed nearly 175,000 declared wildlife shipments and facilitated legal trade valued at over \$4.6 billion.

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.



During 2022, a former biology professor was sentenced to six months in prison, three years of post-release supervision, and fined \$5,000 for buying and importing approximately 358 wildlife items of 14 protected species into the U.S. without declaring or obtaining required permits.

Photo credits: USFWS

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 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 investigates violations of laws that safeguard wildlife and wildlife habitat. The Service also works with industries that affect American wildlife resources and habitats to secure voluntary compliance with wildlife laws.



Conservationist Jeff Corwin teamed up with OLE and other partners to raise awareness about challenges facing North America's native turtles and tortoises, including wildlife trafficking. Turtles are ancient reptiles that face modern threats. On top of habitat loss, climate change, and car strikes when crossing roads, they are under pressure from illegal collection. Learn more at <https://www.fws.gov/story/keeping-turtles-safe-illegal-trade> Photo and video credit: USFWS

Working with Native Americans and Alaska Natives

The OLE supports DOI's priority of strengthening government-to-government relationships with sovereign Tribal Nations in many ways, including 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 pass 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.¹ 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.

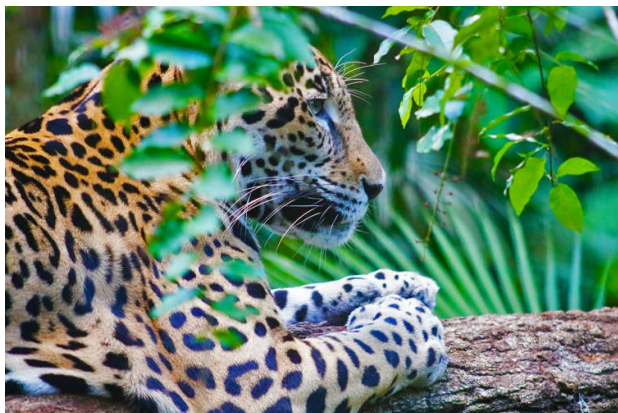
¹ Secretary Deb Haaland: Supporting Indian Artists <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2T-mgzV3OY>

Most of these defendants ran similar multinational criminal schemes in the Southwest United States involving 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 multifaceted crimes were not simple to investigate. They 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.

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. User fees are published in the Code of Federal Regulations and have been set at current rates since 2012. This has been an area of increasing workload in recent years as what was once generally a local or regional problem has become a global crisis. Increasingly sophisticated and violent criminal organizations have identified the exploitation of natural resources as an area of lower enforcement risk and higher potential profit leading to greater illegal trade.



*In 2022, a federal grand jury indicted a Texas woman who allegedly illegally sold a live jaguar cub for approximately \$30,000 to a California man who soon afterward re-sold the cub. The cub was ultimately abandoned on the doorsteps of an animal rescue center. The criminal allegations include violations of the Endangered Species Act, under which jaguars are protected, and the Lacey Act, which prohibits wildlife trafficking. The OLE investigated this case alongside the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.
Photo credit: USFWS*

In order to combat the growth of criminal networks at a global scale, law enforcement agencies are using new technologies and methodologies to try and focus their efforts. Service wildlife inspectors and special agents are expected not only to properly identify, safely physically inspect, communicate with cooperating agencies, and intervene with *declared* shipments but to intercept undeclared, illegal shipments in both international and domestic shipments, which creates huge logistical challenges.

The OLE's International Operations Unit stations special agents as attachés at U.S. embassies to investigate

In 2017 OLE Special Agents initiated a long-term, complex investigation in Africa and Asia related to an extensive criminal enterprise involved in smuggling multiple tons of African elephant ivory and rhinoceros horn from Africa to Asia. A Malaysian national was identified as an active member of this criminal enterprise and was directly involved in smuggling numerous shipments of critically endangered elephant ivory, rhinoceros horn, and pangolin scales from Africa through Singapore and Malaysia en route to criminal associates in Laos, Vietnam, and China over many years.

With Thai partners in 2019, OLE Special Agents conducted a successful operation in Thailand in which the suspect brokered significant payments of U.S. dollars from an undercover U.S. bank account to co-conspirators in China and the delivery of approximately 26 kilograms of rhino horn to undercover officers in Thailand. In 2020, the suspect was indicted in the Southern District of New York for offenses related to conspiracy to commit wildlife trafficking and money laundering. Following a successful arrest in Thailand by Royal Thai Police, the suspect was extradited to the United States.

In September 2023, Teo Boon Ching was sentenced to 18 months in prison for conspiring to traffic hundreds of kilograms of rhinoceros horns worth millions of dollars that involved the illegal poaching of numerous rhinoceros, an endangered wildlife species. Additionally, he and his associated entities were also sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department Office of Foreign Assets Control, a first for OLE.



international wildlife trafficking. Currently, the OLE has 11 personnel (10 attachés and one intelligence analyst) stationed internationally to address limiting factors in countries that drive or enable the illegal wildlife market. An additional attaché assignment will open in FY 2024. These attachés 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 technical assistance to local governments involved in wildlife trafficking investigations. They have also provided training and capacity building, increased coordination among government agencies, and support to Wildlife Enforcement Networks throughout their areas of responsibility.

The 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.

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.

A wildlife forensic pathologist at the Service’s National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Lab, was featured in a Sierra article. In it, she explains her fascinating work that contributes to California condor conservation. Read the article at <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/2022-4-november-december/notes-here-there/condor-csi>

Photo credit: USFWS

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.

Operation Apex

Operation Apex was initiated by the Office of Law Enforcement’s Special Investigations Unit (SIU) to infiltrate a transnational criminal organization involved in wildlife and drug trafficking and money laundering. This complex five-year undercover operation was closely coordinated with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Department of Justice. Agents of the SIU and the DEA successfully infiltrated a sophisticated network of criminals that led to an initial takedown involving the arrests of 12 subjects and the execution of 23 search warrants. In addition, agents seized \$4,382,078 from bank accounts and in cash, 17,735 marijuana plants, 34.5 pounds of high-grade marijuana, 9 firearms, and over \$7 million worth of diamonds, gold, silver, and jewelry. Agents also seized more than six tons of shark fins valued at \$420,000 and seized \$200,000 worth of bladders from the endangered Totoaba fish. In 2023, the last of the 12 defendants pled guilty and were sentenced. In total, the network, received over 250 months incarceration, 60 months of probation, and forfeited monetary property and all wildlife seized.



2025 Program Activities

In FY 2025, 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.

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>

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.

Proposed Program Changes

The 2025 OMB budget request for Law Enforcement is \$110,754,000 and 351 FTE, a program change of +\$16,658,000 and +21 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Wildlife Inspection Program (+\$10,000,000/ +11 FTE) - The Wildlife Inspection Program (WIP) faces a critical juncture as international wildlife trade expands in complexity, and responsibilities have evolved beyond facilitating legal imports and exports. Today, Wildlife Inspectors stand on the front lines, protecting the U.S. border and ports-of-entry, combatting a multi-billion-dollar black market trade in wildlife which fuels species extinction and organized crime, emerging zoonotic threats often linked to wildlife trade, and invasive species which cause ecological disruptions that devastate ecosystems and economies. Traditional WIP funding is based solely on user fees, which have not increased since 2012. This increase would enable the program to institute interdiction efforts to proactively address challenges without imposing the costs onto the trade community that complies with wildlife laws and regulations. The WIP will use these funds to modernize technology to enhance risk analysis and inspection efficiency; increase special operations nationally to target high-risk trade routes; bolster biosafety to protect public health, natural resources, and the economy from zoonotic disease and invasive species threats; increase much needed capacity at border inspection sites; and expand and strategically deploy national K9 interdiction teams.

Baseline Capacity (+\$3,674,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$3.7 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Law Enforcement Operations (+\$1,234,000/+5 FTE) – This increase will allow OLE to fill much needed support personnel positions, such as law enforcement special assistants, lab personnel, and forensic scientists. These personnel are part of the critical support network bolstering the work of special agents and wildlife inspectors in the field who are on the front line fighting for species on the brink of extinction from the accelerating black market of wildlife trade.

Body-worn Cameras (+\$1,000,000/+3 FTE) – The Department of Justice has mandated use of body worn cameras (BWCs) for Federal agents at certain federal agencies. DOI is now also requiring BWC for its officers, in accordance with the Secretary’s priority of equity and environmental justice. BWCs are a promising tool to improve evidentiary outcomes 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 of video files consistent with applicable federal laws.

Law Enforcement Task Force Priorities (+\$500,000/ +1 FTE) – This funding will support the Department’s Law Enforcement Task Force priority of equipping each law enforcement program with a Public Information Officer.

Law Enforcement Task Force Priorities-Mental Health Coordinator (+\$250,000/ +1 FTE) – The 2025 President’s budget includes funding for a Mental Health and Wellness Coordinator for all DOI Law Enforcement programs including \$250,000 in the Service’s Office of Law Enforcement. This supports the DOI Law Enforcement Task Force recommendation that the Department proactively support the mental health, wellness, and resiliency of all DOI law enforcement officers from recruitment to retirement. Healthy law enforcement officers have effective interactions with the public and make sound operational decisions in the performance of their duties which positively impact the public’s view of DOI law enforcement.

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International Affairs

International Affairs

Activity: Conservation and Enforcement

Subactivity: International Affairs

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Budget Request	Change From 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
International Conservation	(\$000)	10,098	10,098	+190	0	+881	11,169	+1,071
International Wildlife Trade	(\$000)	18,981	18,981	+274	-7,500	+1,086	12,841	-6,140
Total, International Affairs	(\$000)	29,079	29,079	+464	-7,500	+1,967	24,010	-5,069
	<i>FTE</i>	72	72	0	-8	+4	68	-4

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for International Affairs

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Theodore Roosevelt Genius Prize	-1,000	-0
Eurasia Regional Conservation	+800	+2
Human Dimensions of International Wildlife Conservation	+825	+1
Wildlife Health and Preventing Zoonotic Disease	+647	+1
Baseline Capacity	+695	+0
Program Changes	+1,967	+4

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 comprises the following elements:

- International Conservation – This program works with partners around the world to conserve high-priority species and their habitats. This is accomplished through stewardship of long-term and trusted grant making programs and building the conservation management capacity of

individuals and institutions in other countries. International Conservation is a leader in the use of conservation evidence and utilizes data to demonstrate the program's impact and improve the effectiveness of its investments.

- 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 in support of international wildlife conservation to, among other objectives, ensure international wildlife trade is legal, traceable, 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, manages a conservation permitting program, and combats wildlife trafficking.

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 and to engage in accessible and clear communication about this work in the context of several long-standing commitments. These obligations are contained in domestic laws, international treaties, and other multilateral agreements. Examples include:

- The *Endangered Species Act* (ESA) (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543), which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2023, 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), which was ratified in 1973, is an international agreement to ensure international trade in specimens of CITES-listed animals and plants is legal, traceable, and does not threaten the survival of the species.
- The *Multinational Species Conservation Acts* support the conservation and protection of elephants, rhinos, 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 tortoises and freshwater turtles by the *John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019* (P.L.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 of 1967* (22 U.S.C. 1978) authorizes prohibition of the import of any products from a foreign country when nationals of that country,

directly or indirectly, are engaged in harvest or trade that diminishes the effectiveness of any international program for the conservation of endangered or threatened species, and the Secretary has certified such fact to the President.

- The *Canada/Mexico/U.S. Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management* is an international treaty that 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) is an international treaty that 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 Lacey Act also prohibits the importation and shipment of wildlife species that are designated by the Secretary of the Interior as injurious, and requires live wildlife to be imported under humane and healthful conditions.
- The *Big Cat Public Safety Act* (BCPSA) (P.L. 117–243) amends the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 (–3378) to clarify provisions enacted by the *Captive Wildlife Safety Act* (CWSA) and to further the conservation of certain wildlife species, including to end private ownership of big cats as pets and to prohibit exhibitors from allowing direct public contact with big cats, including cubs.
- The *Wild Bird Conservation Act* (WBCA) (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 *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 *Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act* (BGEPA) (16 U.S.C. 668-668d) makes it unlawful to take; possess; sell; purchase; barter; offer to sell, purchase or barter; transport; export or import; at any time or any manner, any bald eagle or any golden eagle alive or dead, or any part (including feathers), nest, or egg thereof.
- 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 *Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018* (Evidence Act) (P.L. 115-435) urges the Federal Government to use the best available evidence in making decisions.
- Section 508 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, as amended (29 U.S.C § 794 (d)) requires federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities, ensuring disabled employees and members of the public have access to information comparable to the access available to others.
- The *Plain Language Writing Act of 2010* (P.L. 111-274) requires that federal agencies use clear government communication that the public can understand and use.
- The *21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act* (21st Century IDEA) (Public Law 115-336) aims to improve the digital experience for government customers and reinforces existing requirements for Federal public websites.
- The *Executive Order 14058 on Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government*, directs the government to create public facing content that is user-friendly and in a manner that people of all abilities can navigate and understand. It also directs the Secretary of the Interior to modernize the electronic permitting system to accept and process applications for permits.
- The *Executive Order 13648 on Combating Wildlife Trafficking* addressed the significant effects of wildlife trafficking on the national interests of the United States, directed agencies to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, both domestically and internationally, and established the Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking.
- The *Executive Order 13773 on Enforcing Federal Law With Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking* called for, among other things, strengthened enforcement of Federal law to thwart transnational criminal organizations and others involved in illicit activities such as wildlife trafficking that present a threat to human safety and national security.

Program Overview



The work of the Service's International Affairs program protects imperiled species such as black rhinos. Credit: Karl Strohmayer/USFWS

The survival of natural resources 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 ensure the international trade in wild plants and

animals is legal, traceable, and biologically sustainable. The complex threats affecting 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 imperiled iconic species by providing technical and financial assistance, strengthening capacity to protect these species in their habitats, and providing policy support and fostering interagency collaboration to combat wildlife trafficking. The Service's International Wildlife Trade program protects at-risk species in several ways. It ensures protections under the Endangered Species Act reflect changing threats, evaluates permit applications for activities ranging from scientific research to the importation of sport-hunted trophies and live animals, and negotiates with and supports foreign governments to improve their compliance with CITES and other relevant agreements. These actions complement the activities of a range of Service programs including the 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 tortoises and freshwater turtles are just a few of the species that captivate the hearts and minds of the American public. The Service's work in the International Affairs program extends to numerous native species whose ranges extend beyond our borders. These species include monarch butterflies, marine mammals, and marine turtles, as well as native species of animals and plants that are traded internationally, such as American alligator, American ginseng, paddlefish, bobcat, river otter, and various freshwater turtles. The conservation of these species and their habitats provides concrete benefits to U.S. residents and to the U.S. and global economy. 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.

Working with Partners to Conserve Monarch Butterflies

Pollinator species such as monarch butterflies are important for the human food supply. They migrate between Mexico and Canada and their survival depends on conservation efforts in their wintering grounds in Mexico and along their migration routes. For several decades, monarch numbers have been declining. The Service is working with partners to support monarch butterflies in Mexico through the International Affairs program. Investments include establishing the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve training center and its education program that focuses on sustainable national resource management with local communities. To date, over 100 community-based extension workers have graduated from this center, training an additional 2,000 local farmers on topics such as community planning and governance; sustainable agriculture; and soil, water, and forest conservation. The Service has also supported the restoration of forests in the Reserve bolstering the monarch butterfly wintering grounds.



*Monarch butterflies are important pollinators.
Credit: Jim Hudgins/USFWS*

The Service works closely with State agencies and Tribes to ensure that wildlife trade involving the United States, particularly trade in U.S. native species, is legal, traceable, and biologically sustainable. We also work with partners to strengthen the capacity of other countries to address the on-the-ground conservation needs of key species. Our approach entails working together to find innovative solutions to address urgent conservation threats, including unsustainable harvesting, poaching and wildlife trafficking, illegal logging and associated trade, habitat loss and degradation, disease, climate change, and inadequate capacity or resources to support wildlife conservation. Through these efforts, International Affairs supports numerous conservation aims including establishment of protected areas, wildlife management and community-based conservation, and effective implementation of multilateral environmental agreements.



Sudanese cattle herd grazing near Chinko Nature Reserve in the Central African Republic. Credit: Matthew Luizza/USFWS

The Service's international wildlife conservation efforts extend to some of the regions of the world that are hardest hit by climate change. The effects of climate change compound 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 local communities and

foreign governments to help build resilience against climate change by establishing and managing protected areas and other large landscapes, while strengthening governance and 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, including tropical forests in the Amazon and Congo Basins, 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 bolstering the biosecurity of the United States. 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.



Shipment of live animals awaits inspection upon arriving at a U.S. port of entry. Credit: Rebecca Fabbri/USFWS

Through financial and technical assistance programs, the Service's International Affairs program applies a range of evidence-based approaches that support pandemic prevention at the source, such as addressing illegal commercial 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. CITES Management and Scientific Authorities, the Service also contributes to halting current disease spread and reducing the risk of future outbreaks via the 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 significant negative impact on many at-risk species around the world. 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 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 broadly.

Since 2013, the Service has prioritized regional and species programs, resulting in more than \$32 million in financial assistance for on-the-ground conservation actions and project investments with more than 700 partners in developing countries. In addition to the impact on wildlife conservation, these investments help set a positive tone for U.S. relations around the world, including throughout the Western Hemisphere and across Africa and Eurasia.

International Conservation Strategies

Foundations for Evidence-Based Decision-Making



Forest elephants in the Dzanga-Sangha Reserve of the Central African Republic have benefited from long-term support from the Service. Credit: Daphne Carlson/USFWS

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 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, in Central Africa the Service has supported conservation of the highly threatened forest elephant since 1990. At surveyed sites across Central Africa, a reported 60 percent of

the current forest 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 Service’s monitoring and evaluation of its foreign assistance and is helping the Service meet important objectives described in Congressional legislation.¹ 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, the International Affairs program 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.

¹ *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”

Conserving Priority Species and Habitats across Landscapes



Protection and monitoring of standing forest helped Gabon negotiate one of the first international agreements to receive carbon credits. Credit: William Kanapaux/USFWS



In addition to providing habitat for wildlife, wetlands boost ecosystem and community resilience to climate change, improve clean drinking water, support local economies, and provide access to the outdoors. Credit: Ryan Hagerty/USFWS

With mounting threats to wildlife and wild places around the world, protecting habitats using landscape-level conservation 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 protected areas have proven to be effective in stabilizing and increasing wildlife populations. Effective protected area management also strengthens broader governance and helps maintain the integrity of ecosystems, which is crucial for the wildlife in a changing climate.

The Service's International Affairs program has a well-established history developing the human and financial capacity to effectively manage protected areas. Past successes include supporting creation of the first community co-managed protected area in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and development of the national parks agency of Gabon, strengthening community-based 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.

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 conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. In this work, the International Affairs 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 – healthy habitats supporting healthy wildlife populations and 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 forests, including the Central African Republic's Chinko Nature Reserve, provide critical habitat and ecosystem services. Credit: Matthew Luizza/USFWS

The African continent is characterized by a wide range of habitats, including coastal mangroves, vast grasslands and savannas, and the world's second-largest expanse of tropical forest. These areas harbor an incredibly diverse array of wildlife and plants and represent a critical carbon sink. The Service has more than three decades of experience working across Africa with foreign governments and local communities, in partnership with other U.S. government agencies, multi-donor agencies, and non-governmental organizations. Currently through an interagency agreement with U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and under the authority of the Foreign

Assistance Act, the Service employs a strategic, results-based vision for wildlife conservation in Africa that focuses on 1) improving site-based wildlife conservation and governance in priority population strongholds; 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, human wildlife conflict, and the unsustainable bushmeat trade. The Africa Regional Program administers the African portion of the Great Ape Conservation Fund and the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund as well as the African Elephant Conservation Fund. Through an interagency agreement with the USAID Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE), the program also implements a portfolio focused on developing the long-term capacity for conservation of wildlife strongholds across Central Africa.

Through this program, the Service has achieved significant results, including stabilization of one of the largest remaining populations of critically endangered forest elephants in Gabon and northern Republic of the Congo. The Service is also building conservation leadership with a series of seven of its signature MENTOR fellowship programs², which have educated more than 60 Fellows, with two additional MENTOR programs that began in FY 2023. This series includes MENTOR-Conservator in Gabon, which is a new Master's degree program for park managers.

Latin America and Caribbean Regional Program

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 half of the species known to science, making it Earth's richest genetic reservoir and a critical carbon sink for mitigating climate change. The United States and Latin America also share many at-risk species that depend on the region's unique ecosystems

² The MENTOR Fellowship Program brings together teams of emerging conservation leaders for rigorous academic and field-based training, long-term mentoring, experiential learning, and project design and implementation to address major threats facing wildlife populations. To learn more, visit <https://www.fws.gov/program/mentor-fellowship>

and cross-boundary landscapes for their survival.



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

The goal of the Latin America and Caribbean 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. Protecting wildlife and habitats in the Western Hemisphere is also critical for building regional stability, security, and economic prosperity. Since 2021, Congress has directed the Service’s International Affairs program to invest at least \$1.1 million in projects that

promote conservation in Mexico and the Northern Triangle (Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador) with the goal of strengthening partnerships and capacity in these countries.

In Mexico, the Service works with local and indigenous communities to protect key species like jaguars, scarlet macaws, and monarch butterflies, and the habitats on which they depend. In Central America, the Service supports partners to implement a regional strategy to conserve the five largest remaining intact forests, which are strongholds for key species including 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 stop wildlife trafficking, reduce human-wildlife conflict, and protect key species. Through these projects, the Service promotes wildlife management practices that foster sustainable livelihoods for local people.



The California condor is a species of common concern for the Trilateral Committee. Credit: USFWS

The Canada/Mexico/U.S. Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management (Trilateral Committee) was established in 1996 via a Memorandum of Understanding to implement shared issues of continental significance and serve as a platform for the three countries to coordinate on conservation priorities. The Trilateral Committee meeting is hosted annually on a rotational basis by the three countries and the International Affairs program leads its implementation for the Service. The U.S. will host the Trilateral Committee meeting in 2024 with working tables that will address the following topics:

wildlife law enforcement, CITES, conservation of shared ecosystems and species of concern, and migratory birds.

Recovery and Conservation of North American Grasslands

During the 2023 meeting of the Trilateral Committee, the Service agreed to work with Mexico, Canada, and partners to preserve the grasslands of the Great Plains of North America. These grasslands are home to a plethora of wildlife including some unique species that occur nowhere else on earth. All of North America's grassland types are among the world's most endangered ecosystems, and grassland bird populations have suffered some of the steepest declines of any group of birds on the continent. Grasslands, the diversity of people, and worldviews they support require landscape-level, innovative, cooperative, and interdisciplinary approaches to conservation. Currently, the Service supports several grasslands recovery projects.



*Before and after photos of a shrub control project conducted within the Sustainable Grazing Network.
Credit: Evaluación Integral y Restauración de Hábitat, A.C.*

Eurasia Regional Program

As the largest region in the world, both in terms of landmass and population, the European and Asian continents are exceptionally rich in biodiversity. From the tallest mountains on Earth to the world's largest coral reef system, the region 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, including poaching, have decimated wildlife populations and habitats. The region is also the number one destination for illegal wildlife products and, as such, fuels the illegal wildlife trade. The Asian elephant population declined by approximately 50 percent over the last 75 years, and two of the three Asian rhinoceros species have fewer than 90 individuals remaining in the wild.

The Service's Eurasia Program collaborates with and supports partners to conserve and restore wildlife and habitats in Eurasia. The Eurasia Program manages three Multinational Species Conservation Funds: Asian Elephants, Asian Rhinos and Tigers, and Asian Apes. The goal of the three MSCF Programs is to perpetuate healthy populations of Asian elephants, rhinos, tigers, and apes in their native ranges by supporting the conservation programs of range states. To achieve this goal, the Eurasia Program manages competitive grant programs to provide foreign assistance to non-governmental organizations, individuals, and educational institutions to further on-the-ground conservation activities for these umbrella species.

The Eurasia Program also focuses on cross-cutting wildlife conservation issues across Eurasia, including human wildlife conflict mitigation; leveraging innovative tools, such as conservation working dogs; and building the capacity of partner countries to improve their own wildlife conservation practices and programs. In addition, the Eurasia Program works on shared conservation interests with countries across Europe and Asia. The United States shares populations of wildlife species that migrate between the United States and Eurasia and, as such, the Eurasia Program partners with the relevant countries to exchange information and improve wildlife management.

International Wildlife Trade Strategies

Sustainable Use of Wildlife

The United States 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 United States and other CITES Parties (currently 184 Parties, including 183 countries and the European Union) and ensure such trade does not threaten the survival of CITES-listed animals and plants in the wild, the Service serves as the U.S. CITES Management and Scientific Authorities. Each Party to the treaty is required to designate one or more Management and Scientific Authorities to make legal and scientific non-detriment findings, issue CITES permits and certificates, and monitor trade. For the United States, these authorities are delegated to the Service's International Affairs program.

Ensuring Sustainability for U.S. Native Turtles



Left: Common snapping turtle. Credit: USFWS. Right: Alligator snapping turtle. Credit: Garry Tucker/USFWS

Snapping turtles, and other turtle species that have endured for millennia, are experiencing drastic population declines today. In addition to habitat loss, climate change, and car strikes when crossing roads, turtles face growing threats from the wildlife trade. For example, between 2013 and 2019, more than 200,000 alligator snapping turtles and more than 700,000 common snapping turtles were exported from the U.S., most destined for Southeast Asia and Europe for use as food or traditional medicine. Turtles are one of the most imperiled vertebrate groups in the world and require urgent conservation action to prevent future extinctions.

At the 19th meeting of the Conference of Parties (CoP19) to CITES, the United States took a strong stance for turtles, proposing an amendment to include 36 U.S. native turtle species in Appendix II. Adopted by the Parties at CoP19, the inclusion in Appendix II will solve what was previously a State-specific, fragmented approach, help address illegal trade threats, support biologically sustainable use through legal trade, and complement domestic protections.

CITES Implementation and Leadership



Naimah Aziz, Head of the U.S. Management Authority for CITES, chairs the treaty's 77th Standing Committee meeting on behalf of the United States. Credit/Russel Husen/DOI

CITES provides the necessary framework to ensure scientific integrity and global cooperation in order to facilitate legal and sustainable trade and combat wildlife trafficking for over 37,000 species of wild plants and animals, which are included in one of three Appendices. On an ongoing basis, the International Affairs program implements CITES by leading the United States engagement at CITES meetings, ensuring that U.S. exports and imports comply with CITES requirements, and supporting CITES capacity-building efforts around the world.

Signatories to CITES, known as Parties, gather at policy and technical meetings. Meetings of the Conference of the Parties (CoP), which take place every two to three years, provide an opportunity to promote science-based policymaking and strengthen diplomatic relations and collaboration. At such meetings, the Parties review the implementation of CITES, make decisions regarding the financing and function of the CITES Secretariat to enable it to carry out its functions, decide on amendments to Appendices I and II, consider reports presented by the Secretariat and Parties, and adopt recommendations for improving the interpretation and effectiveness of CITES.

In addition to the CoPs, the work of the Parties is also carried out through regular Committee meetings, which take place yearly between CoPs. These include the Standing Committee, Animals Committee, and Plants Committee meetings. The Standing Committee provides policy and operational direction to the Secretariat regarding CITES implementation, considers implementation and enforcement matters, and advises the other committees as appropriate. The Animals and Plants Committees consider scientific and technical matters and provide guidance based on biological and other specialized knowledge. Among other responsibilities, the Animals and Plants Committees undertake periodic reviews of CITES-listed species to ensure that species are appropriately listed and advise when trade in a particular species may be unsustainable. Throughout this work, the Service adheres to the principles of scientific objectivity and integrity and uses the best available scientific information and trade data to inform U.S. positions and make non-detriment findings.

The Service has played a consistent leadership role at CITES CoPs and technical meetings, coordinated and supported through its 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. Following the last CoP, the United States was elected to chair the Standing Committee through CoP20 (expected to be held mid 2025).

The Service supports effective CITES implementation in the United States through a variety of activities: administering the nation-wide permitting program, maintaining trade records and compiling annual trade reports, consulting and coordinating with the CITES Secretariat and other CITES Parties, supporting law

enforcement efforts, monitoring trade levels, and revising U.S. regulations to reflect updated CITES policies. The Service has also focused on strengthening the capacity of partners to implement CITES in their own countries, play leadership roles in CITES decision-making, and improve the effectiveness of CITES broadly.

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

International trade in CITES-listed U.S. native animal species such as bobcats, river otters, freshwater turtles, alligators, and plant species such as carnivorous plants, orchids, cacti, and American ginseng, provides livelihoods for rural U.S. communities. 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 enhance trust, reduce regulatory burden, and ensure that biologically sustainable wildlife trade remains an important part of the U.S. economy by working directly with partner State agencies and Tribes to implement CITES for U.S. native species of economic importance. Examples of this collaboration include assessing the status of native species impacted by trade, seeking input on CITES permit findings where appropriate, facilitating participation on U.S. delegations to CITES meetings, and coordinating CITES export programs. Through its CITES Interagency Coordination Committee, the Service works closely with all U.S. agencies with equity in wildlife trade, including the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), to facilitate communication and coordination, and ensure a coordinated and agreed US government approach in CITES.

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 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.

The Service’s American ginseng conservation exemplifies how the Service works with States and Tribes to ensure conservation of America’s natural resources. In 2022, the harvest of wild and wild-simulated American ginseng roots exceeded 26,000 dried pounds, with most of this ginseng being 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. 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 identified needed steps to improve the sustainability of wild ginseng. Following an interruption during the pandemic, the Service is now working

with the States and Tribes to support and implement measures these working groups recommended.

Innovating and Improving a Responsive and Efficient Permitting Process

The Service's conservation permitting program managed through the International Affairs program issues more than 20,000 permits and certificates per year under CITES and other permitting authorities. These permits support U.S. international wildlife trade, valued at more than \$1 billion annually. The permits and certificates authorize a wide variety of activities, such as import, export, re-export, and introduction from the sea; captive breeding of non-native species; and interstate commerce.

This permitting work supports individuals, businesses, scientific institutions, States, Tribes, and others, and is a strong component of the Service's work in supporting the U.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 re-export of biological samples needed for medical research, including studies on COVID-19 and preventing future outbreaks of other zoonotic diseases.

In evaluating permit applications, the Service uses the best available biological information to make findings, as required by Service regulations and CITES. This includes determining if the specimens to be exported were legally acquired and whether the export will be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild, or under the ESA, whether it will enhance the survival of species. 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.

Transforming Customer Service and Building Trust



American ginseng is one of the Service's most frequently requested export permits. Credit: Gary Kauffman/USFS

In 2023, the Service fully digitized five frequently used permit application forms for export and import of wildlife, benefitting American ginseng exporters as well as biomedical and horticultural companies that request permits authorized under CITES.

The Service made these improvements as part of the U.S. Government's broader effort to transform Federal customer service and build trust with stakeholders. An Executive Order issued in December of 2021 described the President's goal to deliver modern, technology-based services to the public that reduce the burden and time required to access government resources, authorizations, and programs, describing these inefficiencies as a "time tax." The Order specified that digitizing five international permit application forms should be part of the Service's commitment to achieving this goal, in addition to redesigning the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's website.

Addressing Public Safety Concerns Caused by Private Ownership of Big Cats



The Big Cat Public Safety Act includes cougars as “prohibited wildlife species”. Credit: ucumari photography, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

The Big Cat Public Safety Act was enacted December 20, 2022, to end the private ownership of big cats as pets and prohibit exhibitors from allowing public contact with big cats, including cubs. Big cats kept in private ownership in the United States are often purchased as cubs or bred for photo opportunities, and as they outgrow those uses, they may be sold into the exotic pet trade or the illegal market or abandoned to already financially-strained sanctuaries. Often these big cats are kept in inadequate conditions that threaten both the animal’s health and public safety. Incidents involving big cats have caused human injuries and death. To address these

issues, the Big Cat Public Safety Act placed new restrictions on the commerce, breeding, possession, and use of certain big cat species, and prohibited facilities that exhibit big cats from allowing direct contact between the public and the big cats. The Big Cat Public Safety Act covers the following species, including hybrids of any of these species: lion, tiger, snow leopard, clouded leopard, jaguar, cheetah, and cougar. It also required an entity or individual who did not qualify for an exception and was in possession of a big cat to register each animal with the Service no later than June 18, 2023, in order to continue to possess the big cat.

The Service redirected existing resources to promulgate the regulations needed to implement the law, developed a big cat registration form and registry, and conducted extensive outreach to notify private big cat owners of the registration requirement and statutory registration deadline. The Service continues the work of implementing the Big Cat Public Safety Act by maintaining information on registered big cats, reviewing and approving population management and care plans, and supporting law enforcement efforts.

Cross Program Strategies

Pelly Certifications for Totoaba and Pangolins

In 2023, the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Department of State, issued two Pelly certifications to the President, stating that nationals of Mexico and the People’s Republic of China (PRC), directly or indirectly, engaged in harvest or trade that diminishes the effectiveness of CITES. In Mexico, the concern is illegal fishing for the totoaba, which is causing the imminent extinction of the vaquita, the world’s smallest and most endangered marine mammal, with fewer than 10 individuals remaining.

In the PRC, the concern is the illegal trade in pangolins. The Service’s International Affairs program conducted an in-depth two-year investigation into PRC’s trade in pangolins and produced the factual finding which supported the Secretary’s certification. President Biden notified Congress consistent with the Pelly Amendment and directed the Departments of State and the Interior to continue ongoing efforts with the PRC to take the domestic measures needed to support pangolin conservation.



In collaboration with the Department of State, the Service is actively engaging with officials from the People's Republic of China to improve domestic measures for pangolin conservation. Credit: Sarita Jhawali/NTNC-Central Zoo

Pangolins are considered the most trafficked mammal in the world. Consumer demand for pangolin scales for traditional medicine puts all eight species at risk of extinction. In 2017, these eight pangolin species were included under CITES Appendix I, prohibiting international trade for primarily commercial purposes. Despite this commercial trade ban, the PRC remains the largest destination country for pangolin scales and the demand for pangolin scales appears to be increasing. The PRC uplisted pangolins under its Wildlife Protection Law, but still allows the trade of pangolin scales for medicinal purposes from its national stockpiles, which indirectly fuels the illegal trade of pangolins through its domestic market.

Working on behalf of the Department of the Interior and in close collaboration with the Department of State, the Service's International Affairs program is engaging with officials from the PRC to achieve the pangolin conservation measures needed to ameliorate U.S. concerns that the PRC is diminishing the effectiveness of CITES.

Combating Wildlife Trafficking

Conserving species impacted by wildlife trafficking is vitally important to wildlife as well as people. Wildlife trafficking is a primary threat to many priority species and is a multibillion-dollar transnational criminal industry that involves the unlawful harvest of and international trade in animals and plants and their parts and derivatives. Wildlife trafficking threatens biodiversity, national security, and economic prosperity by depleting natural resources and revenues and driving numerous species to the brink of extinction.



CITES Master's Course 2023 cohort at the International University of Andalucía in Spain, showing Central and East African scholars sponsored by the Service and DOI-ITAP. Credit: Yula Kapetanakos/USFWS

The International Affairs program works to counter wildlife trafficking worldwide through policy and by supporting front-line conservation efforts. With funds from its program on International Wildlife Trade, the Service's International Affairs program advances laws and policies related to wildlife trade and trafficking. As the U.S. Management and Scientific Authority of CITES, International Affairs implements CITES 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 in wild animals and plants.

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 leaders in their respective country's CITES Authority.

With funds from the Service's program on International Conservation, the International Affairs program works to keep animals alive in their habitats. It operates at a critical point in the supply chain and prevents the illegal hunting and trafficking of threatened wildlife. Its financial and technical assistance programs support on-the-ground conservation actions and strengthen capacity among emerging conservation leaders working on these issues in their home countries. The Service especially supports efforts focused on understanding and addressing human behaviors along the illicit supply chain, including consumer demand, which is a primary 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 trade in lion bone.

The Service is also increasingly investing in the conservation of species experiencing profound, rapid population declines due to illegal trade but that 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 invested in addressing the illegal capture of cheetah cubs from the Horn of Africa for the live pet trade to the Middle East and the poaching of saiga antelope from Central Asia and Mongolia for international trade of its horn. Initial support for cheetah conservation resulted in critical



A wild-caught male chestnut-bellied seed-finch (locally called 'towa towa') hangs in a storefront overlooking his native habitat in the South Rupununi, Guyana. This bird will likely be sold in a nearby town, transported to the capital city of Georgetown or abroad to North America or Europe, and competed against other males in singing competitions. Credit: Jen Miller/USFWS

research findings on the distribution of cheetah in the Horn of Africa, a region where sparse data exists, which will help identify trafficking hotspots for these threatened cats and will enable in-country wildlife agencies and researchers to prioritize conservation actions. 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.

The second round of SCCF invested in the trade in songbirds native to the Guiana Shield and Caribbean for singing competitions. This sport consists of "racing" male songbirds to assess which bird can sing a specific song the most number of times in a given timespan.

Competitions can involve high financial stakes and the sport plays a significant socio-cultural and economic role. The current singing competition songbird trade appears to be driving local or range-wide declines of as many as 15 wild passerine species, including seed-finches, seedeaters, buntings, and grosbeaks. The SCCF funding aims to reduce the illegal and/or unsustainable international trade of songbirds throughout the Guiana Shield and Caribbean and to North America and Europe. It will achieve this objective by supporting social and ecological trade research, community-based conservation, sustainable sourcing systems, law enforcement, regulatory efforts, and grant recipient coordination.

Partnerships to Advance Shared Conservation Goals

Working with others toward 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 (Task Force). 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 helps 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 in these efforts. 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 world. Among the numerous examples are: 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 American zoo staff to strategize how captive rhinos and outreach programs in the United States 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; and collaborating with the U.S. Postal Service to raise funds for international wildlife conservation through sales of the Save Vanishing Species semipostal stamp.

Fighting Disease Risk to Salamanders and Other Species with the Lacey Act: In 2016 and for the first time, the Service used the Lacey Act as a defense against wildlife disease transmission. 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 prohibited interstate transport of the listed species and their import into the United States without a Service-issued permit, protecting the health of native salamanders; to date, Bsal has not been detected in the United States. The International Affairs program's Branch of Permits implements this restriction by reviewing and issuing injurious wildlife permits when appropriate. The Service is now considering additional species listings and taxa specific permit conditions that will reduce the risk of spillover of zoonotic diseases to the American people and the risk of infectious disease transmission in native wildlife populations.

CITES as a Defense against Disease Transmission: After the COVID-19 pandemic prompted calls from the public for CITES to address zoonotic risk, International Affairs convened an internal team to consider how CITES might work within its mandate to reduce the spread of zoonotic and infectious pathogens within the international wildlife trade. This team contributed to the CITES Standing Committee's intersessional working group on zoonotic disease, which developed new CITES Decisions to address the need for practical solutions to reduce risk, safer transport of live animals, and international cooperation. To deepen CITES' considerations of disease prevention, the Service also submitted a proposal to CoP19 in 2022 to improve the transport of live CITES-listed animals in international trade. In response, the Conference of the Parties to CITES committed to several actions (i.e., Decisions) that enable Parties to access and better implement existing transport regulations for live animals and plants in international 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 international trade each year. The Service continues to engage in these global discussions on how CITES can help address zoonotic disease risk in international wildlife trade.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will:

- Maintain International Affairs' global leadership in conservation.
- Provide leadership in evaluating impact, increasing transparency, and enhancing evidence-based conservation decision-making.
- 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 CoP19 and leading up to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP20; expected to be held in mid-2025). Priorities in FY 2025 include developing proposals to amend the CITES Appendices and discussion documents concerning CITES implementation and enforcement, advocating U.S. positions, providing leadership, and meeting U.S. objectives at CITES Standing Committee meetings, supporting State and Tribal CITES export programs, and strengthening relationships with the States and Tribes.
- Advance implementation of CITES and other U.S. wildlife laws domestically and ensure international wildlife trade is legal and does not threaten the survival of animals and plants in the wild through decision-making based on robust science.
- Engage Indigenous Peoples in the CITES processes.
- Address the Service's CITES 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.
- Support the Department to implement the President's directives in response to the Secretary of the Interior certifications of both Mexico and the PRC under the Pelly Amendment to the Fishermen's Protective Act.

- Update regulations, including the Permit Fee Rule and Part 23.
- Implement tools to address and adapt to the impacts of climate change on wildlife and habitats.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for International Affairs is \$24,010,000 and 68 FTE, a program change of +\$1,967,000 and +4 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

International Conservation Activities: Theodore Roosevelt Genius Prize (-\$1,000,000/ +0 FTE) –

The budget does not request funding for this program as the John D. Dingell, Jr., Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (P.L. 116-9) and America’s Conservation Enhancement Act (P.L. 116-188) directed the Service to terminate the Theodore Roosevelt Genius Prize program on December 31, 2023.

International Conservation Activities: Eurasia Regional Conservation Program (+\$800,000/ +2 FTE) –

Eurasia encompasses the world’s highest number of threatened species and all major types of ecosystems. 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. Activities 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.

International Conservation Activities: 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 priority species and region where we work.
- 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.

Wildlife Health and Preventing Zoonotic Disease (+\$647,000/ +1 FTE) – This funding will enhance the Service’s work to address zoonotic disease risk and 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 will reduce the risk of zoonotic disease transmission in international wildlife trade by strengthening U.S. permitting processes for injurious species, live animals, biomedical materials, and supporting capacity building with CITES Parties.

Baseline Capacity (+\$695,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$0.7 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Internal Transfer to ePermits (-\$7,500,000/ -8 FTE) – 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. This funding includes building base system functionality of a fully operational and integrated system that meets the basic needs of external and internal users and costs associated with designing, building, maintaining, and supporting the system. Funding also supports a variety of activities and functions including Service positions engaged in the management, implementation, and monitoring of the ePermits system and activities.

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Fish and Aquatic Conservation

Fish and Aquatic Conservation

Activity: Fish and Aquatic Conservation

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Budget Request	Change From 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
National Fish Hatchery Operations	(\$000) FTE	76,356 313	76,356 313	+1,373 0	-6,000 -15	+8,575 +33	80,304 331	+3,948 +18
Maintenance and Equipment	(\$000) FTE	26,314 64	26,314 64	+228 0	0 0	+5,565 +8	32,107 72	+5,793 +8
Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation	(\$000) FTE	138,901 306	138,901 306	+1,793 0	-1,954 +1	-11,806 +26	126,934 333	-11,967 +27
Total, Fish and Aquatic Conservation	(\$000) FTE	241,571 683	241,571 683	+3,394 0	-7,954 -14	+2,334 +67	239,345 736	-2,226 +53

Program Overview

For over 150 years, the Service has provided economic and ecological benefits through the conservation of aquatic species and habitats. 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. FAC works with States, landowners, and other partners and stakeholders to achieve the goals of healthy, self-sustaining populations of fish and other aquatic species. FAC is committed to improving relationships with Native Americans through co-stewardship efforts, including sharing technical expertise; leveraging capabilities and capacity to improve resource management; and recognizing Indigenous knowledge, experience, and perspectives in a manner that seeks to protect the treaty, religious, subsistence, and cultural interests of Tribes, Alaska Native Organizations, Alaska Native Corporations, and the Native Hawaiian Community. In FY 2025, the dedicated and expert staff of the FAC program will work closely with our partners to promote continuous learning and collaboration, foster creativity and innovation, and leverage knowledge and technological resources to encourage the successful implementation of aquatic conservation work. These will contribute to the ambitious conservation goals established by Executive Order 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, and Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful.

Program Elements

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, works with partners for aquatic animal drug approvals, 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 85 National Fish Hatchery System facilities and a national network of 51 field offices conducting aquatic habitat and species conservation work. 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 freshwater aquatic habitats and some of the Nation’s most iconic aquatic species, including native fish species. Biologists develop the science and evidence-based information the Service and its partners rely upon to guide 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 native freshwater fish and other aquatic organisms through collaborative 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 native aquatic species and freshwater habitats, to proactively manage these complex systems, and monitor and evaluate the impacts of conservation actions.
 - *Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)* – 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

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. 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. The *2022 National Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation* reports nearly 40 million anglers, age 16 or older, went fishing in 2022, spending a combined \$99.4 billion, with the average angler spending \$2,490 per year. According to the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation’s special report on fishing activities, roughly 54.5 million Americans went fishing in 2023, up 4% over 2021. Research indicates that in recent years, new participants are more likely to be female, younger, living in an urban area, and more diverse than existing participants. This information supports the Service’s focus on removing barriers to participation in fishing and other connections with nature.

Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders

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

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Change From 2024 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
National Fish Hatchery Operations	(\$000) FTE	76,356 313	76,356 313	+1,373 0	-6,000 -15	+8,575 +33	80,304 331	+3,948 +18

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for National Fish Hatchery System Operations

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Hatchery Operations	+12,848	+32
Restoring Salmon in Columbia River Basin	+3,000	+2
Baseline Capacity	+2,217	0
Fish Technology and Health Centers	+1,410	+3
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
Program Changes	+8,575	+33
Transfer to Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation	-6,000	-15
Total Changes	+2,575	+18

Program Description

For over 150 years, the National Fish Hatchery System (NFHS) 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. The NFHS operates under the authority of numerous treaties and consent decrees, statutes, and recovery and restoration plans and consists of 71 National Fish Hatcheries, one historic National Fish Hatchery, six Fish Health Centers (Health Centers), seven Fish Technology Centers (Tech Centers), and the Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Partnership Program. There is no other fish culture system in the world matching the skill and production potential of the NFHS to shape responsible conservation aquaculture for generations to come. 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.


Highly skilled staff operating a national network of Health and Tech Centers 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 to meet the growing impacts and challenges from habitat fragmentation and degradation, invasive species, and climate change. The Service conducted climate change vulnerability assessments for several National Fish Hatcheries and is applying novel aquaculture technologies to reduce the impacts of decreased flows and warmer water, alter operations to avoid subjecting sensitive life stages to acute summer conditions, and increase preparedness for extreme weather events.

The Service’s captive rearing facilities are increasingly relied upon to meet the needs and expectations of the American people that depend on robust aquatic resources for their sustenance, livelihood, and mental health benefits. These 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. In FY 2023 NFHS bolstered its long-standing reputation as global leader in captive rearing and conservation by releasing or transferring 109 species, including fish, mollusks, reptiles, amphibians, mammals, and arthropods, totaling over 230 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 aquatic animals in support of Tribal management plans. The NFHS facilities worked closely with FAC partners to implement Fisheries Management Plans and other agreements, benefitting at least 50 at-risk species, and helping avoid further declines and ESA listings.

Fish Health Centers

The Service’s six Health Centers comprise an unparalleled collection of aquatic animal health professionals and are the hub of the Service’s aquatic animal health program. These 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. The importance of this program is ever increasing as the impacts of climate change to aquatic ecosystems produce environmental conditions for diseases to flourish and expands opportunities for invasive species, which can be vectors for disease and dangerous aquatic pathogens, to become established and spread. Health Center findings inform decisions to improve the health of captive fishes at Federal, Tribal and State hatcheries and protect valuable fish populations in the wild.

Adapting to Climate Change



Genoa National Fish Hatchery culture system, USFWS

Genoa National Fish Hatchery in Genoa, WI developed flexible culture systems adapting to newly unpredictable water flow and temperature patterns in the Mississippi River. New measures include quarantine systems with temperature control and flexible design elements, as well as Mobile Aquatic Rearing Systems. These support ongoing conservation aquaculture for Genoa NFH’s recovery objectives despite mounting challenges resulting from climate change.

Health Centers work closely with State and Tribal partners via programs such as the National Wild Fish Health Survey (NWFHS) to help maintain the health of native fish populations important to local communities, subsistence harvest, and recreation. Data from this program allows the Service and partners to improve conservation decision-making and reduce the risk of disease transmission in the natural resources on which we all rely. This data will be critical to managing disease prevalence and protecting valuable populations as climate patterns shift and species begin to naturally move into new areas. The data also allows partners to support their own communities by promoting evidence-based decisions for the safe movement of animals for conservation, subsistence, or economic development.

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.

Fish Technology Centers

Practical and applied research emerges as a critical component to the resilience for both aquatic populations and diverse human communities to meet the challenges from changing climate, increased demand for clean water, and rising extinction rates. 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 contribute to the growing knowledge base for Threatened and Endangered species and at-risk species conservation. 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 a global scale. 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.

Advancing conservation science through collaboration: A Molecular Lab Network for Early Detection of Aquatic Invasive Species

DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) shed by plants and animals into the environment is called environmental DNA (eDNA). Use of eDNA to identify species presence is a cutting-edge technology that promises to provide early warning of invasive species. Using Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funding, FAC Tech Centers are leaders in advancing the use of eDNA in early detection, rapid response, and post control monitoring. They collaborate with States, Tribes, and other partners to increase the landscape-level impact of operationalizing this technology. Tech Centers will serve as the foundation for a broad Molecular Lab Network (MLN) to process eDNA samples in support of a national Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) framework. These labs will also continue foundational work to develop and validate additional genetic markers for species at high risk of invading the United States. Service labs participating in the MLN include Alaska Conservation Genetics Lab (Anchorage, Alaska), the Southwestern Native Aquatic Resources and Recovery Center (Dexter, New Mexico), and the Southeast Conservation Genetics Lab, Warm Springs Fish Technology Center (Auburn, Alabama).

Aquatic Animal Health

The Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Partnership (AADAP) program is the only program in the country singularly focused on obtaining critically needed new drugs for use in aquatic ecosystems. AADAP 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 and Partnerships



Service Staff conducting research studies; USFWS



Commercial catfish farm; USFWS

In 2023, the Research Team worked with the drug sponsor of a spawning aid to develop a target animal safety study protocol for establishing a margin of safety for this product when used to induce spawning in female channel catfish. Additional studies to support effectiveness for this spawning aid were also conducted previously by AADAP in 2021 at commercial catfish farms during hybrid catfish spawning season in Mississippi. Once approved, this aid will be an important tool for aquaculturists to safely and effectively induce spawning for female channel catfish.

AADAP works with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), other Federal and State agencies, Tribes, academic institutions, and industry partners to obtain FDA approval of safe and effective new drugs needed for aquaculture and fisheries management. The FDA’s drug approval process is based on defensible science to provide proof of an aquatic animal drug’s effectiveness and safety for the species, the environment, and humans. AADAP staff develop protocols to test aspects of a drug’s effectiveness and safety through hypotheses and statistical analysis of results. These studies increase the Service’s science capacity and contribute to the agency’s unique and critical role in new animal drug approvals.

AADAP's National Investigational New Animal Drug (INAD) Program provides legal access to 19 medications under highly controlled and monitored conditions while they are working their way through FDA's drug approval process. This access is available for program participants throughout the U.S. to Tribes, States, private industry, universities, and other Federal agencies. These medications keep fish and other aquatic animals healthy by treating diseases caused by parasites and bacteria; sedating animals so that they may be safely handled; and assisting in spawning aquatic animals that would otherwise not spawn on their own. The data collected from this program is submitted to the FDA to be used as a part of the drug approval process. These drugs often provide the only option to produce healthy populations of fish and aquatic animals that are subject to warming water temperatures, climatic extremes and unpredictable rearing conditions that are becoming increasingly common due to climate challenges. This program provides hatcheries and aquaculture facilities with options to treat their fish while in captive rearing conditions and helps ensure a better product to the market as well as for recreation and conservation purposes.

Partnerships form the cornerstone of AADAP's collaborative approach to pursuing additional aquatic animal drug approvals. These partnerships between the Service and underserved communities encourages communities to actively participate in studies. In this way, drug studies incorporate local experience, knowledge, and unique aquaculture practices. An example of this includes AADAP's drug approval research work with Hawaiian Kampachi, a culturally significant species for the people of Hawaii. The Service partners with Blue Ocean Mariculture and Ocean Era in Kona, HI, who employ and help involve local, underserved communities in raising Kampachi in underwater net pens contributes to supporting a healthier environment and important aquaculture product.

AADAP and Tribal Trust



Photo credits: Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Fisheries Department

AADAP's INAD Program assists the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho by providing the use of a Lutenizing Hormone - Releasing Hormone analogue (LHRHa) spawning aid INAD. The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho has been culturing Endangered Kootenai River White Sturgeon with use of LHRHa for over 30 years as these sturgeon are spiritually and culturally significant to the indigenous peoples in their region. Female final maturation and ovulation is the primary use of this spawning aid and in May and June of 2023, 14 female Sturgeon were induced to spawn.

Nathan Jensen from the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Fisheries Department writes "The LHRHa is vital to our program. Without LHRHa we would not be able spawn our broodstock and produce fish for ongoing conservation/restoration efforts. The fisheries department/program is funded by the Bonneville Power Administration (and) employs up to 20 full and part time (Tribal and non-tribal) employees. The value of this program is beyond dollars and cents..."



Photo Credit: Blue Ocean Mariculture

AADAP assists drug sponsors in navigating the 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. AADAP also provides fisheries professionals tools to mitigate and promote resilience of populations undergoing stresses due to climate change 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.

Recreation and Education

Hatcheries are integral parts of the communities in which they are located, providing opportunities for the

Fish Funds

Kids' Fishing Day at the Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary in Green Bay, Wisconsin; USFWS

'Fish Funds', a new kick-starter funding program for public outreach and education was initiated in FY 2023. Over \$41,000 supported 21 new projects targeting young adults for special events and removing barriers for new or underserved audiences. Many projects included youth focused programming including river float trips, fish biologist job shadow opportunities, hatchery tours, and hands-on experiences for camps and local community groups. Two projects increased access to fishing equipment and angler education. The Library Fishing Tackle Loaner Program in Western Washington has grown to 5 sites where patrons can check out Fishing Kits complete with gear, species guides, links to instructional videos and info on obtaining fishing licenses. A similar program supported fishing equipment for new events including Kids' Fishing Day at the Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

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 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 2023, 1,641 youth and adults contributed 83,000 volunteer hours (the equivalent of 40 FTEs and \$2.6 million in value). These volunteers helped tag paddlefish, spawned salmon, restored habitat, and shared the joys of fishing with the next generation of anglers and conservationists. Local volunteers composed twenty-two Friends Groups to support the NFHS in the Regions and help coordinate volunteers and businesses in local communities to assist with NFHS facility operations, special events, and outdoor classrooms for youth.

NFHS facilities are in geographically and culturally diverse regions and promote 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. 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*, and other authorities for specific Federal water development projects to promote the sustainable use of natural resources and support local communities and economies. The Service propagates fish at its hatcheries to mitigate the impacts of Federal water development projects on fisheries. 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. These water management agencies provided \$33.7 million to the Service in FY 2023 for costs associated with raising, releasing, and monitoring fish for mitigation. A general mismatch between rising costs and decreases in funding received has led to a shortfall in funding for captive propagation work conducted by the Service. Specifically, in FY 2023, actual costs to conduct mitigation activities in the National Fish Hatchery System exceeded dollars provided under existing partner agency agreements by \$6.9 million. The timescale and structure on which the dollar amounts provided by each agency are reassessed varies by agreement and partner agency. These shortfalls limit the Service's ability to rear fish for mitigation and, in some cases, impedes our ability to maintain critical life-sustaining infrastructure at mitigation hatcheries.

Mitigation production completed by the Service's NFHS supports multiple aquatic populations of great value to local communities. Captive propagation of aquatic animals for mitigation of Federal dams is funded through agreements with water development agencies and aligns directly with important Service priorities. These priorities include support for Tribal conservation in accordance with federal treaty obligations, recovery of threatened and endangered species, restoration of at-risk populations to prevent listing under, and enhancement of commercial and recreational fisheries. One example is the Service's production of Pacific salmon to mitigate for impacts of the Columbia River dams in the Pacific Northwest, which is funded by the National Marine Fisheries Service according to the Mitchell Act of 1938. Salmon produced for this purpose help fulfill the Federal government's Tribal trust responsibilities to the Four Treaty Tribes (Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla and Nez Perce) as delineated in each Tribe's respective Treaty of 1855. In 2023, four NFHS released approximately 4.7 million Chinook and Coho salmon for this effort, in addition to transferring 1.6 million eggs and juvenile fish to States and Tribes for their own Mitchell Act production.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 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.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 OMB budget request for National Fish Hatchery Operations is \$80,304,000 and 331 FTE, a program change of +\$8,575,000 and +18 FTE from the 2024 CR.

Warm Spring Fish Health Center (-\$8,000,000/ -3 FTE) – The 2025 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.

Pacific Salmon Treaty (-\$1,500,000/ -0 FTE) – The proposal reduces funding for the Pacific Salmon Treaty to preserve funding for higher priority work within National Fish Hatchery Operations.

Yukon River Salmon Agreement (-\$1,000,000/ +0 FTE) – The proposal reduces funding for the Yukon River Salmon Agreement to preserve funding for higher priority work within National Fish Hatchery Operations.

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.

Hatchery System Operations– Fish Health and Technology Centers (+\$1,410,000 / +3 FTE) – This request will enhance 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.

Baseline Capacity (+\$2,217,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce, and other must pay requirements needed to continue to deliver the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$2.2 million which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed cost requirements in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts are needed to meet the must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Restoring Salmon in Columbia River Basin (+\$3,000,000 / +2 FTE) - This funding is for the implementation of U.S. Government commitments under the recent settlement agreement and consistent with the Presidential Memorandum on Restoring Healthy and Abundant Salmon, Steelhead, and Other Native Fish Populations in the Columbia River Basin. Example projects include salmon propagation programs at National Fish Hatcheries, studies into the impacts of dissolved gas on native species, and the Walla Walla River/Waluula River Floodplain Restoration Project with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian reservation.

Hatchery System Operations - General Program Activities (+\$12,848,000 / +32 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 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.

Internal Transfer to Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation (-\$6,000,000 / -15 FTE) – 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 FAC's Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation efforts to recover and restore aquatic species. As Hatcheries increase propagation and applied science research, FAC will require additional resources and staff to monitor population status and trends, develop sound conservation and management plans, assess and restore habitat, and evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of aquatic conservation efforts, including those of the NFHS.

Activity: Fish and Aquatic Conservation
Subactivity: Maintenance and Equipment

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Change From 2024 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes(+/-)		Budget Request
Maintenance and Equipment	(\$000) FTE	26,314 64	26,314 64	228 0	0 0	+5,565 +8	32,107 72	+5,793 +8

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Maintenance and Equipment

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Baseline Capacity FWCO	+4	0
Baseline Capacity	+382	0
Deferred Maintenance	+1,437	+0
Annual Maintenance	+3,742	+8
Program Changes	+5,565	+8

Program Description

The Service’s National Fish Hatcheries provide equitable public access to hatchery facilities for recreation and education while meeting the increasing challenges of rapidly changing climatic conditions. Properly functioning infrastructure and adaptability are essential to fish production and the safety of Service employees and visitors. The propagation of aquatic species has long been guided by employing the best available science to advance conservation across the National Fish Hatchery System. These complex processes require 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.

The requested funding for FAC maintenance balances the operational needs across the Service, ensuring that the highest priority mission assets are receiving lifecycle investments, while also ensuring that other critical mission delivery occurs. At the requested funding level for maintenance, inclusive of all sources, the Service estimates that it will continue accrue deferred maintenance and repairs in some assets, while addressing critical maintenance requirements on other assets.

National Fish Hatchery System Maintenance and Equipment

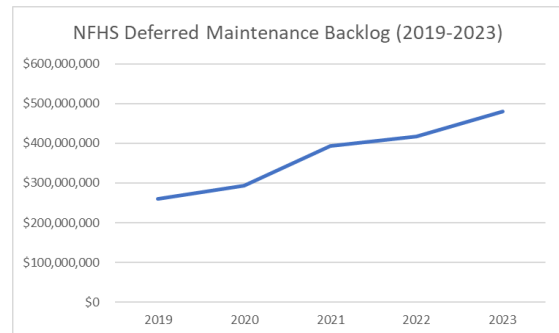
The NFHS’s unique ability to promote collaborative conservation, balance resource use and diverse local economies, and contribute to building and fueling a better future is dependent on operational facilities. Maintenance and equipment funds allow the Service to provide timely upkeep of hatchery property 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 organisms 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’ \$5.3 billion of real property assets considered as mission-critical water management assets.

The Service has developed asset performance measures and a strategy to ensure effective operations and service delivery to advance resilience and natural solutions in communities across the country in both nature-rich and nature-deprived areas. 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. The National Fish Hatchery System is exploring a transition to a Life-Cycle Maintenance system where real property assets will be maintained or replaced earlier in their service life and before risk of assets failing, thus avoiding catastrophic failures leading to aquatic animal losses.

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.



Responding to partner needs and climate challenges



*Replaced Diversion Dam and Fish Barrier at Makah National Fish Hatchery
(Clallam Bay, WA); USFWS*

Recent infrastructure updates at the Makah NFH reduce energy demand and improve conservation outcomes to support State and Tribal needs. The previous diversion dam and electric fish barrier were deteriorating and considered unsafe, necessitating construction of a new fish passage system and repairs to the damaged dam skirt of the existing barrier. Modification of the ladder includes extending the entrance further out into the Tsoo-Yes River, because the previous ladder entrance location did not allow for good fish attraction and resulted in poor adult returns into the hatchery. Additionally, the new fish barrier utilizes no electricity not only reducing operational efficiency, but also improving safety for both staff and aquatic species. Makah NFH is responsible for raising chinook salmon, coho salmon, and steelhead. The unit works cooperatively with the Makah Nation and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to ensure a balanced and sustainable harvest of these fish.

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 once the costs have exceeded \$5,000 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 to allow adaptive responses to the changing demands brought on by climate change and other environmental stressors. FAC accomplishes this by directing deferred maintenance funds at the highest priority assets in greatest need of repair across the NFHS based on a combination of FCI and Asset Priority Index scores. The Service has \$479 million in current deferred maintenance needs for the NFHS, of which \$409 million are maintained with Service funds and \$70 million maintained with non-Service funds. FAC will continue to implement the FAC Climate Change Action Plan in FY 2025 to conduct energy audits and climate resilience assessments at facilities. The information from the audits and assessments will be used to strategically modernize infrastructure and operations over time, reduce energy use, increase water conservation, improve water quality, and reduce operating costs. The Service will explore alternative energy sources where applicable and feasible to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and our carbon footprint. For more details on deferred maintenance please see the Service's *National Wildlife Refuge System* chapter.

Fisheries Office Maintenance and Equipment

FAC field office maintenance and equipment funds purchase and maintenance of over \$34.0 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. These assets are also used to support emergency response actions due to flooding and fire.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will:

- Support maintenance of property and equipment, including the repair, rehabilitation, and replacement of constructed assets, for 85 Hatchery System facilities and 51 field offices;
- Maintain key assets associated with water delivery, aquatic species culture, and effluent management; and
- Prioritize energy efficiency and climate resilience investments in construction and rehabilitation of facilities.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 OMB budget request for Maintenance and Equipment is \$32,107,000 and 72 FTE, a program change of +\$5,565,000 and +8 FTE from 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Baseline Capacity – Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices Maintenance (+\$4,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service's mission. The budget includes \$4,000 in this program which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Baseline Capacity (+\$382,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service's mission. The budget includes \$0.4 million in this program which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Deferred Maintenance (+\$1,437,000/ +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 percent 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 Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems, and replace old pumping systems to reduce energy demands. These projects will allow the Service to sustain operations of its 72 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 – Maintenance and Equipment Activities (+\$3,742,000/ +8 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

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change From 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Habitat Assessment and Restoration	(\$000)	51,826	51,826	+344	+3,000	-6,894	48,276	-3,550
	FTE	79	79	0	+8	+1	88	+9
Population Assessment and Cooperative Mgmt	(\$000)	36,932	36,932	+1,051	-4,954	+1,240	34,269	-2,663
	FTE	136	136	0	-7	+10	139	+3
Aquatic Invasive Species	(\$000)	50,143	50,143	+398	0	-6,152	44,389	-5,754
	FTE	91	91	0	0	+15	106	+15
Total, Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation	(\$000)	138,901	138,901	+1,793	-1,954	-11,806	126,934	-11,967
	FTE	306	306	0	+1	+26	333	+27

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for National Fish Hatchery System Operations

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Invasive Carp	-10,000	-10
Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement	-7,000	0
Great Lakes Fish & Wildlife Restoration	-2,110	0
Delaware River Basin Conservation Act	-1,500	0
Hydrilla, Eel and Milfoil Invasive Grasses	-1,500	0
Contract Fishing (Invasive Carp)	-1,000	0
Snakehead Eradication	-1,000	0
Lake Tahoe Restoration	-950	0
Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission	-700	0
Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey	-818	-1
Pacific Salmon Treaty	-150	0
Habitat Assessment and Restoration	+494	+1
National Fish Habitat Action Plan	+500	0
Habitat Assessment and Restoration Baseline Capacity	+612	0
Aquatic Invasive Species Baseline Capacity	+623	0
FWS Subsistence In-Season Management	+750	+6
Population Assessment and Cooperative Management Baseline Capacity	+1,001	0
Subsistence Managers	+2,000	0
Population Assessment and Cooperative Management	+2,267	+5
Prevention	+4,075	+20
Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid Response Fund/Team	+2,600	+5
Program Changes	-11,806	+26
Transfer from National Fish Hatchery Operations	+6,000	+16
Transfer Office of Subsistence Management to Operation of Indian Programs Appropriation	-7,954	-15
Total Changes	-13,760	+27

Program Description

Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation funding supports a boots-on-the-ground network of field biologists dedicated to the protection, restoration, and recovery of native fish and our nation's freshwater ecosystems. Service biologists work with partners and local communities to monitor population status and trends; develop sound conservation and management plans; assess and restore habitat; prevent, eradicate, and control aquatic invasive species; and evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of aquatic conservation efforts. From recreational, commercial, and subsistence fishing, to economic, cultural, and community resilience, intact and well-functioning aquatic ecosystems are essential to the lives and well-being of the American people and sovereign Tribal nations.

The Service's FAC program collaborates with Tribes, States, other Federal agencies and other partners on species and ecosystems that cross jurisdictional boundaries, bringing diverse partners together to work towards unified goals and objectives. These partnerships are essential for addressing the more than 300 fish, amphibian, crustacean, and mussel species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA, with even more declining significantly in abundance and considered imperiled. Even in relatively intact ecosystems with abundant and diverse aquatic resources, threats from stressors such as residential development and climate change are ever present.

Increasing impacts from habitat loss, fragmentation, aquatic invasive species, pollution, and climate change threaten America's freshwater ecosystems and native fish populations, which provide important benefits to communities, local economies, and the broader environment. The world's rivers and lakes once teemed with abundant and diverse communities of fish, invertebrates, and plants. However, aquatic species now represent some of the most imperiled organisms on the planet. Despite the collective efforts of Tribes, States, Federal agencies including the Service, and other partners, the nation's rich and diverse fish and other aquatic resources are under constant threat. In the United States, millions of barriers, including dams, poorly-designed road stream crossings, and water diversions fragment rivers and watersheds, blocking migratory pathways for fish, and altering the natural processes of the systems. Loss and alteration of habitat, a growing number of invasive species, competition for water, and climate change are putting increasing numbers of freshwater species at risk.

Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation Investment Priorities

As the threats to freshwater ecosystems and native fish species have increased and changed, so must the tools, expertise, partnerships, and strategies utilized. For FY 2025, the Service is seeking to increase and enhance actions to conserve native aquatic species and their habitats.

Investing in locally led, collaborative conservation of native fish and their habitats deliver benefits to the American people and help advance the Service mission. Investments include status reviews and listings under the ESA, propagation and stocking by the National Fish Hatchery System, Tribal and Alaska Native subsistence fisheries, and ensuring positive population response and passage at hydropower facilities. The Investment Priorities will eventually transcend all elements of the FAC program, providing a holistic approach rooted in the mission and goals of the program.

Improving Collaborative Conservation

The FAC Program is leveraging the Service's diverse resources and partnering abilities to maximize

conservation impact for native aquatic species and freshwater habitats. Through ten evaluations of regional aquatic conservation initiatives (Conservation Gap Analyses), the Service is pinpointing areas for more tangible progress to achieve desired goals and collaborating closely with partners to review outcomes, gather feedback, and hone recommendations. This comprehensive program review will serve as a springboard for refining national-scale strategic planning and improvements to the investment of limited budget resources across FAC.

An emerging theme from these analyses is that investment in coordination, planning, and priority setting at the species-level and across Service regions is needed to focus and synergize field efforts, close conservation gaps, and better integrate Service efforts with partners. Comprehensive plans often do not exist or are out of date, particularly for interjurisdictional species that are not listed under the ESA. This will allow the Service to strategically place biologists across the country to enhance range-wide planning, coordination, and priority setting for native aquatic species and ecosystems. Planning efforts will include internal (across programs and regions), and external partners with other Federal Agencies, Tribes, States, and local communities. Planning efforts will consider all tools at our collective (Federal, State, Tribal, NGO) disposal to conserve native fish and their habitats.

Habitat Assessment and Restoration Program Overview

Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation is a primary factor in the decline of native aquatic species. Utilizing its national network of fish biologists, 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, rivers, floodplains and tidal areas, restore riparian areas and wetlands, remove barriers to fish passage and aquatic connectivity, 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 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 collaboratively restore aquatic habitats with partners.

National Fish Passage Program

Millions of barriers, including dams, berms, dikes, poorly-designed culverts, and water diversions fragment rivers, floodplains, tidal areas, and watersheds across the Nation. Barriers to fish passage and

NFPP for Community and Safety



*Charles Mill Dam Construction project;
Photo credit: Jerry Sweeten EcoSystems*

Construction on the Charles Mill Dam Removal project on the Mississinewa River in Indiana. Once completed the project will reopen 965 miles of stream habitat for Smallmouth bass above a large recreational and flood control reservoir. The dam was rated to be in poor condition and presented multiple safety hazards to the surrounding urban community to include injuries and drowning fatalities. The completed project is anticipated to improve the diversity and abundance of native fish is expected to improve significantly with the removal of this legacy dam. Over 85 percent of the nearly 70 fish species in the Mississinewa River migrate upstream and are currently blocked by the dam.

aquatic connectivity 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. Barriers can also 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 flooding, culvert failure, severe road damage, and disruptions to transportation systems. Aging dams can fail, which can affect aquatic species and human health and safety. The safety of recreational boating, fishing, and swimming can be impacted by dams and instream barriers which can create hydraulic conditions resulting in drowning fatalities. Impacts on habitat and fish populations may also reduce recreational and commercial fishing and boating opportunities. 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 coordinate with partners to plan and implement 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. It is a voluntary conservation program that brings together diverse partners to achieve benefits for America's rivers, aquatic species, and local communities. Service staff work with Federal agencies, State governments, private landowners, Tribes, local communities, and other organizations and partners 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 and constructed riffles 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 disadvantaged communities. The NFPP's work to restore degraded and fragmented river, tidal, and floodplain habitats create construction, engineering, and other 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. This work often occurs in disadvantaged 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.

The NFPP develops training and guidance documents to assist others in minimizing impacts to fish passage and aquatic connectivity. The program recently published design guidelines for culverts in fish bearing streams in Alaska and led the development of an agency-wide policy and guidance on consideration of aquatic connectivity and fish passage in all Service actions. In 2023, four Federal land management agencies comprised of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and National Park Service signed an interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to promote actions that maintain, restore, or improve aquatic connectivity and aquatic organism passage while improving climate change resilience to infrastructure on Federal lands. Building on existing efforts, the MOU outlines shared objectives and a path forward for incorporating shared objectives into agency actions to conserve aquatic habitat, improve infrastructure resilience, and improve public safety.

NFPP Under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

Investments in the NFPP through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) in FY 2025 will build on existing collaborative NFPP work with selection priority for projects that also provide benefits for climate change resilience, public safety, Tribal nations, and meet environmental justice goals in disadvantaged communities, advancing Administration priorities. 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 appropriations.

The development and implementation of projects using BIL funding engages a diverse array of partners, including other Federal agencies, State governments, private landowners, Tribes, NGOs, and partnership groups such as the existing network under the NFHP program. The Service coordinates with other State and Federal agencies 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.

In FY 2022 and FY 2023, the NFPP allocated \$73 million to 79 projects across 30 States and Puerto Rico to restore rivers, protect wildlife, support communities, and improve climate resilience. These projects will collectively remove over 212 barriers, including 125 culverts and over 50 dams, and reopen over 6,200 miles of river and streams. Project solicitation in FY 2024 expands upon FY 2023 with internal and external partner engagement. FY 2024 will continue to build on Administration priorities and the NFPP mission. NFPP is utilizing ongoing collaborative efforts, such as partner and Tribal outreach and

Federal Interagency Fish Passage Task Force

The Federal Interagency Fish Passage Task Force (Task Force) was established in December 2022 by collective agreement of leadership of its thirteen member Federal agencies to facilitate coordination among agencies and with non-Federal partners on fish passage. The Task Force shares resources, and best practices across the Federal family in support of aquatic ecosystem restoration aligned activities. Coordination across the Federal family and with non-federal partners intends to expand awareness of the benefits and opportunities provided by fish passage restoration while providing the expertise necessary for streamlining and scaling these activities under each agency's mission.



increased interagency collaboration, to expand the program’s network and extend project solicitation to new potential projects.

NFPP has worked to increase the accessibility of funding for Tribes and reduce the burdens to engage in the program by streamlining the application process, prioritizing Tribal-led projects, and having no match funding requirements for Tribes. The first two years of NFPP BIL implementation involved over 32

Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe: Numana Dam



Representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, members of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, and other partners pose for the Numana Dam groundbreaking. Credit: J. Heil/USFWS | Image

The Numana Dam project in Northern Nevada highlights efforts of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, the Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Nevada Department of Fish and Wildlife to restore access for culturally significant fish into habitat disconnected for over 100 years. This collaborative project broke ground in September 2023 and will provide access to over 65 miles of historic habitat in the Truckee River for two federally listed and culturally important fish species, the Lahontan cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii henshawi*) and Cui-ui sucker (*Chasmistes cujus*).

individual Tribes with \$40.0 million awarded to 33 projects in 13 States. These projects will remove 79 aquatic barriers and will reconnect 1,700 miles of stream and river habitat. NFPP focus and incorporation of environmental justice priorities into program criteria has resulted in over 60 percent of funding being spent within disadvantaged communities, conferring meaningful community benefits such as transportation resilience, increased access to recreational and fishing opportunities, improved water quality, and removal of legacy hazard infrastructure.

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 NFHP. In October of 2020, Title II of America’s Conservation Enhancement (ACE) Act codified the 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.

Through appropriations from Congress, the Service has traditionally provided substantial support to the Board and 20 Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) to provide funding and staff to support hundreds of projects across the U.S. to protect, restore, and enhance priority habitats. The Service coordinates with 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. FHPs, in turn, leverage Federal, State, Tribal, and private funding to conserve fish habitat under NFHP, and are formed around distinct geographic areas, important fish species, or ecosystems. 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 improve other habitat conditions.

In the three fiscal years since the passage of the ACE Act, NFHP has funded 246 projects leveraging a total of \$94.6 million in non-federal funds for projects. Up to ten percent of Federal project funds have gone to Tribes to restore culturally and economically important fish habitats as well as improve climate resilience for Tribal communities. One example is a NFHP-funded initiative by Alaska's Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership, working alongside the Chickaloon Village Traditional Council to develop and conduct a continuing education course that residential contractors may take as a requirement for licensing, emphasizing the interconnectedness of home development in riparian areas, water quality, and salmon habitat.

Population Assessment and Cooperative Management Program Overview

The Service aids partners in efforts to maintain self-sustaining, healthy, and diverse populations of native fish and other aquatic species. Service biologists monitor native fish and other aquatic species population status and trends, work with partners to develop sound plans to conserve these resources, and evaluate the effectiveness and biological outcomes of aquatic conservation efforts. Providing this assistance to partners supports Administration efforts to pursue a collaborative and inclusive approach to conservation, as outlined in the America the Beautiful initiative.

Monitoring and Assessment

For more than 150 years, the Service and its partners have assessed and monitored the outputs and outcomes of fish and aquatic conservation and management efforts. Whether for Pacific Salmon in the Northwest, Gulf Sturgeon in the Southeast, Apache Trout in the Southwest, Atlantic Salmon in the Northeast, or Lake Trout in the Midwest, Service biologists across the country provide valuable technical expertise and capacity. They work with partners to strategically plan, collect, and compile the data necessary to establish a wide range of conservation and management strategies and actions, as well as evaluate the effectiveness of them on achieving goals and objectives contained in various recovery, rehabilitation, and management plans.

Service biologists routinely assess and monitor the status and distribution of wild populations of aquatic species, quality and quantity of aquatic habitat, the efficacy of hatchery propagation techniques and the

Tribal Trust Pacific Salmon Program Adapting to Climate Change



Tribal interns assist FAC biologist with sampling of juvenile coho salmon on the Tsoo-Yess River on the Olympic Peninsula. Photo By/Credit: Kevin Cody/USFWS

With a primary focus on Tribal Trust, FAC works closely with tribal co-managers to conserve salmon populations while adapting to the challenges of climate change. Located near the mouth of the Tsoo-Yess River, FAC's Makah NFH is impacted by low water availability and elevated water temperatures in the summer, issues that make rearing salmon challenging and are exacerbated by climate change. In coordination with tribal co-managers, an alternative release strategy was implemented for coho salmon that allows juveniles to utilize cold-water habitat in the upper portions of the watershed by releasing them throughout the watershed prior to summer rearing limitations at the hatchery. Monitoring and evaluation efforts, led by FAC, provide critical information for the adaptive management of these releases. Initially, all co-managers worked together to gain an understanding of the habitat carrying capacity and natural production in the watershed to inform the number and location of hatchery coho salmon juveniles released. Backpack electrofishing surveys are performed in late summer to evaluate growth, condition, and summer survival, and juveniles are tagged to monitor their winter survival and outmigration as smolts the following spring. Based on these findings, the release numbers and locations are modified to improve the number of coho salmon returning as adults to support a sustainable fishery.

products stocked, the effectiveness of aquatic invasive species management and control efforts, and the effectiveness of habitat restoration efforts. These fundamental and foundational activities contribute to achieving a desired biological outcome for native fish and other aquatic species. Threats to fish and other aquatic species and their habitats are predicted to continue to grow in frequency and complexity, resulting in the need for robust assessment and monitoring capacity to collect, assemble, and provide the best available data to inform conservation and management actions.

The Service's work in the Great Lakes is an example of how the Service works 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 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.

Tribal Trust Responsibilities

The Service works with Tribes, Tribal consortia, and Tribal resource agencies to manage a diverse array of fish and aquatic resources on millions of acres of Tribal and Alaska Native lands, usual and accustomed areas of Tribal use, and/or ceded lands pursuant to Treaty rights. The Service plays a key role fulfilling the Tribal trust responsibilities of the Federal government by providing technical assistance, training, financial support, and equipment to help strengthen Tribal nations. 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. Providing support to Tribes also aligns with the Department's goal to promote well-being, equity, and justice for Tribes, Native Americans, and Alaska Natives.

Alaska Subsistence Management Program

Subsistence harvest of wild foods is a cornerstone of traditional Native and non-Native rural life in Alaska. For many rural Alaska communities there are no alternative food sources. There are 130,973 people living in rural areas of the State that qualify for a Federal subsistence priority, or approximately 16 percent of all Alaska residents. The State's rural residents harvest about 18,000 tons of wild foods each year - an average of 295 pounds per person. Fish make up about 56 percent of this harvest statewide. Nowhere else in the United States is there such a heavy reliance upon wild foods.

The 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) Title VIII recognized the importance of Alaska subsistence by providing qualifying rural Alaska residents a Federal subsistence priority to harvest fish and wildlife on Federal lands over other consumptive sport and commercial harvest uses. The Federal government assumed responsibility for subsistence wildlife management on Federal public lands in 1990. After a court judgement in 1998, the Federal government extended its authority to subsistence fishery management on all navigable waters on and adjacent to Federal conservation units in Alaska on October 1, 1999.

Federal subsistence management is a joint effort of both the Departments of Interior (DOI) and Agriculture to implement the subsistence management program and enforce subsistence regulations. The program provides a direct benefit to federally qualified rural subsistence users on 230 million acres of Federal lands encompassing 66 percent of Alaska's land area. Federal subsistence fisheries management

alone affects 41 percent of Alaska's rivers and lakes, 39 Federal conservation units and over 200 rural villages. The logistics for implementing the Federal fisheries subsistence program is complex and the cost for fish population monitoring and resource management activities is extremely high as most areas where Federal subsistence occurs, and monitoring is needed, are only accessible by boat, small airplane, or helicopter.

The Service has served as the lead DOI bureau of the Federal Subsistence Management Program since 1990, and retains significant responsibility for programmatic, staffing, and funding needs for meeting Federal Subsistence Board (FSB) delegated responsibilities and other mandates for implementing the fisheries subsistence program. These staff are responsible for in-season management for subsistence fisheries in Upper Cook Inlet, Bristol Bay, Chignik, Alaska Peninsula, Aleutian Islands, Kodiak Archipelago and the Kuskokwim and the Yukon River Drainages; conducting Tribal consultation and outreach to federally qualified rural subsistence users in these fisheries; regulatory analysis of proposed fishery regulations; coordination with RACs; and participation in FSB processes, including staff support to the Service FSB member, representation on the interagency staff committee (ISC), Special Action and Regulatory analysis, and tracking state actions that may impact Federal subsistence.

The Service's Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) supports the FSB in administering its responsibilities for an annual regulatory program, alternating between fisheries and wildlife cycles, administering a Fisheries Resources Monitoring Program, supporting 10 Regional Advisory Councils (RACs), and facilitating an ISC comprised of subsistence policy experts from each participating agency. The proposed transfer of OSM out of the Service does not alleviate the Service's significant delegated responsibility for implementing the Alaska subsistence fisheries program mandates or the funding necessary to carry out these duties.

Aquatic Invasive Species Overview

Invasive species are a significant threat to human, animal, and plant health, infrastructure, the economy, and cultural resources. They diminish resources, recreational opportunities, agricultural productivity, personal property values, human health and safety, and public utility capacity. Once established, they can persist and spread widely, leading to global declines of fish and wildlife as well as the quality of their habitats. Invasive species, such as bighead carp, quagga and zebra mussels, Elodea, snakehead, and nutria already cost tens of billions of dollars globally in economic and ecological impacts each year. Native and disadvantaged communities, whose economies, traditions, and culture rely heavily on fishing, agriculture, and forestry, are particularly vulnerable to AIS impacts. The threat and impacts of invasive species continue to grow 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 also exacerbate these impacts 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, while warming temperatures will provide a longer growing season and make it possible for more non-native species to survive.

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 has made significant strides to strengthen partnerships and collaborate with States, Tribes, and stakeholders in prioritizing and responding to invasive species introductions. Science based

data guided priorities, management decisions, and dedicated Service staff modernize scientific and administrative approaches to quickly identify and prevent invasive species threats before they become pervasive on the landscape. The Service also works to educate the public about threats from invasive species and actions they can take to lessen AIS impact and spread.

Reduced impacts from invasive species will conserve biodiversity and the health of our waters, support Administration priorities by increasing resilience of native species and ecosystems to climate change, and reduce opportunities for zoonotic pathogen spillover that can jeopardize human health. 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.

Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force

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, Control and Restoration, Research, and Outreach and Education.

Coordination

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

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. The Service employs the authority of 18 U.S.C. 42(a), (also known as title 18 of the Lacey Act), to 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 establishing. The Service 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.

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. The Service works with partners to develop risk assessment tools to identify species of concern and evaluate likely pathways for introduction into the United States. Prevention efforts include inspecting and decontaminating watercraft and gear, advocating against the release of potentially harmful species, enforcing current laws and regulations aimed at reducing the risk of introduction and spread of AIS, and preventing the spread of AIS already present in the United States into new areas (secondary spread). Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) planning is a structured process that assesses a specific resource management activity, identifies possible AIS risks, and facilitates risk elimination or mitigation of potential invasive species. HACCP can help to ensure an agency's activities do not cause unnecessary harm by developing and implementing a quality-control planning process to prevent the unintentional introduction and spread of invasive species.

Early Detection and Rapid Response

The Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, or BIL) funding provides an opportunity to advance coordinated invasive species management efforts that will have meaningful impacts across the Nation. One of the Department's Keystone Initiatives is to advance a National Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) Framework. The purpose of the National EDRR Framework is to find and eradicate invasive species new to the United States or those demonstrating secondary spread. The Service will coordinate across Federal and non-federal partners and invest in innovative approaches for surveillance, data integration, and response capabilities for use by resource managers.

BIL invasive species funding is the foundation of a National EDRR Framework to use a series of comprehensive, coordinated, and integrated steps to stop the invasion of harmful nonnative species. Establishing a strong Framework will allow the Service to continue to improve and refine processes. The EDRR Framework is developing molecular markers for high-risk invasive species along with rapid screens for nonnative species to inform risk and feasibility screening. The Service is developing and implementing an Interjurisdictional Invasive Species Rapid Response Team (IInSRRT) to collaborate with State, Tribal, and Federal land management partners to carry out expedited management response to new AIS invasion across jurisdictions. The Service will conduct AIS regional horizon scans to identify invasive species at high risk of moving across ecosystem and watershed boundaries and implement a pilot for early detection surveillance within invasion hotspots in Southeast U.S. rivers and lakes.

Pilot Rapid Response Fund

Aquatic invasive species can lead to the extinction of native plants and animals, permanently alter habitats, and imperil public health. Aquaculture, tourism, recreation, shipping, and hydropower facilities may also be adversely impacted by biological invasion. Effective and coordinated approaches are necessary to manage aquatic invaders and protect our Nation's waters. Recognizing the importance of timely action, the Department of the Interior invested \$1 million in Fiscal Year 2023 to establish a pilot Rapid Response Fund for Aquatic Invasive Species, with an additional \$1 million planned each year through fiscal year 2026 as part of advancing a National EDRR Framework for invasive species. The Rapid Response Fund is a critical component of a National EDRR Framework by providing readily available financial resources to assess and support response actions for quick containment or eradication of newly detected invasive species that threaten U.S. waters.

The Fund is being administered within the existing authorities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fish and Aquatic Conservation program and coordinated through the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANSTF). The ANSTF developed a model process for the operation of the Fund including defining circumstances and activities that qualify for funding, eligibility of applicants, application process, evaluation criteria, expectations on desired outcomes, and the relationship of those activities to the National EDRR Framework. Rapid Response Funds are awarded quarterly through a competitive funding opportunity to allow timely response to new species threats while maintaining a fair, competitive, and transparent process. In the first award cycle, 12 proposals were submitted for consideration. Project costs ranged from \$68,191 to \$541,758, with a total need of \$2.67 million. The high number of proposals received in the first quarter and the amount of funding requested significantly exceeding the amount available, emphasizes the critical role of the Rapid Response Fund to make adequate resources available to halt incipient invasions. The Fund is currently being supported as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law authorization for ecosystem restoration; however, annual appropriations, are needed to continue and expand the Rapid Response Fund in future years. Continued investment in the Fund will allow the Federal government and its partners to proactively prevent the establishment and spread of newly introduced invasive species, thus avoiding costly and long-term impacts from new invasions.

BIL investments are enabling a new paradigm in how we respond when invasive species are detected and the 2025 President's budget complements the BIL investments in the EDRR framework with proposed funding to rapidly respond to aquatic invasive species when detected.

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. The Service works to evaluate the principal pathways by which AIS are introduced and dispersed. New methods are developed and tested for effectiveness, like developing eDNA markers for early detection surveillance of high-risk species that may enter the United States. This research is an essential part of ongoing work to prevent, detect, respond to, and control AIS nationwide.

Safeguarding the Nation's water through Horizon Scanning

Horizon scanning is one step for creating an early detection surveillance network needed to identify new invasive species and prevent establishment. It is a systematic analysis of non-native species and the pathways that may transport AIS to a specific region, combined with an evaluation of the risk of the species being introduced, establishing, spreading, and causing harm. The analysis is used to develop "watch lists" of the species with the highest risk of becoming invasive. To date, the Service has conducted horizon scans in nine geographic regions (see map below), identifying seven different pathways and 61 different species. Horizon scans are coordinated with the local management authorities and experts to determine the pathways and species focus. This work is an essential component of the National Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) Framework by identifying species at risk of moving across ecosystem and watershed boundaries.



The nine geographic regions in which Regional Horizon Scans have been completed or are ongoing.

Sea Lamprey Control Sustains a Thriving Recreational Fishery on Lake Champlain

Restoration of lake trout and landlocked Atlantic salmon in Lake Champlain has been a shared goal of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the states of New York and Vermont, and Québec, Canada through their partnership in the Lake Champlain Fish and Wildlife Management Cooperative since the 1970s. Through investments in aquatic invasive species control, habitat restoration, and cooperative state and federal hatchery stocking programs, fishing records are being set and angler satisfaction is at their highest levels since the 1970's. 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 be lost.

After 34 years of working to suppress sea lamprey populations, lamprey wounds on lake trout and land-locked Atlantic salmon have reached record lows. Continued low wounding rates are resulting in some of the greatest gains in history – the lake trout are successfully reproducing and becoming self-sustaining, and land-locked Atlantic salmon are returning in record numbers to Lake Champlain tributary rivers to spawn. Young lake trout are surviving, allowing the States and the Service to reduce lake trout stocking by 50%. Further reductions in lake trout stocking will continue in the coming years if sea lamprey controls continue as planned. Advances in salmon propagation and stocking practices, along with the suppressed sea lamprey populations are contributing to the increased survival in Lake Champlain, and increased returns of salmon to their spawning rivers. Additionally, improvements to riverine and upland habitats, along with increasing access to spawning habitats following the removal of dams, are creating greater opportunities for the salmon populations to expand. For example, salmon are returning to spawning grounds on the Saranac River, Cold Brook, and the Boquet River after dams were removed. History has shown that the successful control of sea lamprey is the path to achieving self-sustaining lake trout and salmon populations in the Great Lakes and in Lake Champlain. Strong partnerships and investments of 34 years are paying off. Anglers are happy, and recreational fishing is restoring an economic engine to the Lake Champlain region with anglers spending \$205 million dollars on goods such as tackle, bait, boats, and refreshments. Fishing related businesses on Lake Champlain also reported annual income of \$5 million.

Outreach and Education

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. The ANS Task Force, under the auspices of the Service, assess these national campaigns to develop products and tools to inform the public of the wide-ranging impacts of AIS and actions necessary to prevent their introduction and spread. These campaigns empower recreational water users and pet owners to become environmental stewards by taking action to prevent the spread of AIS. Additional BIL funding will support a National AIS Outreach Summit in FY24 to bring together AIS outreach program managers and social science experts from across the Nation to review and discuss recommendations and findings from recent outreach assessments. Summit participants will work together to develop a science-based communication framework and media toolkit to promote a consistent approach for AIS outreach and education across and within State, Tribal, Federal, and partner organizations.

Military Lands Conservation

The Service and the Department of Defense (DoD) have successfully collaborated on natural resource management actions on DoD-controlled lands for almost a century and have expanded those efforts in recent years. Efforts between DoD, including the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), each military service branch, and the Service are broad ranging, affecting conservation on millions of acres across the United States, including the Pacific Islands. These actions have restored and maintained habitat, benefitted imperiled species, recovered listed species, kept fire risks at bay, responded to natural disasters, reached ahead to conserve at-risk species, supported local communities, and applied science to guide our adaptive management approach to decision-making on a landscape scale. Collaboratively, the Service continues to identify and resolve complex conservation challenges, a shared mission that illustrates both meaningful conservation and military mission accomplishment.

Under the authority of the Sikes Act, the Service works with DoD and the States to develop and implement Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans (INRMPs) to affect conservation and support military readiness on hundreds of military installations. Using National Interagency Agreements between the Service, U.S. Air Force, and U.S. Army, the Service distributes funding and provides support to installations and Service field offices to successfully execute INRMP natural resource projects on installations.

FAC coordinates across programs to create a collaborative Service approach for DOD funded projects. In the Intermountain West, the Service and DoD work to leverage

**DoD and Service
Black Footed Ferret success**



*Black-footed ferrets released on Army's PCD, Colorado, November 15, 2023.
Photo Credit: Tomás Nocera, USFWS*

resources to prevent the

extinction of the black-footed ferret (BFF) in Colorado, a species central to grassland ecosystem function and to the overall health of military lands. This species is dependent on black-tailed prairie dogs and their colonies for food, shelter, and rearing young. The Service collaborates with Air Force's Buckley Space Force Base and the U.S. Army's Pueblo Chemical Depot (PCD) in Colorado to establish a new population of endangered black-footed ferrets, using Air Force funding and Service expertise. In 2023, the Service and Army gathered at PCD to release BFFs at the installation.

**Military and Service Collaboration
Success**



Bill Tate, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service catching Okaloosa darter. Photo by Ilk Ilka Cole is USAF, 96th Test Wing, Eglin AFB

A recent partnership between the Service and Eglin Air Force Base, Florida resulted in restoring Okaloosa darters. The darter's recovery from a population of less than 1,500 to over 600,000 was celebrated by Department of Interior Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks Shannon Estenoz and Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Energy, Installations, and Environment Dr. Ravi Chaudhary. Estenoz remarked that Eglin is "steadily and strategically rebuilding the entire ecology of this landscape with no loss to the flexibility of the military mission." Acting Service Regional Director for the Southeast Region, Michael Oetker noted "As we celebrate the Endangered Species Act's 50th anniversary this year, this is a great example of how the military and the Service collaborate to achieve our respective missions."

The Service's work with the military also contributes to priorities around climate change resilience and diversity, equity, and inclusion. For example, through Army directed environmental resilience funding, the Service is working with the Hispanic Access Foundation (HAF), Colorado State University Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands (CEMML), and U.S Army Corps of Engineers Construction Engineering Research Laboratory, to update Army Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans for climate adaptation using data on climate change, environmental stressors, and a structured decision-making process. Fellows from HAF write individualized climate profiles for installations to identify natural resource vulnerabilities and recommended actions to mitigate risk for the installations.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will:

- Work collaboratively with partners to develop sound plans to conserve native aquatic species and their habitats and use partnership programs such as the NFPP and the NFHP 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 the Service and its partners can use science and evidence-based information to guide fish conservation and management decisions;
- Evaluate the effectiveness and biological outcomes of Service and partner aquatic conservation efforts such as habitat restoration, fish passage, and fish stocking efforts through the 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 as injurious if they may serve as hosts of pathogens or parasites that can cause serious infectious diseases in humans.

Justification of the 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 OMB budget request for Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation is \$126,934,000 and 333 FTE, a program change of -\$11,806,000 and +37 FTE from the 2024 Enacted.

Invasive Carp (-\$10,000,000/ -10 FTE) – The 2025 budget submission does not request the full funding for Invasive Carp.

Klamath Basin Recreation Agreement (-\$7,000,000/ -0 FTE) – The 2025 budget submission does not request dedicated additional funding for Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provided \$162,000,000 through FY 2026 for Klamath Basin Restoration Activities. The BIL funding will focus on priority projects and activities such as Tribal trust commitments, aquatic habitat restoration activities, water quality improvement projects, Klamath river science and data collection. The reduction of \$7,000,000 in appropriated funding from FY 2023 enacted returns funding levels to FY 2022 enacted, allowing the Service to continue the work originally conducted, while expanding the projects, activities, and impacts through the BIL funding.

Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Program (-\$2,110,000/ -0 FTE) – The 2025 budget submission does not request dedicated funding for Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration.

Delaware River Basin Conservation Act (-\$1,500,000/ -0 FTE) – 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 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provided \$26,000,000 through FY 2026 to prioritize and fund projects for the program. The reduction of \$1,500,000 in appropriated funding from FY 2023 enacted returns funding levels to FY 2022 enacted, allowing the Service to continue to coordinate with partners from Tribal, Federal, State, local, community, and NGO organizations who make up our Delaware River Watershed Conservation Collaborative.

Hydrilla, Eel, and Milfoil Invasive Grasses (-\$1,500,000/ -0 FTE) – The budget request does not include Congressionally Directed Spending and Community Project Funding included in the FY 2023 enacted bill in order to advance the Administration's priorities.

Snakehead Eradication (-\$1,000,000/ -0 FTE) – The 2025 budget submission does not request dedicated funding for Snakehead Eradication.

Contract Fishing (Invasive Carp) (-\$1,000,000/ -0 FTE) – This reduction funds Invasive Carp-Contract Fishing at \$3.0 million in FY 2025. The budget request does not include full funding for Congressionally Directed spending included in the FY 2023 enacted bill in order to advance the Administration's priorities.

Lake Tahoe Restoration (-\$950,000/ -0 FTE) – The 2025 budget submission does not request dedicated additional funding for Lake Tahoe Restoration.

Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey (-\$818,000/ -1 FTE) – The 2025 budget submission does not request dedicated additional funding for Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey.

Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission (-\$700,000/ -0 FTE) – The 2025 budget submission does not request dedicated additional funding for Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission.

Pacific Salmon Treaty (-\$150,000/ -0 FTE) – The 2025 budget submission does not request funding for Pacific Salmon Treaty.

Habitat Assessment and Restoration Activities (+\$494,000/ +1 FTE) – This funding will facilitate the Service's work with private landowners, non-profit organizations, Tribes, and local, State, and Federal agencies to restore aquatic habitats for the benefit of native fish and other aquatic resources, as well as local communities. Funding will provide resources for freshwater habitat conservation, specifically activities other than fish passage such as in-stream, riparian, and floodplain conservation, and freshwater habitat assessment.

National Fish Habitat Action Plan (+\$500,000/ -0 FTE) – This funding will support implementation of additional fish habitat conservation projects, as authorized under the ACE Act. Projects will be identified and prioritized through FHPs that work with other Federal Agencies, States, Tribes, private landowners, businesses, and others to restore stream banks, provide aquatic connectivity, plant vegetation, renovate oyster reefs, and improve other habitat conditions.

Baseline Capacity – Habitat Assessment and Restoration (+\$612,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$0.6 million in this program which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Baseline Capacity – Aquatic Invasive Species (+\$623,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in program needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$0.6 million in this program which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

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, conducting stock status and trend analysis, offering 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 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).

Baseline Capacity – Population Assessment and Cooperative Management (+\$1,001,000/0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$1.0 million in this program which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Subsistence Managers (+\$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 (TCC) which will result in TCC assuming responsibility for certain functions, including those associated with subsistence management, currently provided by DOI bureaus.

Population Assessment and Cooperative Management Activities (+\$2,267,000/ +5 FTE) – This funding will increase FAC capacity to work with partners in efforts to restore and manage native fish populations. This investment will allow FAC to increase capacity to focus on the following areas: planning, coordination, and priority setting for native fish restoration; technical capacity for climate change adaptation; monitoring and assessment; and support to fulfill Tribal trust responsibilities. This additional capacity will invest in locally led, collaborative conservation of native fish and their habitats, deliver benefits to the American people, and help advance the Service mission.

Aquatic Invasive Species-Prevention: Early Detection Rapid Response Framework (+\$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.

Prevention Activities (+\$4,075,000/ +20 FTE) – Prevention funds will support work by the Service and its partners to prevent the introduction, establishment and spread of AIS, and 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. Early detection surveillance will occur within invasion hotspots and at points of entry into the United States as part of a nationally coordinated EDRR framework and a failsafe to prevention. 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.

Internal Transfer From National Fish Hatchery Operations (+\$3,000,000 / +8 FTE) – This moves funds from National Fish Hatchery Operations to Population Assessment and Cooperative Management. The Hatcheries, Fish Health Centers, and Fish Technology Centers work in conjunction with FAC's Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation efforts to recover and restore native aquatic species. As Hatcheries increase propagation and applied science research, FAC will require additional resources and staff to monitor population status and trends, develop sound conservation and management plans, and evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of aquatic conservation efforts.

Internal Transfer from National Fish Hatchery Operations (+\$3,000,000 / +8 FTE) – This moves funds from National Fish Hatchery Operations to Habitat Assessment and Restoration. The Hatcheries, Fish Health Centers, and Fish Technology Centers work in conjunction with FAC habitat conservation efforts to recover and restore aquatic species. As Hatcheries increase propagation and applied science research, additional resources and staff from Habitat Assessment and Restoration are needed to conserve

the habitats the aquatic species occupy.

Transfer of the Office of Subsistence Management to the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs (-\$7,954,000/ -15 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

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change from 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Science Partnerships	(\$000)	26,400	26,400	+458	0	+416	27,274	+874
	FTE	90	90	0	0	+5	95	+5
Service Science	(\$000)	8,972	8,972	+87	0	+1,569	10,628	+1,656
	FTE	11	11	0	0	+4	15	+4
Total Science Applications	(\$000)	35,372	35,372	+545	0	+1,985	37,902	+2,530
	FTE	101	101	0	0	+9	110	+9

Program Overview

Securing a vibrant future for the Nation’s fish, wildlife, plants, and our communities depends on successfully bringing together a diverse array of people to identify mutual priorities, using and sharing data and science in new ways, and co-developing solutions that serve our Nation’s diverse and varied interests. The Science Applications program is a non-regulatory program that addresses complex conservation challenges through voluntary, landscape-level partnerships and the innovative application of science and data management. In pursuit of the Service’s larger mission, the program works with others to create a network of lands and waters for thriving ecosystems and connected communities for current and future generations.

To do this work, the Science Applications program focuses on the following linked approaches:

- **Collaboration:** Works with States, Tribes, other Federal agencies, academic institutions, the conservation community, industry partners, landowner groups and local organizations to establish shared priorities and co-develop solutions connecting our lands, waters, and communities.
- **Proactive, non-regulatory conservation:** Are responsive and nimble to changing conditions and promote voluntary conservation actions to adapt to emerging issues such as climate change, changing demographics and land uses, and/or other developments.
- **Innovation for the future:** Pursue novel and leading-edge approaches to address challenges, such as protecting species at-risk of becoming threatened or endangered, and develop our future workforce. Work towards a sustainable future and maintain the biodiversity and ecosystem services that are essential for human and wildlife health while relating to all citizens and honoring the cultural practices, knowledge, and traditions across our lands.

The program employs a wide array of positions to advance our collaborative, proactive, and innovative approaches. Our workforce includes social and interdisciplinary scientists to help interpret and connect complex systems, facilitation experts to coordinate diverse teams on challenging issues, spatial ecologists and GIS technicians to design and integrate tools to translate our science into action, and user support specialists to engage with partners to ensure tools meet their needs.

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 collaborative landscape conservation with the goal of creating a network of connected lands and waters for thriving ecosystems and communities. These partnerships help identify gaps in scientific knowledge needed to achieve conservation goals and deliver scientific research and decision support tools essential to success. Work leads to durable conservation outcomes where partners collaboratively co-develop and implement proactive and voluntary actions to directly conserve at-risk species, reduce habitat stressors, and restore ecosystem health.
- Service Science – Coordinates and facilitates Service-wide conservation initiatives. Provides policy, guidance, information, and tools across the Service that inform decision-making, and connect other important collaborators. This work supports National Wildlife Refuge System 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 that may be in conflict with current 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 develop policies and programs guided by the best available scientific data.

Activity: Science Applications
Sub-activity: Science Partnerships

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Change from 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	
Science (\$000)	26,400	26,400	+458	0	+416	27,274	+874
Partnerships FTE	90	90	0	0	+5	95	+5

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Science Partnerships

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Science Partnerships Activities	+7,698	+5
Baseline Capacity	+718	+0
Chesapeake WILD Program	-8,000	-0
Program Changes	+416	+5

Program Description

The stewardship of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats, increasingly requires large landscape scale conservation efforts to address complex, inter-jurisdictional environmental issues such as climate change, habitat degradation, and habitat fragmentation. The Science **Partnerships** program was established to work with States, sovereign Tribal nations, Federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, universities, private landowners, and others to provide science and collaborative capacity in support of landscape scale conservation beyond the scope of any one organization. The resulting collaborative landscape conservation partnerships transcend boundaries and emphasize working together to identify and prioritize contributions to shared conservation goals. A defining characteristic of the program is working with partners to seek conservation solutions in a collaborative and non-regulatory context.

Catalyzing and Maintaining Collaboration

Capacity for coordination and collaboration is essential to maintaining partnerships. Building durable and trusting relationships takes years and can be easily disrupted. The Service’s Science Partnerships program has built this trust for more than a decade, successfully fostering regional, national, and international partnerships to identify shared conservation goals and 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 Partnerships, and the Network for Landscape Conservation, as well as private landowners’ organizations such as the National Alliance of Forest Owners, Western Landowners Alliance, and Partnerscapes. This inclusive approach to conservation fosters agreement on priorities and leverages limited conservation dollars to projects with the most important impacts at state and local levels.

The Science Partnerships program also pursues opportunities with non-traditional conservation partners. The program is cultivating relationships with the Department of Defense to enable development and restoration of more interconnected and healthy systems for fish, wildlife, plants, and communities through expanded partnerships with other Service programs, Federal agencies, State fish and wildlife agencies, Tribes, private landowners, and industry groups operating in those areas. The program also works with the NASA Earth Sciences Division to explore opportunities to share data, co-develop tools, and innovate, particularly as it relates to the use of remote sensing technologies to provide more information about

plant, animal, and fish populations in North America.

Providing Customized Support

The program is committed to meeting partners where they are to identify and meet shared science needs that inform resource management decision-making. Working with several long-standing and new partners, Science Partnerships 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 executive-level leaders at Federal and State fish and wildlife agencies. This collaborative venue provides a unique opportunity to develop shared priorities, foster communication, explore new opportunities, and provide a forum for early problem-solving on issues that emerge in large landscape scales. It also supports the work of other regional State and Service collaboratives, such as the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy, the Midwest Landscape Initiative, Salt Marsh Restoration in the Northeast, and 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). LCD development underpins the program's overall collaborative landscape conservation efforts. LCDs serve as blueprints that guide partners in targeting their management efforts and are a partner-driven proactive approach to achieve a sustainable, resilient landscape that meet the ecological, social, and economic needs of an area. LCDs are 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 collective conservation goals.

Current LCD work includes:

- **National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) Comprehensive Conservation Planning:** In FY 2024 the Science Applications program began partnering with NWRS planners as part of their comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) review, to develop LCDs, climate change uncertainty, and other anthropogenic forces and decision support tools necessary to achieve landscape-scale NWRS outcomes. The program has identified an inflection point where cross-programmatic collaboration will enable staff to meet this important agency mandate despite broadened engagement requirements in Service and DOI policies and guidance, and workload associated with revising CCPs.
- **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 2023, 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. This version expanded consistent methods and indicators to Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the surrounding nearshore waters of the U.S. Caribbean, as well as the full U.S. offshore waters of the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico within the SECAS geography. The team also incorporated several new indicators and related data sets, including those around marine birds and coastline habitat for example, making the Blueprint a more useful and responsive tool for planners and developers in the Southeast region.
- **Migration Corridors and Habitat Connectivity in the West:** Science Partnerships staff have been coordinating implementation of Secretarial Order 3362, "Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big

Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors,” signed February 9, 2018. SO 3362 focuses on conserving and restoring seasonal habitat and migration corridors for several big game species across 11 western States. These big game species are of cultural, ecological, and economic importance and the effort has strong bipartisan support. All eleven western State fish and wildlife agencies remain actively engaged through State-developed action plans. Program staff are also deeply involved in the development of a Sagebrush LCD to strategically target line-item funding on the most important sagebrush restoration projects across the west. Sagebrush restoration projects will concurrently benefit big game priority seasonal habitats and migration corridors.

Science Partnerships leads and supports efforts to consider and incorporate Tribally-led conservation and Indigenous Knowledge into collaborative conservation decisions and designs. The program works closely with the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society (NAFWS), and through this partnership, implemented a Tribal collaboration project to identify and implement shared priorities including climate change, biodiversity, wildlife disease, and wildlife corridors and connectivity. Science Partnerships also provides resources to support the NAFWS as they provide technical assistance to American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, further promoting Tribal collaboration, and laying the groundwork for co-stewardship. 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.

The program’s ongoing collaboration with the U.S. Geological Survey’s Climate Adaptation Science Centers (CASCs) is an important science partnership. The CASCs provide science, research, and technical assistance to help the program 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.

Collaborative conservation is among the most effective methods to meet the enormous and diverse conservation challenges the Nation faces in the 21st century. Science Applications is at the forefront of collaborative conservation, helping to shape landscape partnerships and associated landscape conservation designs across partners, with a focus on States and Tribes. This collaborative work strives to create an ecologically connected network of lands and waters that sustain fish, wildlife, and plant populations across the Nation in the face of rapid change.

KEY EXAMPLES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

North American Pollinator Conservation

Pollinators are essential to the health of our economy and people, and they are declining globally. Science Partnerships plays a central leadership, collaboration, and technical assistance role for the Center for Pollinator Conservation. In its first full year in operation, the Center for Pollinator Conservation (Center) invested in science and partnered with the NWRS on pollinator inventory and monitoring efforts. The Center also partnered with the Monarch Joint Venture to study the use of un-crewed aircraft systems and artificial intelligence to rapidly census the distribution of milkweed on several refuges. The Center hopes to expand the use of this technology to additional refuges. The Center also contributed funds to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Monarch Butterfly and Pollinators

Conservation Fund. This Fund has invested over \$20 million since 2015 in over 100 projects to help conserve and recover the monarch butterfly and benefit other native pollinator species. The Center continues to build capacity and engaged new industry sectors, collaborated with agencies, made strategic investment in applied science, and co-created solutions with partners. Science Applications plays a central

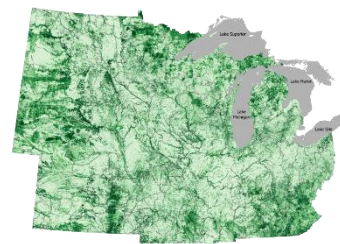


*Monarch butterfly.
Photo by USFWS*

leadership, collaboration, and technical assistance role for the Center for Pollinator Conservation.

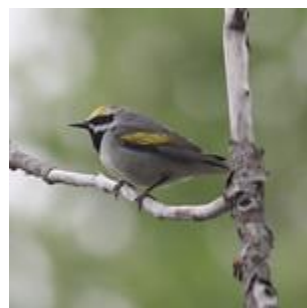
Midwest Conservation Blueprint

In 2023, the Science Partnerships program, Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and others published the Midwest Conservation Blueprint (Blueprint). The Blueprint is a base map of priority lands and waters that displays opportunities to link habitats and ecosystems so species can move and potentially adapt to changing climates. The Blueprint reflects more than 20 social and environmental values, such as environmental justice and climate resiliency and is a resource for conservation practitioners, land managers, private landowners interested in collaborative conservation. The Blueprint was designed so users can either (1) download the data layers into their systems, or (2) overlay their own maps, priorities and plans over the viewer, to customize or scale their view. Users can also identify focal areas in the Midwest and quickly engage with other users. The Midwest Conservation Blueprint reflects the active collaboration of more than 50 individuals and 12 organizations and is the first version of a living map that will be updated based on new data and community feedback.



Midwest Conservation Blueprint, courtesy of USFWS

The Wildlife Conservation Initiative: Collaborative Approach to At-Risk Species Conservation



*Golden winged warbler.
Photo courtesy of
Khustochka/Creative
Commons*

In 2023, the Service, National Alliance of Forest Owners (NAFO), and National Council for Air and Stream Improvement (NCASI) signed a memorandum of understanding to formalize the existing collaboration and objectives of the Wildlife Conservation Initiative (WCI). The WCI formed to advance the conservation of at-risk and ESA-listed species on sustainably managed, commercial working forests owned and managed by NAFO member companies across the U.S. The partnership has resulted in twelve 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. Science Applications has aided work through project funding, collaborative scientific development and technical project management. In FY 2023, the WCI completed four ongoing projects, continued six projects, and initiated three new projects. At-risk species benefiting from this work include several native bee and butterfly species, various mussels and amphibians,

Northwestern Pond turtles, golden-winged warbler, and the Texas heel splitter to name a few.

Habitat and Ecosystem Restoration Grants

In FY 2023 and FY 2024 Science Partnerships continued work with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to facilitate implementation of the America the Beautiful Challenge grant program (Challenge) through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The Challenge, creates a strong partnership focused on developing and implementing large-scale, locally led, collaborative projects that address shared priorities across landscapes. Science Partnerships developed targeted habitat goals with State fish and wildlife agencies to focus grants on shared priorities, ensured a diverse group of grant proposal reviewers, and developed grant proposal criteria focused on community engagement, outreach to communities, co-design of processes, and the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge. In FY 2024, 55 grants were selected to receive DOI funding totaling \$121.5 million and will leverage an additional \$70 million in grantee match for a total conservation investment of \$191 million. Selected projects advance the coordination of ecosystem restoration across the United States and connect and restore the lands, waters, and wildlife upon which we all depend. Of the 55 funded projects, 76 percent of the projects included underserved communities, and 23 projects provided direct funding to Tribes. Science Applications will continue to coordinate and administer the Challenge in FY 2025 through 2026.

Pacific Northwest Landscape Conservation Forum

In December 2023, Science Partnerships sponsored a virtual Landscape Conservation Forum, bringing together close to 300 registrants representing Federal land management agencies, State Fish and Wildlife and Transportation agencies, Tribes, non-governmental organizations from the U.S. and Canada, local government, private landowners, academia, and businesses. Outcomes included: a detailed Pacific Northwest (PNW) directory with contact information, geographic scope, mission, products, involved collaborators, and websites for the 87 collaboratives in the PNW: and plans to continue meeting in the future to focus on building more durable landscape conservation at local, regional, and international scales. In December 2023, Science Applications sponsored a virtual Landscape Conservation Forum, bringing together close to 300 registrants representing Federal land management agencies, State Fish and Wildlife and Transportation agencies, Tribes, non-governmental organizations from the U.S. and Canada, local government, private landowners, academia, and businesses. Outcomes included: a detailed PNW directory with contact information, geographic scope, mission, products, involved collaborators, and websites for the 87 collaboratives in the PNW: and plans to continue meeting in the future to focus on building more durable landscape conservation at local, regional, and international scales.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will enhance collaborative, proactive, and innovative approaches of our Science Partnerships, enabling our program to:

- Continue and expand staff capacity to build and sustain diverse partnerships that address the full range of conservation challenges, engage and/or lead more collaborative LCD efforts, and increase investment in conservation planning.
- Continue and increase development of more effective and collaborative decision-making tools and the consistent incorporation of climate, ecological, and social data, and trends to inform shared goal setting across boundaries.
- Improve database management and geospatial mapping capacity across the Service to allow for improved data sharing and make national databases more robust with local data resources.
- Increase assistance to underrepresented communities and Tribes through staff and financial support, to assist in providing capacity for important conservation work to be done in those communities; continue to engage underrepresented communities and Tribes to identify high priority conservation opportunities using new and existing LCDs.
- Expand the Center for Pollinator Conservation to enhance coordinated conservation of western monarchs and other important pollinator species, and increase funding for implementation grants and science procurement.
- Implement grant programs, dedicate staff resources, and provide funding support to collaborate with other public and Tribal entities as well as private landowners, such as the NAFO, to conserve at risk species throughout the country, address connectivity of habitats, and collaborate with broad-based efforts, such as the WCI and Network for Landscape Conservation, to more effectively connect hundreds of independent landscape conservation efforts occurring on private and public lands.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Science Partnerships is \$27,274,000 and 95 FTE, a program change of +\$416,000 and +5 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Science Partnerships Activities (+\$7,698,000/ +5 FTE) – The 2025 request will support the coordination of local, State, private, and Tribal conservation, and restoration initiatives in the following areas:

- Sagebrush conservation;
- Grassland conservation;
- Keystone Initiatives and related habitats;
- Corridors and connectivity;
- At-Risk Species Conservation, including North American Pollinator Conservation; and
- Nature-based Solutions and expanded support for ecosystem services.

Funding will also advance collaborative landscape conservation by increasing coordination capacity and allow for additional user support specialists, data management coordinators, spatial analysts, and social scientists. The increase in coordination and user support capacity will significantly enhance and accelerate work with partners toward building a durable conservation framework to promote biodiversity, climate adaptation and mitigation, and racial equity. The additional support will be especially important as we promote environmental justice in conservation by pursuing work with underrepresented communities and underserved partners who have previously had limited opportunities to engage with landscape conservation efforts. Funding for coordination of landscape conservation will also (1) enhance support for existing partnerships and develop new ones, particularly with Tribes and underrepresented communities (2) support the role of working lands in conservation (3) increase scientific and conservation activities in collaboration with Tribes and States and (4) weave together existing efforts across the country.

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. This increase will also allow the program to invest in data managers and geospatial mapping capacity to work with States, Tribes, and local partners to better incorporate new and ongoing efforts often unaccounted for in national databases.

The request will also improve conservation efforts by incorporating critical social science knowledge and approaches to inform a better understanding of (1) conservation planning and implementation strategies that are effective, sustainable, and relevant to the citizens we serve; (2) how conservation impacts people; and (3) how the work of the Service contributes to the well-being of local communities.

Baseline Capacity (+\$718,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$0.7 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Chesapeake WILD Program (-\$8,000,000/ -0 FTE) – The 2025 budget submission does not request the dedicated additional funding for Chesapeake WILD provided in the 2023 appropriation.

Activity: Science Applications

Sub-activity: Service Science

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Change from 2024 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Service Science	(\$000) <i>FTE</i>	8,972 11	8,972 11	+87 0	0 0	+1,569 +4	10,628 15	+1,656 +4

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Service Science

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Service Science Activities – Climate Science	+1,471	+4
Baseline Capacity	+98	+0
Program Changes	+1,569	+4

Program Description

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. Service Science serves as a non-regulatory, innovation and coordination hub that supports the work of Service programs and provides science support to ensure they can make decisions informed by the best available science, knowledge, data management and partnerships. Work supports regulatory decisions, biological opinions, LCDs, refuge planning, and species and habitat conservation recommendations. Recent work includes the creation of decision support tools like the dashboard developed for the Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation Program and their partners to target hundreds of thousands of dollars of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds to the most important sites to improve fish passage in this nation.

Service Science coordinates with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and provides USGS with the science needs identified by partners to obtain relevant, timely, best available science upon which to make decisions, and 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 and OneHealth;
- Science Information Management and Sharing;
- At-Risk and Endangered Species recovery;
- Pre-listing conservation partnerships with States;
- Refuge System Comprehensive Conservation Planning;
- Native Seed Strategy;
- Prevention and mitigation of invasive grasses and wildfires in the sagebrush ecosystem; and
- White-Nose Syndrome research, monitoring and outreach to save imperiled bats.

Climate Science to Action

Climate resiliency and seeking nature-based solutions are a foundational piece of the program's work and central to addressing many of today's ecosystem and habitat stressors. The program is responsible for coordination, development, and 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, fulfill Congressional mandates, and contribute to the Administration's priorities. The seven core elements of the CCAP include: (1) Adaptation and Resilience; (2) Climate Science; (3) National Conservation Adaptation Strategy; (4) Partnerships; (5) Climate Mitigation; (6) Policy; and (7) Capacity. These elements provide a foundation for FWS to respond consistently and comprehensively to climate challenges systemwide. The CCAP organizes work with programs, regions, and external partners to apply the best available science and foster collaborations to address complex climate adaptation and mitigation challenges at multiple geographic scales.

In FY 2025, the Service will continue to be a strong partner in the National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Network, which supports work on issues related to climate adaptation and is made up of representatives from Federal, State, Tribal, academic, and non-profit organizations. The Service is also supporting implementation and update of the 2012 National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy, its 2021 Revision, and subsequent work. The Strategy, which was developed through coordination among the Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, is organized around seven major goals to help fish, wildlife, plants and ecosystems adapt to changing conditions, paying heed to economic and intrinsic values these resources have to their communities and providing practical actions that can be taken to address them. Service Science plans to complete its Resist-Accept-Direct Implementation Guidebook. The Guidebook will provide a climate adaptation decision-making approach based on the best available science in the face of uncertain future scenarios by allowing resource managers to explore plausible future conditions and decide whether to resist change, accept change, or direct change to a more desired condition.

Service Science will continue to support growing collaborations with the NWRS to improve CCPs, work with the U.S. Army to support Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans and support new approaches to improve carbon sequestration and energy efficiency on Service lands.

Robust Data Management and Data Management

Rigorous scientific evidence underpins the Service's management work and provide the basis 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. Service Science buttresses the Service's work to improve all aspects of data management to ensure the quality, reliability, availability, and transparency of the agency's scientific information. Service Science coordinates critical underlying aspects of the Service's work relating to robust data management and science approach as well as scientific integrity policies contributing to science excellence.

Building a Workforce of the Future

Fostering and maintaining science-based conservation excellence relies on the Service and our partners successfully recruiting the next generation of talented natural resource professionals. The program is creating opportunities to connect to a future workforce by working with colleges and universities across the country to broaden the pool of talent who might pursue conservation careers. The program continues

to create opportunities for students from a variety of communities and educational backgrounds to explore careers in natural resources and consider the Service as a future employer. These opportunities include employee-in-residence programs, internships, and project-based learning opportunities. The program also works with college and university faculty and staff to deepen relationships and provide opportunities for connection and mentoring throughout the year.

KEY EXAMPLES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Climate Change Action Program

During fiscal year 2023, Service Science ensured significant progress on all seven CCAP elements. This work prioritized application of improved tools and their effective use by employees and partners, including development of an employee toolkit to guide project development for Nature-Based Solutions, climate change toolkit, and guidance regarding basic climate science and use of projections on decision making and conservation planning. The program also worked with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies on how to integrate climate change into various funding opportunities and state-level plans, and recruited and trained four climate adaptation and resiliency fellows as part of an effort to develop the workforce of the future. Service Science also pursued opportunities to improve Service infrastructure management more by training Service staff to conduct on-site-energy audits and encouraging more energy conservation projects.



Brown bear captures salmon in Alaska. Photo by USFWS

Social Science Expertise and Integration

Service Science provides one third of the Service's social science capacity and coordinates closely with the NWRs Human Dimensions Branch. The program helps lead the integration of social science to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of conservation outcomes. Accomplishments include enhanced collaborative landscape conservation efforts such as the Cascades to Coast Landscape Collaborative, Chesapeake Bay Watershed Investments in Landscape Design, Midwest Landscape Initiative, Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy, and greater coordination and collaboration in grassland and sagebrush ecosystems. The Center for Pollinator Conservation models how social science integration can support innovative approaches to at-risk species conservation, engaging in a multi-phase social network analysis to inform efforts to create, sustain, and strengthen relationships and communication channels across individuals and organizations to increase awareness of, collaboration on, and efficacy of pollinator conservation efforts. In FY 2025, the program will continue leading social science integration and collaboration by integrating social-ecological considerations to amplify the Service's efforts on climate change adaptation, invasive species management, habitat degradation and fragmentation, and voluntary approaches to at-risk species conservation.

Enterprise Data Coordination for Data-driven Conservation

The Science Applications program and the Information Resource and Technology Management program work closely together to coordinate the Service's data management activities through the Enterprise Data Management Team. This cross-programmatic work created a solid foundation for data-driven conservation across the Service through the Service's Public Access Plan, creating and implementing data and metadata standards, and conducting critical requirements analysis necessary to make our data accessible and increase transparency behind the Service's conservation decisions. The programs also work together to facilitate and coordinate with other programs, partners, and the public to tell data success stories demonstrating the connection between quality data and conservation success. Some specific examples include:

- **Nevada Corridor Project:** Collaboration with the Nevada Department of Wildlife to develop an application highlighting restoration projects within a mule deer corridor in northern Nevada. This work will help the Nevada Department of Wildlife prioritize future projects and benefit conservation within this corridor.
- **Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy Atlas:** Service Science developed an ArcGIS Online platform, which includes the Southeast Conservation Blueprint as well as other conservation planning resources, that is a gateway to maps, data, and other resources to inform conservation in the Southeast and Caribbean. This platform allows the user to view, download data layers, and create your own maps. In addition to the Southeast Conservation Blueprint, the work includes underlying natural and cultural resource indicators, a regional connectivity analysis, and other data like sea-level rise, urbanization, protected lands, and more.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will:

- Address science challenges faced by refuges, endangered species, migratory birds, and fish and aquatic resources.
- Enhance the Service's ability to obtain and evaluate scientific information and develop tools needed to support critical natural resource management decisions that are becoming more challenging due to climate change, habitat fragmentation, invasive species, disease threats, and other land use changes.
- This funding will be used to address critical issues such as:
 - Developing information to help conserve priority species with States and other partners before Endangered Species Act listing is a consideration;
 - Developing, improving and integrating, decision tools and models, including risk assessments, for priority terrestrial and aquatic species and ecosystems, to identify actions for species and ecosystem sustainability;
 - Supporting students and graduates of minority serving institutions to encourage their participation in natural resource careers; and,
 - Providing coordination and support for data management and sharing.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Service Science is \$10,628,000 and 15 FTE, a program change of +\$1,569,000 and +4 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Service Science Activities – Climate Science (+\$1,471,000/ +4 FTE) – Service Science will continue to work seamlessly with academic and other DOI science entities to ensure climate science needs are addressed. The program will distill climate research to ensure natural resource managers incorporate relevant science into Service management and conservation decisions. The program will continue work with other Service programs to use the Resist-Accept-Direct framework that incorporates consideration of future climate and social drivers, and develop crucial climate science support tools and communications capacity. The program 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 staff and partners with tangible information about their role in addressing climate change, (3) continue to implement a proactive national climate change communications strategy, (4) publish and update corresponding climate science toolkits for the Service and public use, and (5) coordinate climate change communication efforts with other bureaus and partners, as appropriate.

The Program will also work closely with the NWRS and Fish Hatchery Program to assess the climate vulnerability and risk associated with Service infrastructure and habitat management. Service Science will also 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. The program will continue to provide collaborative conservation project and product data in a form that is discoverable, accessible, interoperable, and re-useable for all users and develop a centralized, secure, metadata file storage system that supports the future data requirements of government and partnerships.

Baseline Capacity (+\$98,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$0.1 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

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General Operations

General Operations

Activity: General Operations

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Change from 2024 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Central Office Operations	(\$000) FTE	31,077 223	31,077 223	+1,360	0 0	+2,935 +6	35,372 229	+4,295 +6
Management and Administration	(\$000) FTE	51,249 668	51,249 668	+3,540	0 0	+4,669 +0	59,458 668	+8,209 +0
Servicewide Bill Paying	(\$000) FTE	46,581 0	46,581 0	+1,592	0 0	+2,146 +0	50,319 0	+3,738 +0
Aviation	(\$000) FTE	3,296 8	3,296 8	+36	0 0	+68 +0	3,400 8	+104 +0
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	(\$000) FTE	7,032 1	7,032 1	+6	0 0	+0 +0	7,038 1	+6 +0
National Conservation Training Center	(\$000) FTE	27,015 103	27,015 103	+462	0 0	+735 +4	28,212 107	+1,197 +4
Total, General Operations	(\$000) FTE	166,250 1,003	166,250 1,003	+6,996	+0 +0	+10,553 +10	183,799 1,013	+17,549 +10

Program Mission

The General Operations Program enables the Service to accomplish its mission by providing management and support across the organization. Primarily, it provides headquarters, regions, and field offices with resources and support services such as human resources, finance, leadership, and information management. Through these functions, the Service carries out its work 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.

Program Elements

Six 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 Management and Administration is the Service's Associate Chief Information Officer (ACIO), who supervises Information Resources and Technology Management (IRTM), including cybersecurity.

Servicewide Bill Paying – Funds bills for DOI services, including Information Technology (IT), communications, and security. Servicewide Bill Paying also funds Workers' Compensation and Unemployment Compensation, and mail printing services.

Aviation Management – 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) – Serves as the official foundation for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It runs a competitive challenge grant program to implement projects that further the conservation and management of fish, wildlife, plants, and other natural resources.

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

	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change from 2024 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Central Office (\$000)	31,077	31,077	+1,360	0	+2,935	35,372	+4,295
Operations FTE	223	223	0	0	+6	229	+6

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Central Office Operations

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Native American Programs Coordination	+300	+2
Diversity Office - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Accessibility	+226	+2
Office of Communications	+224	+1
Regional Directors	+149	+1
Office of the Director	+18	+0
Baseline Capacity	+2,018	
Program Changes	+2,935	+6

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.

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.

Office of Diversity and Inclusive Workforce Management (ODIWM) In support of recently published Executive Orders, ODIWM ensures that the Service’s 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.

Regional Directors (RDs) manage the conservation of our lands through the administration of programs throughout the Service. This includes development of recommendations on national and regional policies, plans, and procedures implemented by nearly 7,000 highly-skilled biologists, maintenance workers, law enforcement officers, and an array of additional talented personnel. RDs advise the Service Director and engage the public and partners by serving as liaisons to State, local, and Tribal governments, as well as civic groups within their respective jurisdictions.

Office of the Director includes the Director, Deputy Director, and staff specialists, and provides policy direction and support for program and management activities of the Service.

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.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will:

- 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; implement equal employment opportunity laws and directives; and support implementation of the Service's Diversity and Inclusion Implementation Plan.
- Coordinate Service government-to-government consultation with Native American Tribes.
- Develop and provide the tools necessary for employees to successfully uphold our Federal Indian Trust responsibilities.
- 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.

Proposed Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Central Office Operations is \$35,372,000 and 229 FTE, a program change of +\$2,935,000 and +6 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Native American Coordination Office (+\$300,000/ +2 FTE) – The Service will hire two full-time employees to expand outreach and deepen partnerships with Tribes and 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 to enhance government-to-government interactions with Tribes. Here, the focus will be on enhancing the relationships between the Service, Tribes, and Tribal organizations to cultivate a community where the Service can exchange information with Tribes and Tribal organizations, and seek opportunities to leverage their additional knowledge and capacity.

Diversity Office - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (+\$226,000/ +2 FTE) – The budget includes additional funding 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 (+\$224,000/ +1 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. This increase will accelerate the Service’s ongoing transition to digital communications, including improving the Service’s web presence.

Regional Directors Offices (+\$149,000/ +1 FTE) – This increase will provide resources to cover the additional costs of leading a workforce across the Service’s Pacific, Midwest, Southeast, Northeast, Mountain-Prairie, and Alaska regions. The additional FTE will augment the ability of the Regional Directors to provide leadership and technical expertise to accomplish mission priorities and goals and address challenges presented by increasing threats to Service resources from climate change and other factors.

Office of the Director (+\$18,000/ +0 FTE) – This increase will partially offset cost increases relating to supporting the Director’s office in providing policy direction and support for program and management activities of the Service.

Baseline Capacity (+\$2,018,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$2.0 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Activity: General Operations

Subactivity: Management and Administration

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Change from 2024 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Management and Administration	(\$000)	51,249	51,249	+3,540	+0	+4,669	59,458	+8,209
	FTE	668	668	0	+0	+0	668	+0

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Management and Administration

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Information Resources and Technology Management	-805	+0
Customer Experience Strategy Support	+500	+0
Baseline Capacity	+4,974	
Program Changes	+4,669	+0

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 \$3.9+ billion budget.
- *Acquisition Management*, which includes contracting, 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.
- *Safety*, which ensures safety and occupational health and processes workers compensation and tort claims.

Information Resources and Technology Management (IRTM)

The Service’s Assistant Director for IRTM (AD-IRTM) is responsible for partnering with Service programs to ensure technology requirements of the FWS conservation program are met. To that end, IRTM is responsible for the development of policy and Service-wide management and technology guidance, 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 Officer (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).

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will:

- Provide human resources support.
- Provide safety and occupational health guidance and support.
- Coordinate budget formulation, presentation, and execution.
- Provide finance, acquisition, and contract 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.
- Strengthen cybersecurity operations, risk management, and compliance.

Proposed Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Management and Administration is \$59,458,000 and 668 FTE, a program change of +\$4,669,000 and +0 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Customer Experience Strategy Support (+500,000/+0 FTE) – This increase would be for the Customer Experience (CX) strategy within the Service and ongoing efforts to expand the use of digital sites and activity passes to cover additional National Wildlife Refuges as articulated in the FWS CX Action Plan. These funds will support FWS entering into interagency agreements as a prioritized customer of GSA's Technology Transformation Service (TTS) which includes Digital Corps Fellows, Presidential Innovation Fellows, Centers of Excellence, 18F, and other services (such as RFP development support) to support teams who will provide services to High Impact Service Provider (HISPs) to drive designated service improvement and capacity building efforts.

Information Resources and Technology Management (-\$805,000/ +0 FTE) – The budget decrease will have a small impact on the Service's ability to provide up-to-date servers, specialized software, network connectivity, fiber optics, switches, and cybersecurity tools to support employees.

Baseline Capacity (+\$4,974,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service's mission. The budget includes \$5.0 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Activity: General Operations

Subactivity: Servicewide Bill Paying

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change from 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Servicewide (\$000)		46,581	46,581	+1,592	0	+2,146	50,319	+3,738
Bill Paying FTE		0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Servicewide Bill Paying

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Communications, Information Technology and Security	-357	+0
Baseline Capacity	+2,503	
Program Changes	+2,146	+0

Program Overview

Servicewide Bill Paying processes bills received by the Service for charges from 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 category 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 its bureaus and offices and to other customers. The budget request includes funding for the Service’s portion of the WCF bill.

Servicewide Workers’ Compensation and Unemployment Compensation Costs

Workers’ compensation covers costs associated with accidental on-duty injuries and deaths of employees. 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 the 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.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will:

- Provide IT leadership and resources 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

The 2025 budget request for Servicewide Bill Paying is \$50,319,000 and 0 FTE, a program change of +\$2,146,000 and +0 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Communications, Information Technology and Security (-\$357,000 / -0 FTE) – This change is a result of Information Technology adjustments across multiple budgetary baselines.

Baseline Capacity (+\$2,503,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service's mission. The budget includes \$2.5 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Activity: General Operations
Subactivity: Aviation Management

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Change from 2024 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Aviation Management	(\$000)	3,296	3,296	+36	0	+68	3,400	+104
	FTE	8	8	0	0	0	8	0

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Aviation

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Aviation Management	+4	0
Baseline Capacity	+64	
Program Changes	+68	+0

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 office, previously managed within the Migratory Bird program. The Assistant Director of the Migratory Bird Program serves as the agency’s Aviation Executive overseeing this office and represents the Service as a voting member of the DOI’s Executive Aviation Committee, which is responsible for developing aviation policy. Additionally, the office 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 National Aviation Management office 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.

Celebrating Safety in Flight: 8 Years and Counting!

In 2023, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) marked eight consecutive years without an aircraft accident, a testament to our commitment to safety and dedication to excellence. Based in Boise, Idaho, the National Aviation Management office supports the Service’s aviation enterprise through safety management and planning, training, and policy development. The Service’s fleet of 44 airplanes, 2 helicopters, and 53 Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) are used by a diverse range of pilots – from biologist pilots surveying wildlife to law enforcement pilots ensuring our public lands safety to refuge pilots monitoring habitats. Their combined efforts span the Nation from Alaska to Maine, supporting everything from wildlife management to emergency disaster response. A team of operational and technical subject matter experts supports the pilots, which includes two Regional Aviation Compliance specialists. This team ensures aircraft accident prevention and safety programs are well-coordinated with the Department of Interior’s Office of Aviation Services to achieve smooth program operation. This 8-year milestone reflects team unity, adaptability, and collective expertise. It is a testament to all involved with the aviation team, the Service’s dedicated pilots, and those who continue to ensure our missions are carried out with precision and safety.



*Members of the Service's aviation community participate in the 2023 AirVenture Convention.
Photo Credit: Rosalie Wetzel/USFWS*

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will support the Service's continued efforts to improve aviation safety, training for pilots and aerial observers, and 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.

Proposed Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Aviation is \$3,400,000 and 8 FTE, a program change of +\$68,000 and +0 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Aviation Management (+\$4,000 / +0 FTE) – The budget increase will support the Service's continued efforts to improve aviation safety and training for pilots and aerial observers.

Baseline Capacity (+\$64,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service's mission. The budget includes \$64,000 in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Activity: General Operations

Subactivity: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change from 2024 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	7,032	7,032	+6	0	+0	7,038	+0
(\$000)							
FTE	1	1	0	0	0	1	0

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	-10	0
Baseline Capacity	+10	
Program Changes	+0	0

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.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 Budget will:

- 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; and
- Provide funding to State and Tribal agencies to support the America the Beautiful Initiative.

Proposed Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is \$7,038,000 and 1 FTE, a program change of +\$0 and 0 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (-\$10,000/ +0 FTE) – NFWF annually receives more grant applications that have important conservation value than current award levels can fund. Program funding will continue NFWF’s reach in communities around the country, assist grant recipients with environmental required compliance costs, and leverage resources from corporations, foundations, and conservation partners. This will result in outcome-focused investments developed in partnership with the Service.

Baseline Capacity (+\$10,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$10,000 in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Activity: General Operations
Subactivity: National Conservation Training Center

	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change from 2024 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
National Conservation Training Center (\$000)	27,015	27,015	+462	0	+735	28,212	+1,197
FTE	103	103	0	0	+4	107	+4

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for National Conservation Training Center

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
NCTC Annual Maintenance	+801	+4
NCTC Operations	-956	+0
Baseline Capacity	+890	
Program Changes	+735	+4

Program Overview

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 Non-Governmental Organization (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.

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.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will:

- Provide 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.
- Advance 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).
- Align curricula with the Administration's priority to advance racial equity by providing leadership development and training that supports cultural competence, equity, and continual learning for all.

Proposed Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for the National Conservation Training Center is \$28,212,000 and 107 FTE, a program change of +\$735,000 and +4 FTE from the 2024 annualized CR.

Annual Maintenance (+\$801,000/ +4 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 Operations (-\$956,000/ +0 FTE) – This funding level will allow the Service to continue to provide training opportunities to internal as well as external partner audiences. NCTC will maintain the minimum infrastructure necessary to implement core strategic training partnerships for youth corps and related programs such as the Directorate Fellowship Program and Tribal collaboration and Tribal training programs. Staffing, direct partnership support, training and systems for reporting and tracking will be executed at a reduced level. The DFP and NYCALC will leverage existing partnerships and be coordinated at the highest level to build communities by providing participants with livable wage positions, leadership training, and practice targeted recruitment strategies to advance racial equality to build the next generation of conservation stewards.

Baseline Capacity (+\$890,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service's mission. The budget includes \$0.9 million in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

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; \$32,165,000, 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.

Note.--A full-year 2024 appropriation for this account was not enacted at the time the Budget was prepared; therefore, the Budget assumes this account is operating under the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2024 and Other Extensions Act (Division A of Public Law 118–15, as amended). The amounts included for 2024 reflect the annualized level provided by the continuing resolution.

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 (January 2021). 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.

Executive Order 14057, Catalyzing Clean Energy Industries and Jobs Through Federal Sustainability (May 2018). Directs Federal Agencies to achieve 100 percent carbon pollution-free electricity by 2030, including 50 percent on a 24/7 basis; reach 100 percent zero-emission vehicle acquisition by 2035, including 100 percent light-duty acquisitions by 2027; and have climate resilient infrastructure and operations.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Construction
Justification of Fixed Costs Changes**
(Dollars In Thousands)

Fixed Cost Element	2024 Annualized CR Total or Change	2024 Annualized CR to 2025 Request Change	Description
Change in Number of Paid Days	+34	0	Total paid days for FY 2025 is 261 (2088 hours) which is the same number of days as FY 2024.
Pay Raise	+432	+169	The President's Budget for 2025 includes one quarter (October-December 2024) of the 5.2% pay raise for 2024 and three quarters (January-September 2025) of the estimated 2.0% pay raise for 2025.
FERS Employer Contribution Increase	0	0	The estimates do not reflect increases to the employer contribution for FERS or Law Enforcement FERS for FY 2025.
Departmental Working Capital Fund (WCF)	0	0	The estimates reflect final decisions of the Working Capital Fund Consortium on the FY 2025 Working Capital Fund Central Bill.
Account Total Fixed Cost	+466	+169	

Appropriation: Construction

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Changes from 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Nationwide Engineering Services	(\$000) FTE	5,821 34	5,821 34	+169 0	0 0	+701 +0	6,691 34	+870 +0
Dam, Bridge, and Seismic Safety	(\$000)	2,427	2,427	0	0	0	2,427	+0
Construction Projects	(\$000) FTE	21,656 0	21,656 0	0 0	0 0	+1,391 +1	23,047 1	+1,391 +1
Total, Construction w/o Supplemental	(\$000) FTE	29,904 34	29,904 34	+169 0	0 0	+2,092 +1	32,165 35	+2,261 +1
Disaster Relief Act, 2023 P.L. 117-328	(\$000) FTE	247,000 18	0 18	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 18	0 0
Total, Construction w/ Supplemental	(\$000) FTE	276,904 52	29,904 52	+169 0	0 0	+2,092 +1	32,165 53	+2,261 +1

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 570 National Wildlife Refuges, 38 Wetland Management Districts, 40 Conservation areas, seven National Monuments, 71 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 the 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

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 effort is primarily 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 engineering 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 reallocate or reprogram unspent balances as stated in the reprogramming guidance for unforeseen reconstruction, replacement, or repair of facilities or equipment damaged or destroyed by storms, floods, fires, and similarly unanticipated events. These investments are critical to fully support climate resiliency, protect federal lands and neighboring communities, and implement life-cycle management to maximize the return on investment and maintain infrastructure in good condition.

Appropriation: Construction
Activity: Nationwide Engineering Services

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Budget Request	Change from 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Core Engineering Services	(\$000)	5,134	5,134	+169	0	+701	6,004	+870
	FTE	34	34			+0	34	+0
Waste Prevention and Recycling	(\$000)	63	63	0	0	+0	63	+0
Environmental Compliance	(\$000)	624	624	0	0	+0	624	+0
Total, Nationwide Engineering Services	(\$000)	5,821	5,821	+169	0	+701	6,691	+870
	FTE	34	34	0	0	+0	34	+0

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Nationwide Engineering Services

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Core Engineering Services	+701	0
Program Changes	+701	0

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 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, and 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 supports 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 percent of the Current Replacement Value (CRV) are required to meet the Administration’s priorities.

Justification of Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for the Nationwide Engineering Services activity is \$6,691,000 and 34 FTE, a program change of +\$701,000 and +0 FTE from the 2024 CR.

Core Engineering Services (+\$387,000/ +0 FTE) – This increase enhances the Service’s ability to provide technical expertise and assistance for projects across the entire infrastructure portfolio. This funding supports safe, welcoming, and accessible facilities for staff and visitors. This funding also support clean energy projects, remediation of abandoned mines and wells, and critical water infrastructure improvements. This increase enables the Service to strengthen its ability to support proactive maintenance of its assets through investments in performance-based requirements, design templates, and management tools that evaluate investments and remove nonessential costs.

Baseline Capacity (+\$314,000/ +0 FTE) – The 2025 budget includes important investments in programs needed to help strengthen America and be more competitive as the world continues to change. These investments include the funding needed to maintain a strong, talented workforce and the must pay requirements needed to continue to fulfill the Service’s mission. The budget includes \$314,000 in this Subactivity which reflects the incremental amount needed to cover fixed costs associated with mission operations in FY 2024. This request in combination with the FY 2025 fixed costs amounts will allow the program to meet must pay requirements without impacting program activities.

Appropriation: Construction
Activity: Dam, Bridge, and Seismic Safety

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change from 2024 (+/-)
				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
Total, Dam, Bridge, and Seismic Safety	(\$000)	2,427	2,427	0	0	0	2,427	0
	FTE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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 15 high hazard dams, part of the Service’s inventory of over 300 dams. Located on refuges and hatcheries for the purpose of resource or facility management, these dams provide life-sustaining water resources to the American public in all regions of the United States. They are an extremely important part of this Nation’s infrastructure serving several functions at once by providing vital benefits such as community recreation, habitat, resiliency for flood control and flood risk reduction, drought mitigation, irrigation, wetland creation, water supply for hatcheries, nesting habitat for waterfowl, provide breeding grounds, prevent the spread of invasive species, and support recreational fishing. Continued and proportionate funding allows us to support critical activities to ensure the Service’s existing portfolio of dams are resilient, maintained, identified for rehabilitation, and properly operated to protect human life, property, the environment, and the valuable natural resources on Service lands. In FY 2023, the Service conducted four formal Safety Evaluation of Existing Dams (SEED) inspections, 11 annual inspections of high hazard dams, 4 Emergency Action Plan functional exercises, 28 low hazard dam inspections, and two special inspections with contracted architectural and engineering (A&E) firms.

In FY 2025 the Service will use comprehensive, risk-informed reviews of high hazard potential dams to appropriately assess dam safety risks in accordance with requirements within the Federal Guidelines for Dam Safety, Departmental Manual, and current state of practice within the industry. One comprehensive review is scheduled to begin in FY 2024 and completed in FY 2025. The Service plans to complete one comprehensive review per year until all high hazard dams have a base level completed. Reviews of completed comprehensive reviews that are older than 10 years are planned and subject to funding availability.



Significant rain event at Lake Jed Johnson Dam, Wichita Mountain Wildlife Refuge, Oklahoma, October 2023.

Emergency Action Plans for high and significant hazard potential dams provide site-specific guidance for on-site detection and mitigation of conditions that may cause dam failures, incidents or uncontrolled reservoir releases, and communication protocols for notifying first responders and evacuating downstream populations. Routine Safety Evaluation of Existing Dams (SEED) inspections identify dam deficiencies at the earliest stages so that when addressed, the Service may stave off more serious/critical repairs, consequences, or interventions, reducing life cycle costs, ensuring critical infrastructure resiliency, and avoid increasing the maintenance backlog.

Emergency Management and First Responders participating in an Emergency Action Plan Functional Exercise at Umbarger



Dam, Buffalo Lake NWR, Texas.

SEED inspections include performing and reassessing hazard classifications, which are based upon estimates of loss of life, property and environmental damage should a dam fail. This program element also funds new and additional engineering analyses of the response and safety impacts for a dam because of increased magnitude of flood risks and earthquake predictions as updated within the dam safety community of practice and professional standards of care. The Service uses the hazard classification, individual risk assessments, risk-informed decision making, and the overall inspection condition of the dam to identify and prioritize dam repair and rehabilitation projects.



Comanche Dam during and after rehabilitation construction, Wichita Mountain Wildlife Refuge, Oklahoma.

Management of major rehabilitation and construction work is accomplished under the supervision of the Service's Dam Safety Officer with the Dam Safety Designated Official. Consistent with practice from past years, unobligated funds from the dam safety project may be used to address ongoing dam safety and security needs (e.g., special inspections, 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 formal inspection, analyses and rehabilitation of low hazard dams are the lowest priority within the managed portfolio of dams based on the risk associated with failure. Formal inspections are recommended every five years in accordance with FEMA P-93, Federal Guidelines for Dam Safety, and 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 2024, the Bridge Safety Program will pursue completion of bridge inspections required by law and Service policy. If funding shortfalls limit the number of bridge inspections that can be scheduled, bridges will be prioritized for inspection in the following order: scour critical and non-redundant steel tension member (NSTM) bridges, bridges with past-due inspections, 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. Program personnel use bridge inspection findings to identify scour critical bridges. In FY 2024, Bridge Safety Program funds will be used to develop Plans of Action (POA) for each scour critical bridge. POAs provide mitigation guidance to field personnel who are responsible for the safe operation of scour critical bridges and provide monitoring requirements for the structure during flooding events.

SCOUR CRITICAL BRIDGE - PLAN OF ACTION			
1. GENERAL INFORMATION			
Structure number: 43670-50312	City, County, State: Cache Township, Monroe County, Arkansas	Waterway: East Bayou	
Structure name: East Bayou	State highway or facility carried: Red Cat Road	Owner: US Fish & Wildlife Service	
Year built: 2003	Year rebuilt: _____	Bridge replacement plans (if scheduled): _____	
Structure type: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bridge		Anticipated opening date: _____	
Structure size and description: 105 ft long x 14.2 ft wide bridge with steel stringers and open grid deck on stacked precast concrete beams acting as abutments and pier.			
Foundations: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Known, type: Concrete sill on soil Depth: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown			
Subsurface soil information (check all that apply): <input type="checkbox"/> Non-cohesive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cohesive <input type="checkbox"/> Rock			
Bridge ADT: 5	Year ADT: 2023	% Trucks: _____	
Does the bridge provide service to emergency facilities and/or an evacuation route (Y/N)? N If so, describe: _____			
2. RESPONSIBILITY FOR POA			

Scour Screening and Scour Critical Bridge Plan of Action

FY 2024 program funds will also be used to complete hands-on, in-depth inspection of bridges with non-redundant steel tension members. These structures require higher levels of scrutiny than other bridge structures, and special techniques and equipment are often required for inspection.

SEH Nonredundant Steel Tension Member Inspection Procedures
Tensas River NWR 43690-00025 - Iron

Bridge Identification Description
Region: 4
System Name: TENSAS RIVER NWR
FWS Bridge Number: 43690-00025 (AR# 000043/50 00025)
Name: Iron

DESCRIPTION: The bridge consists of 3 spans: the 2 end spans are each 18 feet - 4 inches long and consist of 6 W-shaped stringers and 2 channel stringers. The main span consists of a 78 foot - 11 inches long steel through truss with timber deck and steel stringers on steel floor beams. The ends of the trusses are supported by concrete bents. The abutments are concrete caps on timber piles. Bridge cannot safely carry legal loads; review latest inspection report for bridge load limitations. It should be posted for load capacity of 6 tons, 12 tons, & 12 tons for AASHTO truck types 3, 3S, & 3K, or 6 tons for a single load limit sign. Weight 1 and 6 Tons signs are in place.

Nonredundant Steel Tension Members and Details
The superstructure of the main span of the iron bridge consists of two steel trusses and therefore the bridge does not have load path redundancy, qualifying it for nonredundant steel tension member inspection.

Nonredundant Steel Tension Members: The bridge has steel floor beams which are spaced at greater than 14 feet which makes them redundant steel members. The NSTM includes the lower chord of the trusses, diagonal members, U1S1, U1S3, U1S7, and U1S9, vertical members U1S1 and U1S4, and pin at the ends of the eye bars. These are shown on the attached sketch.

Fatigue Probe Details: Below is a table of the fatigue probe details and their respective AASHTO Fatigue Category from AASHTO 18FD Bridge Design Specifications, 6th Edition (including 2009 Interim Revisions). They are shown on the attached sketch.

Page 1 of 4 Updated November 2023 SEH




Hands-On Inspection of NSTM of the Iron Bridge at Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge, Louisiana

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. In FY 2023, the Service inspected and analyzed six buildings. Of those inspections, three were Tier 1 Analysis Reports and the remaining three provided full Seismic Evaluation Reports with preliminary strengthening measure costs that summed to over one million dollars. In FY 2025, the Service plans to continue to provide several full Seismic Evaluation Reports to the Refuges and Hatcheries to plan accordingly for their construction retrofit budgets.

Rapid Visual Screening of Buildings for Potential Seismic Hazards
 FEMA P-154 Data Collection Form

Level 1
MODERATE Seismicity



Address: 74135 Rreview Lane
 Irrigon, Oregon Zip: 97844

Other Identifiers: Irrigon Fish Hatchery

Building Name: Hatchery Building

Use: Hatchery Office

Latitude: 45.909302 Longitude: -119.545453

Sr: 0.424g Sr: 0.161g

Screeners(s): V. Winn Date/Time: 04-18-2022

No. Stories: Above Grade: 1 Below Grade: 0 Year Built: 1986 EST

Total Floor Area (sq. ft.): 11500 sf Code Year: 1982 UBC

Additions: None Yes, Year(s) Built

Occupancy: Assembly Commercial Emer. Services Historic Shelter
 Educational Exhibition Government Industrial Institutional Laboratory Library Medical Office Other Performance Religious Retail Residential Sports Utility Warehouse Residential Other

Soil Type: A B C D E F DNK
 Hard Avg Dense Stiff Soft Poor # DNK assume Type D
 Rock Rock Soil Soil Soil Soil

Geologic Hazards: Liquefaction: Yes No DNK Landslide: Yes No DNK Surf. Rupt.: Yes No DNK

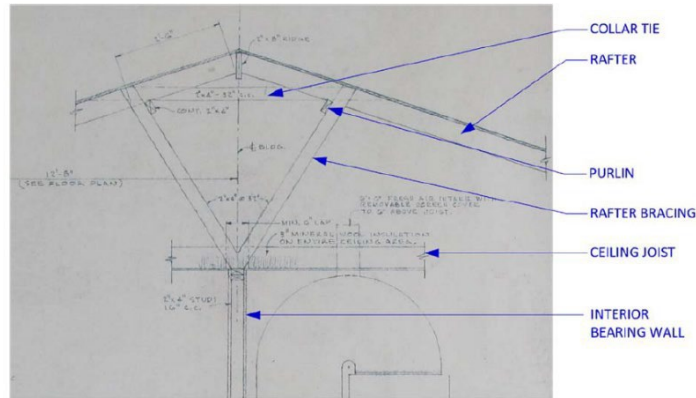
Adjacency: Pounding Falling Hazards from Taller Adjacent Building

Irregularities: Vertical (type/severity) Plan (type)

Exterior Falling Hazards: Unbraced Chimneys Heavy Cladding or Heavy Veneer Parapets Appendages Other

COMMENTS:
 Reinforced masonry bearing wall structure with a flexible roof diaphragm. Roof is glulam girders that span the width of the building with wood roof joists and a fully blocked plywood sheathed diaphragm.

Rapid Visual Screening at Irrigon Fish Hatchery Building



Justification of Program Changes

The 2025 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 2025 relative to the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Appropriation: Construction
Activity: Line-Item Construction

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Budget Request	Change from 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Line-Item Construction Projects	(\$000)	21,656	21,656	0	0	-701	20,955	-701
Zero-Emission Vehicle Infrastructure	(\$000)	0	0	0	0	+2,092 +1	2,092 1	+2,092 +1
Total, Construction projects	(\$000) FTE	21,656 34	21,656 34	0 0	0 0	+1,391 +1	23,047 35	+1,391 +1

Summary of 2025 Program Changes for Line-Item Construction

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Line-item Construction	-701	0
Zero-Emission Vehicle Infrastructure	+2,092	+1
Program Changes	+1,391	+1

Program Overview

The Service has committed to completing Line-Item Construction funded projects in a timely manner. In FY 2023, several long-standing projects were completed after receiving the final phases of construction funding. 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. For example, the Minnesota Valley NWR received construction funds to complete an addition to their Visitor Center and Administration building, allowing the Minnesota and Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office to co-locate, facilitating the removal of their dilapidated former headquarters. This project served to combine resources, reduce the footprint and reduce the deferred maintenance backlog with the removal of the former headquarters. For more details on deferred maintenance please see the Service’s *National Wildlife Refuge System* chapter.

The requested funding for maintenance balances the operational needs across the Service, ensuring that the highest priority mission assets are receiving lifecycle investments, while also ensuring that other critical mission delivery occurs. At the requested funding level for maintenance, inclusive of all sources, the Service estimates that it will continue to accrue deferred maintenance and repairs in some assets, while addressing critical maintenance requirements on other assets.



The Ecological Services addition to the MN Valley NWR, during construction and after completion.

Makah NFH completed their diversion dam and fish barrier replacement project in FY 2023. The diversion dam was severely deteriorated, becoming unsafe to maintain by hatchery staff. The former timber dam was replaced by a stronger concrete structure. The fish barrier and fish ladder channel entrance had 20 years of silt and debris removed and is now armored with rip rap, allowing better access for the returning adult Chinook. This improved access will allow greater success for egg collection efforts and in turn, meet tribal stocking commitments.



The Makah NFH fish weir before repairs.



The Makah NFH fish weir after repairs.

Proposed Program Changes

Line-Item Construction (-\$701,000/+0 FTE)

The Service is requesting a total of \$20,955,000 in the FY 2025 President’s Budget for Construction funding. This funding request will allow the Service to reduce our building footprint and associated energy costs via the completion of two co-location projects; the relocation of a laboratory out of a coastal flood area to a more resilient location and provide better facilities for rearing species entrusted to us for the benefit of the American people. A list of the Line-Item projects for FY 2025 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 2025-2029 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 the Interior and Service guidance and priorities.

Zero Emission Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (+\$2,092,000/ +1 FTE)

The request for the Service includes \$2,092,000 in the Line-Item Construction Projects activity to support vehicle fleet lifecycle replacement, fleet requirements analysis, charging infrastructure planning and deployment, and fleet capabilities assessments. Across Interior, the 2025 request includes \$13 million for this purpose. This funding will continue Interior's efforts to right-size its fleet and replace vehicles with more efficient, mission capable, zero emissions vehicles (ZEV) at the right locations and with the right vehicle mix to deliver Interior's missions. The Service's fleet planning efforts will continue to ensure ZEVs are integrated into the overall fleet plan, prioritizing locations and appropriate missions for deployment of these vehicles. Additionally, this funding will assist the Service with adapting electric vehicle support equipment planning and deployment to address installation requirements which vary by geographic region. Finally, this funding provides the Service with the necessary support to coordinate fleet lifecycle replacement with infrastructure deployment.

2025 Construction Project Listing by Program					
DOI Rank Score	Interior Region	Station	State	Project Title/Description	Request (\$000)
National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS)					
70	Great Lakes	Sherburne NWR	MN	Office and Visitor Center Construction Phase II of II	6,981
Subtotal, NWRS					6,981
National Fish Hatchery System (NFHS)					
90	Missouri Basin	Baldhill Dam NFH	ND	Rehabilitate Ponds, Kettles, and Drainage (Ponds 1 to 20) Phase I of II	3,619
90	South Atlantic- Gulf	Bears Bluff NFH	SC	Replace and Relocate Laboratory Phase III of III Additional Funding	1,500
75	North Atlantic-Appalachian	Harrison Lake NFH	VA	Construct Mussel Rearing Building – Additional Funding	400
55	Arkansas-Rio Grande-Texas-Gulf	San Marcos FTC	TX	Colocation of Service Staff (ES, LE, FAC) at San Marcos Aquatic Resources Center	5,500
55	Great Lakes	Jordan River NFH	MI	Construct 5-Bay Vehicle Storage Building	850
55	Great Lakes	Pendills Creek NFH	MI	Construct 5-Bay Vehicle Storage Building	850
Subtotal, NFHS					12,719
Other					
70	Nationwide	Dam Safety Program	N/A	Evaluations of Newly Acquired and Existing Dam Deficiencies for Rehabilitation - Phase II of VI	350
70	Nationwide	Information Resources & Technology Management	N/A	Perform Nationwide Radio Site Safety Remediation Phase I of IV	400
60	Nationwide	Energy Management Program	N/A	Administer the National Energy Management Program	255
60	Nationwide	Information Resources & Technology Management	N/A	Perform Nationwide Radio Tower Safety Investigations Phase VII of VIII	250
Subtotal, Other					1,255
TOTAL, CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS					\$20,955

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Project Data Sheet**

Total Project Score/Ranking: 90
 Planned Funding FY 2025: \$ 3,619,000
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

Project Identification

Project Title: Rehabilitate Ponds, Kettles, and Drainage (Ponds 1 to 20) Phase I of II
 Project Number: 2020334424
 Unit/Facility Name: Baldhill Dam National Fish Hatchery
 Region/Area/District: Missouri Basin
 Congressional District: AL
 State: ND

Project Justification

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id#	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
40710400	10027108	WATER DIS PROD, REARING PONDS WATER SUPPLY/DRAIN	100	0.8

Project Description:

Rehabilitate the Rearing Ponds Water Supply/Drain Distribution Lines servicing Ponds 1-20. Constructed in 1951, the concrete kettles are located within the ponds at one end, integrated within the levee. These kettles perform two functions, pond drainage and fish collection for distribution. Currently the kettles, drain lines, and supply lines are settling due to water infiltrating the soil via gaps in the pond liners and deterioration. The settlement of the kettles also affects the adjoining drain lines. These drain lines will be replaced as a part of the project. Deficiency identified during the 2017 CCA via INCA# 2017300982.

Phases BEGIN PHASE INFO: Phase 1 [c]: Plan Year:2025, Plan Cost:\$ 3,619,000 Phase 2 [c]: Plan Year:2026, Plan Cost:\$ 431,000 END PHASE INFO

This phase of the project is expected to address \$3,619,000 in DM&R costs for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Scope of Benefits (SB):

Baldhill Dam National Fish Hatchery (NFH) is part of the Valley City NFH. The Baldhill Unit consists of 20 earthen ponds totaling 15.2 surface acres of extensive fish culture as well as an intensive fish production building designed for egg incubation, early life stage rearing of native and endangered fish and freshwater mussel propagation. Valley City NFH along with the Baldhill Dam Rearing Unit plays an important role in providing quality fishing opportunities throughout the Great Plains Region and in restoring Lake Sturgeon and Freshwater Mussel populations within the Hudson Bay Drainage. This project will ensure that the water supply and drainage is strategically managed for fish production.

Investment Strategy (IS):

This project will significantly change the O&M costs and prevent more expensive repairs or catastrophic failure with further deterioration.

Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):

Failure to complete this project would allow the kettles to continue settling and vital production water to escape out of the degrading supply and drainage pipes. This water infiltration decreases the available water for production and promotes erosion, which compounds the issue. Over time the kettles and drain lines will fail, ultimately causing the ponds to fail and/or water loss. Failure in these structures ensures mission failure by losing fish production, maintenance time, and maintenance money.

Ranking Categories:

Category	Percent	Score
FCI Rating:	N/A	0.8
API Rating:	N/A	100
API/FCI Score:	(20%)	20
SB Score:	(40%)	40
IS Score:	(20%)	20
CFA Score:	(20%)	10
Total Score:	(100%)	90

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):

Activity	Dollars in thousands	Percent
Maintenance/Repair Work :	\$ 0	0
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$ 3,619	100
Divestiture Work:	\$ 0	0
Total:	\$ 3,619	100

Project Funding History (entire project):

History	Dollars in thousands
Funded to Date:	\$ 0
FY 2025 CONSTRUCT Funding (this PDS):	\$ 3,619
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$ 431
Total:	\$ 4,050

Class of Estimate: A B C D C

Estimate Escalated to FY:

Planning and Design Funds:

Planning Funds Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0
 Design Funds Received Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0

* These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated for the FY 2025 budget on this project data sheet.

Major Milestones

Construction Award/Start

- Scheduled:
- Actual: TBD

Project Complete

- Scheduled:
- Actual: TBD

Project Data Sheet

Prepared/Last Updated: 05/23

DOI Approved: No

Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$

Current: \$3,163

Projected: \$1,000

Net Change: -\$2,163

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Project Data Sheet**

Total Project Score/Ranking: 90
 Planned Funding FY 2025: \$ 1,500,000
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

Project Identification

Project Title: Replace and Relocate Laboratory Phase III of III Additional Funding
 Project Number: 2020335048
 Unit/Facility Name: Bears Bluff National Fish Hatchery
 Region/Area/District: South Atlantic-Gulf
 Congressional District: 06
 State: SC

Project Justification

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id#	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
35740100	10014324	BLDG LAB, LABORATORY & DORMITORY (IQMIS #2)	100	0.87

Project Description:

Replace and relocate 3,432 sqft storm damaged fish laboratory to higher elevation to avoid loss of irreplaceable scientific samples and expensive lab equipment. The 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. The walls are already substantially cracked from settlement and other environmental forces such as hurricanes and the building is energy inefficient. Delays in funding and work beginning have led to increased costs for the project overall, from supplies to labor.

Project Need/Benefit:

Replacement of this building, which shows signs of earth shifting, will facilitate meeting station goals of endangered species research and recovery by providing a safe, appropriately designed laboratory space. Additional benefits will include improved energy efficiency as the current building is energy inefficient with limited options for substantially improving energy conservation.

BEGIN PHASE INFO WO# 04135407: Phase 1&2 [p]: Plan Year:2024, Plan Cost:\$ 2,404,000 WO# 2020335048: Phase 3 [cc]: Plan Year:2025, Plan Cost:\$ 1,500,000 END PHASE INFO

This phase of the project is expected to address \$1,000,000 in DM&R costs for the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Scope of Benefits (SB):

This project will make a significant contribution to reducing the FCI of National Fish Hatchery System mission critical water management assets. It will correct the deferred maintenance for this asset and ensure appropriate science can be conducted to support recovery and restoration activities for Atlantic coast species.

Investment Strategy (IS):

The replacement of the laboratory building will reduce current ongoing corrective maintenance needs and future issues from storms in the coastal location. While the new asset is not expected to have a major reduced overall O&M, 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. Exposure to salt water will continue to greatly deteriorate building components. This building exhibits seismic impacts as outer walls show cracks and separation in the cinder blocks. This building serves as the only safe escape on station during severe weather events.

Ranking Categories:

Category	Percent	Score
FCI Rating:	N/A	0.87
API Rating:	N/A	100
API/FCI Score:	(20%)	20
SB Score:	(40%)	40
IS Score:	(20%)	20
CFA Score:	(20%)	10
Total Score:	(100%)	90

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):

Activity	Dollars in thousands	Percent
Maintenance/Repair Work :	\$ 0	0
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$ 1,500	100
Divestiture Work:	\$ 0	0
Total:	\$ 1,500	100

Project Funding History (entire project):

History	Dollars in thousands
Funded to Date:	\$ 2,404
FY 2025 CONSTRUCT Funding (this PDS):	\$ 1,500
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$ 0
Total:	\$ 3,904

Class of Estimate: A B C D C

Estimate Escalated to FY:

Planning and Design Funds:

Planning Funds Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0
 Design Funds Received Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0

* These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated for the FY 2025 budget on this project data sheet.

Major Milestones

Construction Award/Start

- Scheduled:
- Actual: TBD

Project Complete

- Scheduled:
- Actual: TBD

Project Data Sheet

Prepared/Last Updated: 05/23

DOI Approved: No

Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$

Current: \$1,630
 Projected: \$1,630
 Net Change: \$0

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Project Data Sheet**

Total Project Score/Ranking: 75
 Planned Funding FY 2025: \$ 400,000
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

Project Identification

Project Title: Construct Mussel Rearing Building - Additional Funding
 Project Number: 2023525244
 Unit/Facility Name: Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery
 Region/Area/District: North Atlantic-Appalachian
 Congressional District: 04
 State: VA

Project Justification

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id#	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
	51210	Harrison Lake NFH	100	0.87

Project Description:

Additional funding to combine with 2020 Construction project of same name. Project was designed and advertised, but funding was short of required amount to make award. This additional funding will allow the project to proceed.

Construction of a 1,500 square foot, pre-engineered mussel rearing building with trench drains, plus connection to existing, water delivery, drains, and electrical is required to meet the mission of the Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery. The station’s cooperative, interagency freshwater mussel program has grown to become of regional importance in addressing culture needs for imperiled mussels endemic to Atlantic Slope rivers, including Federally endangered species, those expected to be Federally-listed soon, and others that are declining and of concern to state partners. The station is set to receive long-term funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (2017-2020) and Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration (2018-2028) to continue its technology development work and subsequently apply those technologies for large-scale production and release of tagged sub-adult mussels for recovery and restoration actions. Without the construction of the requested culture building, the station lacks the space, specialized propagation infrastructure, and the rearing systems needed to achieve stocking targets for upcoming interagency conservation actions.

This phase of the project is not expected to further address DM&R costs for the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Scope of Benefits (SB):

Completion of the project allows for stocking a wide array of imperiled mussels endemic to Atlantic Slope rivers, including Federally endangered species (James spiny mussel, dwarf wedge mussel), those expected to be Federally- listed soon (Atlantic pigtoe, green floater, brook floater, yellow lance), and others that are declining and of concern to state partners (notched rainbow, triangle floater, creeper, yellow lampmussel, alewife floater, northern lance, eastern elliptio). This stocking is vital to ongoing restoration and recovery efforts as well as a Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration project.

Investment Strategy (IS):

The project will not increase the annual operations and maintenance costs as those costs are being covered by matching contributions averaging \$260,000 per annum by our partners under the long-term cooperative agreement. Service dollars will not be used for Operations and Maintenance.

Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):

The station is set to receive \$2.6 million in long-term funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (2017-2020) and Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration (2018-2028) to continue its technology development work and subsequently apply those technologies for large-scale production and release of tagged sub-adult mussels for recovery and restoration actions. Failure to complete the project will result in insufficient climate- controlled rearing space, and the agency's failure to complete the large-scale production and release of tagged sub- adult mussels for recovery and restoration.

Ranking Categories:

Category	Percent	Score
FCI Rating:	N/A	
API Rating:	N/A	100
API/FCI Score:	(20%)	15
SB Score:	(40%)	40
IS Score:	(20%)	10
CFA Score:	(20%)	10
Total Score:	(100%)	75

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):

Activity	Dollars in thousands	Percent
Maintenance/Repair Work :	\$ 0	0
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$ 400	100
Divestiture Work:	\$ 0	0
Total:	\$ 400	100

Project Funding History (entire project):

History	Dollars in thousands
Funded to Date:	\$ 0
FY 2025 CONSTRUCT Funding (this PDS):	\$ 400
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$ 0
Total:	\$ 400

Class of Estimate: A B C D C

Estimate Escalated to FY:

Planning and Design Funds:

Planning Funds Received in FY 2025:*	\$	0
Design Funds Received in FY 2025:*	\$	0

* These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated for the FY 2025 budget on this project data sheet.

Major Milestones

Construction Award/Start

- Scheduled:
- Actual: TBD

Project Complete

- Scheduled:
- Actual: TBD

Project Data Sheet

Prepared/Last Updated: 05/23

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 2025: \$ 350,000
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

Project Identification

Project Title: Evaluations of Newly Acquired and Existing Dam Deficiencies for Rehabilitation – Phase II of VI
 Project Number:
 Unit/Facility Name: Nationwide
 Region/Area/District: Nationwide
 Congressional District: ALL
 State: ALL

Project Justification

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id#	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
		Dam Safety Program	100	N/A

Project Description:

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 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 of future funding needs for operation, maintenance and inspections.

Phased Project? Y Number of Phases 6

This project does not specifically address DM&R costs for Fish and Wildlife Service.

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 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 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 and inclusive public recreational opportunities, and provide significant downstream flood control benefits.

Ranking Categories:

Category	Percent	Score
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
Total Score:	(100%)	70

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):

Activity	Dollars in thousands	Percent
Maintenance/Repair Work :	\$ 350	100
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$ 0	0
Divestiture Work:	\$ 0	0
Total:	\$ 350	100

Project Funding History (entire project):

History	Dollars in thousands
Funded to Date:	\$ 350
FY 2025 CONSTRUCT Funding (this PDS):	\$ 350
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$ 1,400
Total:	\$ 2,100

Class of Estimate: A B C D C

Estimate Escalated to FY: 05/22

Planning and Design Funds:

Planning Funds Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0
 Design Funds Received Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0

* These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated for the FY 2025 budget on this project data sheet.

Major Milestones

Construction Award/Start
 • Scheduled: 01/25
 • 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 2025: \$ 6,981,000
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

Project Identification

Project Title: Office and Visitor Center Construction [P/D/C] Phase II of II
 Project Number: 2006389614
 Unit/Facility Name: Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge
 Region/Area/District: Great Lakes
 Congressional District: 06
 State: MN

Project Justification

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id#	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
	32550	Sherburne NWR	100	N/A

Project Description:

This project will construct a Visitor Center and Office Building at Sherburne NWR and will allow colocation for the Minnesota Private Lands Office, eliminating annual lease costs. This project will provide the Refuge with a facility to provide quality environmental education to a growing population area. It will be energy efficient and provide an accessible space available to all. The current office has no visitor facilities and environmental education programs, interpretation, and special events are held in a deteriorating schoolhouse. The schoolhouse 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

This project does not specifically address DM&R costs for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, it provides the capital improvement funding necessary to complete new construction projects for the building.

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 Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Investment Strategy (IS):

The schoolhouse building previously used by the station’s 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:

Category	Percent	Score
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
Total Score:	(100%)	70

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):

Activity	Dollars in thousands	Percent
Maintenance/Repair Work :	\$ 0	0
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$ 6,981	100
Divestiture Work:	\$ 0	0
Total:	\$ 6,981	100

Project Funding History (entire project):

History	Dollars in thousands
Funded to Date:	\$ 919
FY 2025 CONSTRUCT Funding (this PDS):	\$ 6,981
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$ 0
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 2025:* \$ 0
 Design Funds Received Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0

* These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated for the FY 2025 budget on this project data sheet.

Major Milestones

Construction Award/Start

- Scheduled: 01/25
- Actual: TBD

Project Complete

- Scheduled: 04/27
- Actual: TBD

Project Data Sheet

Prepared/Last Updated: 08/22
 DOI Approved: No

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: 70
 Planned Funding FY 2025: \$ 400,000
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

Project Identification

Project Title: Perform Nationwide Radio Site Safety Remediation Phase I of IV
 Project Number:
 Unit/Facility Name: Assistant Director-Information Resources and Technology
 Region/Area/District: 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:

Preliminary screening has identified over 150 Service-owned and leased radio systems that lack sufficient initial safety and structural inspection. Detailed investigations and engineering evaluations are being conducted to develop a comprehensive maintenance and repair plan and to expand options for shared use of the Service and other federal agency or bureau tower sites. The engineering evaluations provide technical evidence to determine risk if mitigation efforts are required and locations where towers should be removed from operations and demolished. These funds will be used to conduct the removal or remediations of sites identified in the inspections.

Phased Project? Y Number of Phases: 4

This project will address \$400,000 in DM&R costs for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Scope of Benefits (SB):

The project supports Department strategic goal 4.1 (Protect Lives, Resources, and Property) through mitigation options to reduce the risk or complete removal of systems from operations.

Investment Strategy (IS):

The project will apply retrofit strategies resulting in expanded opportunities to shared radio related facilities and will help reduce annual operations and maintenance costs through repairs, upgrading equipment, or by removing those units posing risk.

Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):

The Service has evaluated radio facilities as required by DOI policy, identifying operational and structural risks associated with current operations. Failure to fulfill our responsibilities could endanger the life and health of Service employees and visitors.

Ranking Categories:

Category	Percent	Score
FCI Rating:	N/A	N/A
API Rating:	N/A	TBD
API/FCI Score:	(20%)	
SB Score:	(40%)	40
IS Score:	(20%)	10
CFA Score:	(20%)	20
Total Score:	(100%)	70

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

Project Costs and Status

Project Cost Estimate (this PDS):

Activity	Dollars in thousands	Percent
Maintenance/Repair Work :	\$ 400	100
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$ 0	0
Divestiture Work:	\$ 0	0
Total:	\$ 400	100

Project Funding History (entire project):

History	Dollars in thousands
Funded to Date:	\$ 0
FY 2025 CONSTRUCT Funding (this PDS):	\$ 400
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$ 1,200
Total:	\$ 1,600

Class of Estimate: A B C D C

Estimate Escalated to FY: 22

Planning and Design Funds:

Planning Funds Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0
 Design Funds Received Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0

* These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated for the FY 2025 budget on this project data sheet.

Major Milestones

- Construction Award/Start
- Scheduled: 01/25
 - Actual: TBD

Project Complete

- Scheduled: 04/28
- Actual: TBD

Project Data Sheet

Prepared/Last Updated: 04/23

DOI Approved: Yes

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 2025: \$ 255,000
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

Project Identification

Project Title: Administer the National Energy Management Program
 Project Number:
 Unit/Facility Name: Energy Management Program
 Region/Area/District: Nationwide
 Congressional District: ALL
 State: ALL

Project Justification

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id#	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
		Energy Management Program		

Project Description:

The Service’s 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 sqft 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

This project does not specifically address DM&R costs for Fish and Wildlife Service.

Scope of Benefits (SB):

The reinvigorated National 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:

Category	Percent	Score
FCI Rating:	N/A	N/A
API Rating:	N/A	TBD
API/FCI Score:	(20%)	0
SB Score:	(40%)	40
IS Score:	(20%)	0
CFA Score:	(20%)	20
Total Score:	(100%)	60

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):

Activity	Dollars in thousands	Percent
Maintenance/Repair Work :	\$ 255	100
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$ 0	0
Divestiture Work:	\$ 0	0
Total:	\$ 255	100

Project Funding History (entire project):

History	Dollars in thousands
Funded to Date:	\$ 0
FY 2025 CONSTRUCT Funding (this PDS):	\$ 255
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$ 0
Total:	\$ 255

Class of Estimate: A B C D C

Estimate Escalated to FY: 22

Planning and Design Funds:

Planning Funds Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0
 Design Funds Received Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0

* These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated for the FY 2025 budget on this project data sheet.

Major Milestones

Construction Award/Start

- Scheduled: 01/25
- Actual: TBD

Project Complete

- Scheduled: 04/27
- Actual: TBD

Project Data Sheet

Prepared/Last Updated: 05/23

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 2025: \$ 250,000
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

Project Identification

Project Title: Perform Nationwide Radio Tower Safety Investigations Phase VII of VIII
 Project Number: 2016278920
 Unit/Facility Name: Assistant Director-Information Resources and Technology Management
 Region/Area/District: 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:

These funds will be used to perform required radio tower evaluations of Service buildings per DOI policy. Preliminary screening has identified over 150 Service-owned and leased radio system that lack sufficient initial safety and structural inspection. Detailed investigations are necessary and engineering evaluations are the next required analysis to confirm the systems are safe for operational use, develop a comprehensive maintenance and repair plan and expand options for shared use of Service and other federal agency or bureau tower sites. The engineering evaluations will provide technical evidence to determine what risk mitigation efforts are required and locations where towers should be removed from operations and demolished.

Phased Project? Y Number of Phases: 8

This project does not specifically address DM&R costs for Fish and Wildlife Service.

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 Service 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 Service employees and visitors.

Ranking Categories:

Category	Percent	Score
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
Total Score:	(100%)	60

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

Project Costs and Status

Project Cost Estimate (this PDS):

Activity	Dollars in thousands	Percent
Maintenance/Repair Work :	\$ 250	100
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$ 0	0
Divestiture Work:	\$ 0	0
Total:	\$ 250	100

Project Funding History (entire project):

History	Dollars in thousands
Funded to Date:	\$ 1,500
FY 2025 CONSTRUCT Funding (this PDS):	\$ 250
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$ 250
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 2025:* \$ 0
 Design Funds Received Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0

* These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated for the FY 2025 budget on this project data sheet.

Major Milestones

- Construction Award/Start
- Scheduled: 01/25
 - Actual: TBD

Project Complete

- Scheduled: 04/28
- Actual: TBD

Project Data Sheet

Prepared/Last Updated: 04/21

DOI Approved: Yes

Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$

Current: \$0

Projected: \$0

Net Change: \$0

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Project Data Sheet**

Total Project Score/Ranking: 55
 Planned Funding FY 2025: \$ 5,500,000
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

Project Identification

Project Title: Colocation of Service Staff (ES, LE, FAC) at San Marcos Aquatic Resources Center
 Project Number: 2020333562
 Unit/Facility Name: San Marcos FTC/San Marcos Aquatic Resources Center
 Region/Area/District: Arkansas-Rio Grande-Texas-Gulf
 Congressional District: 25
 State: TX

Project Justification

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id#	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
	21230	San Marcos Aquatic Resources Center	100	N/A

Project Description:

This project will construct a 13,375 square foot office building for 45 staff from Austin Ecological Services, San Marcos Aquatic Resources Center, Texas Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, Office of Law Enforcement, Science Applications, Office of Communications, and other Regional Office staff (currently stationed in Austin, Texas).

Project Need/Benefit: The Austin Ecological Services field office vacated their previously leased building in December 30, 2022, after more than 20 years, when the lease expired. The building owner plans to demolish the building and re-develop the site. Commercial leasing costs in the Austin area are rapidly increasing.

For a long-term solution to provide affordable office spaces, a new office building will be built at the San Marcos Aquatic Resources Center, located between Austin and San Antonio. The new facility will provide private and open offices (co-locating staff from 5 FWS programs), meeting rooms, restrooms for public and staff use, and storage space.

This new construction project does not address DM&R costs for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Scope of Benefits (SB):

Constructing a new office building for employees of all our programs would provide a unique opportunity for synergy among the programs that would further enhance cross-program collaboration and coordination. Savings will total approximately half a million a year in rent costs (comparing like footprints in Austin General Services Administration (GSA) space versus this space) that will only increase in time in the Austin area commercial real-estate market. Indeed, only our regional offices and headquarters feature this level of cross-program presence. This office would be located between Austin and San Antonio where much of the Service’s work exists in Texas. Housing costs are significantly less expensive in San Marcos compared with Austin with several communities to choose from with lower costs of living. Finally, numerous partner organizations are located close to San Marcos including Texas State University, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Texas at San Antonio, the Edwards Aquifer Authority, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The office would still be within 30 miles of the Texas capital. A closer connection between conservation biologists in Ecological Services and research and

field biologists from the Texas Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office and the San Marcos Aquatic Resources Center would help strengthen Service programs as the programs all primarily work with many of the same threatened and endangered species. Additionally, a co-location would provide a benefit to our common partners by eliminating the need for multi-city trips for meetings and other collaborations. The property is adjacent to an off-campus research center for Texas State University and the San Marcos Conference Center. It is also within walking distance of a Holiday Inn Express and an Embassy Suites Hotel. This location provides ample lodging and conference capabilities for collaborators requiring multi-day meetings with our offices. Moreover, there are many benefits for the Service to own this property including its importance as a refugia for Edwards Aquifer species in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan which provides the economic benefits of water security for the people of San Antonio, the seventh largest city in the nation, and the recovery of federally listed species.

Investment Strategy (IS):

This will be a new building; therefore, significant O&M costs will not be incurred in the operation and maintenance of this building. Operation and maintenance will largely be limited to building upkeep, janitorial, utilities, security/ cybersecurity and similar standard operation and maintenance activities.

Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):

The ES office location is leading the rapid pace of redevelopment and dramatically increasing property values with the presence of a growing technology sector. Had the current office not been sold, current market rates for the previous ES office space would have more than doubled to \$500,000 annually, according to the GSA. Working with GSA to determine interest from other commercial office buildings in Travis County resulted in no locations or offers. There is simply not enough commercial real-estate in the market given the demand, nor would the Service be able to afford the lease cost should anything become available.

Ranking Categories:

Category	Percent	Score
FCI Rating:	N/A	
API Rating:	N/A	100
API/FCI Score:	(20%)	15
SB Score:	(40%)	40
IS Score:	(20%)	0
CFA Score:	(20%)	0
Total Score:	(100%)	55

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):

Activity	Dollars in thousands	Percent
Maintenance/Repair Work :	\$ 0	0
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$ 5,500	100
Divestiture Work:	\$ 0	0
Total:	\$ 5,500	100

Project Funding History (entire project):

History	Dollars in thousands	
Funded to Date:	\$	0
FY 2025 CONSTRUCT Funding (this PDS):	\$	5,500
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$	0
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$	0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$	0
Total:	\$	5,500

Class of Estimate: A B C D C

Estimate Escalated to FY:

Planning and Design Funds:

Planning Funds Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0
 Design Funds Received Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0

* These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated for the FY 2025 budget on this project data sheet.

Major Milestones

Construction Award/Start

- Scheduled:
- Actual: TBD

Project Complete

- Scheduled:
- Actual: TBD

Project Data Sheet

Prepared/Last Updated: 05/23

DOI Approved: No

Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$

Current: \$0
 Projected: \$9,359
 Net Change: \$9,359

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Project Data Sheet**

Total Project Score/Ranking: 55
 Planned Funding FY 2025: \$ 850,000
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

Project Identification

Project Title: Construct 5-Bay Vehicle Storage Building
 Project Number: 2021366752
 Unit/Facility Name: Jordan River National Fish Hatchery
 Region/Area/District: Great Lakes
 Congressional District: 01
 State: MI

Project Justification

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id#	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
	31220	Jordan River NFH	100	

Project Description:

Construct a 5-bay vehicle storage building at Jordan River NFH. Fish truck storage is needed to keep the vehicles out of the harsh elements of Northern Michigan.

This new construction project does not address DM&R costs for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Scope of Benefits (SB):

Constructing this building would help prevent fish distribution truck breakdowns. Currently trucks are stored overwinter in fish production buildings that have a humid environment. The humidity is suspected to be causing some of the frequent breakdowns.

Investment Strategy (IS):

This project may only have a minor reduction of maintenance however if keeping distribution trucks in the proper environment prevents one breakdown, that reduces the risk of fish loss and secures the program goals.

Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):

Failure to act increases the risk of fish loss during distribution or possible driver safety due to breakdowns.

Ranking Categories:

Category	Percent	Score
FCI Rating:	N/A	
API Rating:	N/A	100
API/FCI Score:	(20%)	15
SB Score:	(40%)	20
IS Score:	(20%)	10
CFA Score:	(20%)	10
Total Score:	(100%)	55

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):

Activity	Dollars in thousands	Percent
Maintenance/Repair Work :	\$ 0	0
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$ 850	100
Divestiture Work:	\$ 0	0
Total:	\$ 850	100

Project Funding History (entire project):

History	Dollars in thousands
Funded to Date:	\$ 0
FY 2025 CONSTRUCT Funding (this PDS):	\$ 850
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$ 0
Total:	\$ 850

Class of Estimate: A B C D C

Estimate Escalated to FY:

Planning and Design Funds:

Planning Funds Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0
 Design Funds Received Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0

* These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated for the FY 2025 budget on this project data sheet.

Major Milestones

Construction Award/Start

- Scheduled:
- Actual: TBD

Project Complete

- Scheduled:
- Actual: TBD

Project Data Sheet

Prepared/Last Updated: 05/23
 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: 55
 Planned Funding FY 2025: \$ 850,000
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

Project Identification

Project Title: Construct 5-Bay Vehicle Storage Building
 Project Number: 2021366745
 Unit/Facility Name: Pendills Creek National Fish Hatchery
 Region/Area/District: Great Lakes
 Congressional District: 01
 State: MI

Project Justification

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id#	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
	31230	Pendills Creek NFH	100	

Project Description:

Construct 5-bay vehicle storage building at Pendills Creek NFH. Fish truck storage is needed to keep the vehicles out of the harsh elements of Northern Michigan.

This new construction project does not address DM&R costs for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Scope of Benefits (SB):

Constructing this building would help prevent fish distribution truck breakdowns. Currently trucks are stored overwinter in fish production buildings that have a humid environment. The humidity is suspected to be causing some of the frequent breakdowns.

Investment Strategy (IS):

This project may only have a minor reduction of maintenance however if keeping distribution trucks in the proper environment prevents one breakdown, that reduces the risk of fish loss and secures the program goals.

Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):

Failure to act increases the risk of fish loss during distribution or possible driver safety due to breakdowns.

Ranking Categories:

Category	Percent	Score
FCI Rating:	N/A	
API Rating:	N/A	100
API/FCI Score:	(20%)	15
SB Score:	(40%)	20
IS Score:	(20%)	10
CFA Score:	(20%)	10
Total Score:	(100%)	55

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):

Activity	Dollars in thousands	Percent
Maintenance/Repair Work :	\$ 0	0
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$ 850	100
Divestiture Work:	\$ 0	0
Total:	\$ 850	100

Project Funding History (entire project):

History	Dollars in thousands
Funded to Date:	\$ 0
FY 2025 CONSTRUCT Funding (this PDS):	\$ 850
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
FY 2025 FLREA/FLTP/Donation, etc. Funding:	\$ 0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$ 0
Total:	\$ 850

Class of Estimate: A B C D C

Estimate Escalated to FY:

Planning and Design Funds:

Planning Funds Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0
 Design Funds Received Received in FY 2025:* \$ 0

* These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated for the FY 2025 budget on this project data sheet.

Major Milestones

Construction Award/Start

- Scheduled:
- Actual: TBD

Project Complete

- Scheduled:
- Actual: TBD

Project Data Sheet

Prepared/Last Updated: 05/23
 DOI Approved: No

Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$

Current: \$0
Projected: \$0
Net Change: \$0

US Fish and Wildlife Service

FY25-29 Line Item Construction Plan -Greenbook Submission \$20,955

Plan Fund Year	Priority	Facility or Unit Name	Project Title	Cong. District	Total Project	Funded to Date	Total	Remaining to be Funded	Future Years of Plan with Funding	Investment Category/Work Classification	DOI Score	Estimated DM&R Addressed
2025	1	Baldhill Dam NFH	Rehabilitate Ponds, Kettles, and Drainage (Ponds 1 to 20) Phase I of II	ND-AL	\$4,050	\$0	\$3,619	\$431	2026	Modernization and Renewal (Recapitalization)	90	\$3,619
2025	2	Bears Bluff NFH	Replace and Relocate Laboratory Phase III of III - Additional Funding	SC-06	\$3,904	\$2,404	\$1,500	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (Replacement)	90	\$1,000
2025	3	Harrison Lake NFH	Construct Mussel Rearing Building - Additional Funding	VA-04	\$400	\$0	\$400	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (Replacement)	75	\$0
2025	4	Dam Safety Program	Evaluations of Newly Acquired and Existing Dam Deficiencies Phase II of VI	*	\$2,100	\$350	\$350	\$1,400	2026-2029	Maintenance	70	\$0
2025	5	Sherburne NWR	Office and Visitor Center Construction Phase II of II	MN-06	\$7,900	\$919	\$6,981	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)	70	\$0
2025	6	Information Resources & Technology Management	Perform Nationwide Radio Site Safety Remediation Phase I of IV	*	\$1,600	\$0	\$400	\$1,200	2026-2028	Maintenance	70	\$400
2025	7	Energy Management Program	Administer the National Energy Management Program	*	\$255	\$0	\$255	\$0		Maintenance	60	\$0
2025	8	Information Resources & Technology Management	Perform Nationwide Radio Tower Safety Investigations Phase VII of VIII	*	\$2,000	\$1,500	\$250	\$250	2026	Maintenance	60	\$0
2025	9	San Marcos FTC	Colocation Of Service Staff (ES, LE, FAC) at San Marcos Aquatic Resources Center	TX-25	\$5,500	\$0	\$5,500	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)	55	\$0
2025	10	Jordan River NFH	Construct 5-Bay Vehicle Storage Building	MI-01	\$850	\$0	\$850	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)	55	\$0
2025	11	Pendills Creek NFH	Construct 5-Bay Vehicle Storage Building	MI-01	\$850	\$0	\$850	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)	55	\$0
Total for Fiscal Year 2025							\$20,955					\$5,019

US Fish and Wildlife Service

FY25-29 Line Item Construction Plan -Greenbook Submission \$20,955

Plan Fund Year	Priority	Facility or Unit Name	Project Title	Cong. District	Total Project	Funded to Date	Total	Remaining to be Funded	Future Years of Plan with Funding	Investment Category/Work Classification	DOI Score
2026	1	Patuxent NWR	Chesapeake Bay colocation ES/LE/FWCO	MD-05	\$4,863	\$0	\$4,863	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)	90
2026	2	Baldhill Dam NFH	Rehabilitate Ponds Kettles and Drainage (Ponds 1 to 20) Phase II of II	ND-AL	\$4,050	\$3,619	\$431	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (Recapitalization)	90
2026	3	North West Montana Complex	Replace Operational Infrastructure to Support Field Stations Formally Supported at the National Bison Range Phase IV of IV	MT-AL	\$13,153	\$11,553	\$1,600	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)	80
2026	4	Wichita Mountains NWR	Quanah Parker Dam Auxiliary Spillway Replacement	OK-04	\$750	\$0	\$750	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (Replacement)	70
2026	5	Dam Safety Program	Evaluations of Newly Acquired and Existing Dam Deficiencies Phase III of VI	*	\$2,100	\$700	\$350	\$1,050	2027-2029	Maintenance	70
2026	6	Erwin NFH	Construct Building Over Lower Raceways	TN-01	\$2,250	\$0	\$2,250	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)	70
2026	7	Silvio Conte NFWR	Administration/Visitor Facility - (Co-Location at Ft. River) Phase I of II	MA-01	\$5,300	\$0	\$2,554	\$2,746	2027	Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)	70
2026	8	Information Resources & Technology Management	Nationwide Radio Site Safety Remediation Phase II of IV	*	\$1,600	\$400	\$400	\$800	2027-2028	Maintenance	70
2026	9	D.D. Eisenhower NFH	Fish Rearing Infrastructure Upgrades	VT-AL	\$7,252	\$0	\$7,252	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)	60
2026	10	Information Resources & Technology Management	Nationwide Radio Tower Safety Investigations Phase VIII of VIII	*	\$2,000	\$1,750	\$250	\$0		Maintenance	60
2026	11	Energy Management Program	Administer the National Energy Management Program	*	\$255	\$0	\$255	\$0		Maintenance	60
Total for Fiscal Year 2026							\$20,955				

US Fish and Wildlife Service

FY25-29 Line Item Construction Plan -Greenbook Submission \$20,955

Plan Fund Year	Priority	Facility or Unit Name	Project Title	Cong. District	Total Project	Funded to Date	Total	Remaining to be Funded	Future Years of Plan with Funding	Investment Category/Work Classification	DOI Score
2027	1	Gavins Point NFH	Replace Office Building	SD-AL	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,000	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (Replacement)	100
2027	2	Upper Souris NWR	Lake Darling Dam Semi Qualitative Risk Assessment	ND-00	\$450	\$0	\$450	\$0		Maintenance	90
2027	3	Eagle Creek NFH	Electric Weir Replacement	OR-05	\$2,900	\$0	\$2,900	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (Replacement)	80
2027	4	Abernathy FTC	Construction of Fish & Egg Isolation/Quarantine Building	WA-03	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,000	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)	70
2027	5	Dam Safety Program	Evaluations of Newly Acquired and Existing Dam Deficiencies Phase IV of VI	*	\$2,100	\$1,050	\$350	\$700	2028-2029	Maintenance	70
2027	6	Silvio Conte NFWR	Administration/Visitor Facility - (Co-Location at Ft. River) Phase II of II	MA-01	\$5,300	\$2,554	\$2,746	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)	70
2027	7	National Black-Footed Ferret Conservation Center	Expand Operational and Rearing Facility Infrastructure.	CO-07	\$4,439	\$0	\$4,439	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)	70
2027	8	Information Resources & Technology Management	Nationwide Radio Site Safety Remediation Phase III of IV	*	\$1,600	\$800	\$400	\$400	2028	Maintenance	70
2027	9	Selawik NWR	Replace the Bunkhouse	AK-00	\$3,000	\$0	\$3,000	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)	70
2027	10	Leadville NFH	Construct Tank Building with Circular Tanks	CO-03	\$765	\$0	\$765	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)	60
2027	11	Energy Management Program	Administer the National Energy Management Program	*	\$255	\$0	\$255	\$0		Maintenance	60
2027	12	Ankeny NWR	Construct Ankeny Hill Nature Center Phase II of II	OR-05	\$3,630	\$2,130	\$1,500	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)	45
2027	13	Gavins Point NFH	Replace Hatchery Building/Tank Room and Demo Existing Hatchery Building	SD-AL	\$150	\$0	\$150	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (Replacement)	40
Total for Fiscal Year 2027							\$20,955				

US Fish and Wildlife Service

FY25-29 Line Item Construction Plan -Greenbook Submission \$20,955

Plan Fund Year	Priority	Facility or Unit Name	Project Title	Cong. District	Total Project	Funded to Date	Total	Remaining to be Funded	Future Years of Plan with Funding	Investment Category/Work Classification	DOI Score
2028	1	Dam Safety Program	Evaluations of Newly Acquired and Existing Dam Deficiencies Phase V of VI	*	\$2,100	\$1,400	\$350	\$350	2029	Maintenance	70
2028	2	Information Resources & Technology Management	Nationwide Radio Site Safety Remediation Phase IV of IV	*	\$1,600	\$1,200	\$400	\$0		Maintenance	70
2028	3	Lahontan NFH	Replace Main Water Supply Lines from Wells	NV-01	\$2,300	\$0	\$2,300	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (Replacement)	70
2028	4	Lahontan NFH	Complete Water Reuse System phase-II (of 2021 rehab)	NV-01	\$2,351	\$0	\$2,351	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (Alteration)	70
2028	5	Felsenthal NWR	Construct Two Bridges on Newly Acquired Property	AR-04	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,000	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)	70
2028	6	E.B Forsythe NWR	Rehabilitate/Replace East Pool Water Control Structures and Culverts including Dike and Salt Marsh for aquatic connectivity improvements	NJ-02	\$2,000	\$0	\$1,173	\$827	2029	Modernization and Renewal (Replacement)	60
2028	7	Energy Management Program	Administer the National Energy Management Program	*	\$255	\$0	\$255	\$0		Maintenance	60
2028	8	Tishomingo NFH	Replace Administration Building and Visitors Center	OK-03	\$2,500	\$0	\$2,500	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (Replacement)	55
2028	9	Green River NWR	Convert Newly Acquired Property into Visitor Center	KY-01	\$4,500	\$0	\$4,500	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (Recapitalization)	52
2028	10	Wertheim NWR, Long Island, Silvio Conte NWR, Ninigret NWR, Eastern Massachusetts NWR	Demolish Bunkhouse and Construct Safer, Energy Efficient New Bunkhouse at each station	*	\$5,126	\$0	\$5,126	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (Replacement)	52
Total for Fiscal Year 2028							\$20,955				

US Fish and Wildlife Service

FY25-29 Line Item Construction Plan -Greenbook Submission \$20,955

Plan Fund Year	Priority	Facility or Unit Name	Project Title	Cong. District	Total Project	Funded to Date	Total	Remaining to be Funded	Future Years of Plan with Funding	Investment Category/Work Classification	DOI Score
2029	1	Dam Safety Program	Evaluations of Newly Acquired and Existing Dam Deficiencies Phase V of VI	*	\$2,100	\$1,750	\$350	\$0		Maintenance	70
2029	2	Willard NFH	Replace Fish Production Water River Intake	WA-03	\$5,000	\$0	\$5,000	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (Replacement)	70
2029	3	Genoa NFH	Construct 5-Bay Storage Building	WI-03	\$1,300	\$0	\$1,300	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)	62
2029	4	Energy Management Program	Administer the National Energy Management Program	*	\$255	\$0	\$255	\$0		Maintenance	60
2029	5	E.B Forsythe NWR	Rehabilitate/Replace East Pool Water Control Structures and Culverts including Dike and Salt Marsh for aquatic connectivity improvements	NJ-02	\$2,000	\$1,173	\$827	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (Replacement)	60
2029	6	Ottawa NWR	Repair and Modernize Infrastructure for Improved Resiliency and Public Access	OH-05	\$11,750	\$0	\$11,300	\$450		Modernization and Renewal (Recapitalization)	53
2029	7	Assabet River NWR, Great Swamp NWR, Rachel Carson NWR, and Moosehorn NWR	Demolish and Replace Four Maintenance Shops	*	\$4,000	\$0	\$1,923	\$2,077		Modernization and Renewal (Replacement)	52
Total for Fiscal Year 2029							20,955				

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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. 460l-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⁽¹⁾

(Dollars in Thousands)

Account/Activity/Subactivity/Program Element	2023 Actual	2024 Request	2025 Request	2025 Req vs. 2024 Req	2024 FTE	2025 FTE	2025 v. 2024 FTE
Land Acquisition							
Federal Land Acquisition							
Acquisition Management	17,970	18,028	18,028				
Land Protection Planning	491	493	493				
Exchanges	1,557	1,591	1,591				
Inholdings, Emergencies and Hardships	10,000	11,000	11,000				
Recreational Access	15,500	15,500	15,500				
Line-Item Projects	58,499	62,340	64,840	+2,500			
Subtotal, Federal Land Acquisition ⁽²⁾	104,017	108,952	111,452	+2,500	79	79	+0
State and Local Grants							
Highlands Conservation Act	10,000	10,000	10,000				
Subtotal, Highlands Conservation Act	10,000	10,000	10,000		2	2	+0
Total, Land Acquisition Funding (Net Budget Authority)	114,017	118,952	121,452	+2,500	81	81	+0
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF)							
State and Local Grants							
Species Recovery Land Acquisition	11,162	14,162	14,162				
HCP Land Acquisition	21,638	26,000	26,000				
Total, CESCF Funding (Net Budget Authority)	32,800	40,162	40,162				
<p>(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. Amounts sequestered from LWCF programs become available for obligation ("Pop-Up") in subsequent years.</p> <p>(2) Subtotals may not appear to add correctly due to rounding of sequester adjustments.</p>							

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Allocation of Land and Water Conservation Fund FY 2025 <i>Dollars (Net Budget Authority)</i>		
Account/LWCF Category/Activity/Project	State	Amount
Land Acquisition		
Federal Land Acquisition		
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
Land Acquisition Projects		
Everglades to Gulf Conservation Area (proposed)	FL	2,000,000
Cache River NWR	AR	500,000
Dakota Grassland CA	Multi - ND/SD	8,000,000
Everglades Headwaters NWR/CA	FL	8,000,000
Dakota Tallgrass Prairie WMA	Multi - ND/SD	6,000,000
Northern Tallgrass Prairie NWR	Multi - IA/MN	750,000
Rachel Carson NWR	ME	1,500,000
Grasslands WMA	CA	1,000,000
Silvio O. Conte NFWR	Multi - CT/MA/ NH/VT	2,000,000
Willamette Valley CA	OR	1,800,000
Blackwater NWR	MD	750,000
Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR	CA	4,500,000
Patoka River NWR	IN	1,000,000
Rappahannock River Valley NWR	VA	1,000,000
Big Muddy NFWR	MO	500,000
Great Thicket NWR	Multi - CT/MA/ME /NH/NY/RI	1,500,000
Stone Lakes NWR	CA	1,000,000
Petit Manan NWR	ME	1,000,000
Cypress Creek NWR	IL	500,000
Tulare Basin WMA	CA	1,000,000
Middle Mississippi River NWR	Multi - IL/MO	500,000
Bear River Watershed CA	Multi - ID/MT/UT	2,750,000
St. Marks NWR	FL	1,500,000
Clarks River NWR	KY	1,000,000
Waccamaw NWR	SC	1,000,000
Minidoka NWR	ID	3,000,000
Okefenokee NWR	Multi - FL/GA	5,000,000
Hackmatack NWR	Multi - IL/WI	3,290,000
Mountain Bogs NWR	NC	1,000,000
Rocky Mountain Front CA	MT	1,500,000
Land Acquisition Projects, Subtotal		64,840,000
Subtotal, Federal Land Acquisition		111,452,000

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Allocation of Land and Water Conservation Fund FY 2025 <i>Dollars (Net Budget Authority)</i>		
Account/LWCF Category/Activity/Project	State	Amount
State and Local Grant Programs		
Highlands Conservation Act (HCA)		10,000,000
Subtotal, State and Local Grants		10,000,000
Land Acquisition Total		
		121,452,000
<u>Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF)</u>		
State and Local Grant Programs		
Species Recovery Land Acquisition		14,162,000
Habitat Conservation Plan Acquisition		26,000,000
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Total		40,162,000
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service LWCF Total (Net Budget Authority)		161,614,000

FY 2025 Land Acquisition Summary Table
(Dollars)

Budget Authority/Activity	Amount
FY 2025 New Budget Authority	121,584,805
FY 2025 Estimated Sequestration Reduction (-5.7%)	-6,930,334
FY 2025 Estimated Pop Up (+5.7% of 2024)	+6,797,529
FY 2025 Net Budget Authority	121,452,000

FY 2025 Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Summary Table
(Dollars)

Budget Authority/Activity	Amount
FY 2025 New Budget Authority	40,135,102
FY 2025 Estimated Sequestration Reduction (-5.7%)	-2,287,701
FY 2025 Estimated Pop Up (+5.7% of 2024)	+2,314,599
FY 2025 Net Budget Authority	40,162,000

Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF) is displayed here to show the entirety of LWCF funding provided to the Service. For more information, please see the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund chapter.

Appropriation: Land Acquisition

Program Overview

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. The Department of the Interior’s 2025 budget proposes a Tribal LWCF program which will enable Tribes to directly participate in the LWCF for the first time to acquire lands for the purposes of natural and cultural resource conservation and recreation access.

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 county in the Nation have benefited from the LWCF since its establishment.

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 Act (GAOA) amended the LWCF Act to make LWCF funding permanent and LWCF funding is provided through a mandatory account. GAOA requires the President’s annual budget submission to Congress include a proposed 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 percent. 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 Service used LWCF funding to acquire a conservation easement to protect wetlands in the Mascoma River Division of Silvio O. Conte NFWR in New Hampshire. Credit: Tom Geser/USFWS.

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 the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund grants to States program (described in the CESCFC chapter).

Appropriation: Land Acquisition
LWCF Category: Federal Land Acquisition

	2023 Actual ¹	2024 Request	2025				Change from 2024 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request ¹	
Federal Land Acquisition							
Land Acquisition Management (\$000)	17,970	18,028	0	0	0	18,028	0
Land Protection Planning (\$000)	491	493	0	0	0	493	0
Exchanges (\$000)	1,557	1,591	0	0	0	1,591	0
Inholdings, Emergencies, and Hardships (\$000)	10,000	11,000	0	0	0	11,000	0
Recreational Access (\$000)	15,500	15,500	0	0	0	15,500	0
Line-Item Projects (\$000)	58,499	62,340	0	0	+2,500	64,840	+2,500
Subtotal, Federal Land Acquisition (\$000)	104,017	108,952	0	0	+2,500	111,452	+2,500
FTE	79	79				79	0

¹Bureau 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.

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 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



In October 2023, the Service acquired 441 acres for Balcones Canyonlands NWR, Texas. The acquisition will protect nesting habitat for grassland birds and the endangered golden-cheeked warbler. Credit: USFWS.

meet the Service's conservation mission. Therefore, if conservation easements 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.

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 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.



The Nature Conservancy donated an 87-acre parcel to establish Paint Rock River NWR in southeastern Tennessee. Credit: Nick Wirwa/USFWS.

Land Acquisition Management

This activity supports efforts directly related to the acquisition of lands within approved acquisition boundaries of the NWRs. 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 provide 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.
- Providing Agency appraisal coordination, including facilitating communication with DOI and providing bureau oversight to streamline the appraisal process.
- 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 NEPA requirements for land acquisition projects and the development of 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.



In 2023, the Service acquired 27 acres for Great Thicket NWR's Berwick-York Focal Area in southern Maine. The tracts connect other conservation lands, providing migration and dispersal corridors for New England Cottontail and other species that rely on early successional habitat. Credit: Karl Stromayer/USFWS.

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 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 more than 65,900 acres, and the Service estimates that \$1,612,000 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.

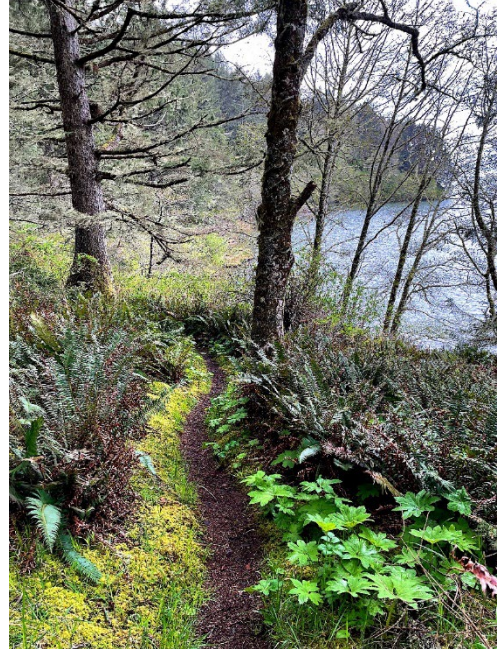
Potential Land Exchange Projects

State	Potential Exchanges	Acres to be Acquired	Management Costs
Alaska	Alaska Peninsula NWR	3.0	\$5,000
Alaska	Alaska Peninsula NWR and Izembek NWR	56,000.0	\$200,000
Alaska	Alaska Peninsula NWR and Kodiak NWR	TBD	\$75,000
Arizona	Havasu NWR	85.0	\$25,000
Arizona	Kofa NWR (various)	372.0	\$87,000
Arkansas	Dale Bumpers White River NWR	250.0	\$30,000
Arkansas	Felsenthal NWR	2,168.0	\$40,000
California	Bitter Creek NWR	TBD	\$45,000
California	Sacramento River NWR	20.0	\$20,000
California	Stone Lakes NWR	2.0	\$30,000
Colorado	Arapaho NWR	280.0	\$25,000
Georgia	Harris Neck NWR	50.0	\$30,000
Hawaii	Hakalau Forest NWR	2,131.0	\$20,000
Hawaii	Hanalei NWR	8.0	\$20,000
Idaho	Minidoka NWR	350.0	\$20,000
Indiana	Indiana FSA	1.0	\$10,000
Indiana	Patoka River NWR	80.0	\$2,000
Iowa & Wisconsin	Upper MS River NWFR	36.0	\$25,000
Louisiana	Laccasine/Sabine NWRs	1,900.0	\$30,000
Massachusetts	Parker River NWR	2.0	\$25,000
Minnesota	Beltrami WMA (LUP)	544.0	\$10,000
Minnesota	Big Stone County WPA	5.0	\$9,000
Minnesota	Carver County WPA	7.0	\$2,000

State	Potential Exchanges	Acres to be Acquired	Management Costs
Minnesota	Douglas County WPA	0.1	\$9,000
Minnesota	Glacial Ridge NWR	200.0	\$10,000
Minnesota	Grant County WPA	3.0	\$9,000
Minnesota	Meeker County WPA	59.0	\$2,000
Minnesota	Morrison County FSA	0.3	\$10,000
Minnesota	Pope County WPA	6.0	\$9,000
Montana	Various Montana WPAs and WMDs	40.0	\$50,000
New Jersey	EB Forsythe NWR	26.0	\$35,000
North Dakota	Audubon WMD	55.0	\$25,000
North Dakota	Various North Dakota WPA's & WMA's	500.0	\$275,000
Oregon	Bandon Marsh NWR	1.0	\$5,000
Oregon	Cold Springs NWR	14.0	\$40,000
Oregon	Tualatin River NWR	4.2	\$15,000
South Dakota	Various South Dakota WPA's & WMD's	500.0	\$260,000
Texas	Laguna Atascosa NWR	95.0	\$37,000
Texas	Lower Rio Grande Valley NWR	100.0	\$27,000
Texas	Trinity NWR	4.0	\$7,000
Wisconsin	Necedah WMA (FmHA)	5.0	\$2,000
Total Exchange Acres and Management Costs		65,906.6	\$1,612,000

Inholdings, Emergencies, and Hardships

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 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 be a good neighbor to local landowners.



In June 2023, the Service used Inholdings, Emergencies, and Hardships project funding to acquire tidelands for Nestucca Bay, WA. The acquisition provides protection for intertidal plants and animals and allowed for extension of the Two Rivers Nature Trail and improved public fishing access. Credit: Jonathan Bloomfield/USFWS.

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 line-item 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.

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.



The Service used Recreational Access project funding to acquire 132 acres for ACE Basin NWR, SC. The acquisition joins several existing refuge tracts, providing connectivity for public recreation. The tract also provides habitat for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. Credit: Alice Lawrence/USFWS.

Line-Item Projects

This activity funds individual land acquisition projects. Each year the Service acquires land or interests in land, such as conservation easements using the 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:



Quino checkerspot butterfly. Credit: USFWS.

San Diego National Wildlife Refuge, California

In 2023, the Service acquired 27 acres of undisturbed coastal sage and grasslands for San Diego National Wildlife Refuge. The acquisition connects existing refuge lands and provides important habitat for the endangered Quino checkerspot butterfly and threatened California gnatcatcher.

***Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge,
Louisiana***

In June 2023, the Trust for Public Land donated 835 acres of bottomland hardwood to the Service for Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge. The donation fills in critical inholdings at this refuge, providing contiguous blocks of wildlife habitat. This benefit is augmented by previously acquired property that connected two of the refuge units north and south of a major highway that provides a wildlife corridor below a highway overpass for Louisiana black bears and other wildlife.



Restored wetlands and marsh on land donated for Bayou Teche NWR, LA. Credit: Ken Clough/USFWS.

***Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge,
Illinois***

In 2023, the Service acquired approximately 200 acres near the headwaters of Nippersink Creek for Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge. The properties are adjacent to other public conservation lands, contain tallgrass prairie and sage meadow wetlands, and will contribute to the restoration of a large wetland complex. Acquisition of the properties nearly doubled the acreage in the refuge available for public outdoor recreation, such as hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing.



The acquisition of a conservation easement for Bear River Watershed CA in Idaho, protects sage brush habitats and an important mule deer migration route. Credit: Charlie Parrott/USFWS.

Bear River Watershed Conservation Area, Idaho

In May 2023, the Service acquired a conservation easement over a 395-acre working ranch in Idaho on the southern end of the Preuss Range, where the mountains drop down into the Bear River floodplain. The sagebrush rangeland and grasslands provide valuable habitat to many species of birds and mammals, including greater sage-grouse, sage thrasher, grasshopper sparrow, western meadowlark, golden eagles, bald eagles, mule deer, and elk. The narrow 2-mile section of mountains where this property is located is an

important corridor and pinch point for 4,000-6,000 mule deer that use this area during the spring and fall migrations. The Service, Idaho Fish and Game Department, and Idaho Department of Transportation, identified a need for this conservation easement to protect the important migratory route and prevent wildlife collisions along the highway.

Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Nebraska

In November 2022, the Service used Recreational Access project funding to acquire an 830-acre ranch for Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge in western Nebraska. The ranch contains a large naturally occurring population of an endangered, short-lived, perennial forb, the blowout penstemon. The acquisition also protects native sandhills prairie and natural wetland habitat for wildlife, including migratory birds, such as long-billed curlew, upland sandpiper, grasshopper sparrow, and trumpeter swan. In 2024, the property will offer public recreational opportunities such as wildlife observation, photography, and hunting.



Sandhills prairie at Crescent Lake NWR, Nebraska, provide habitat for migratory birds. Credit: Gabby Parada/USFWS.



A recent acquisition at Hakalau Forest NWR provides protection for this 'apapane and other Hawaiian flora and fauna. Credit: Charlie Parrott/USFWS.

Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge, Hawaii

In February 2023, the Service acquired 619 acres at Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge. This acquisition connects existing refuge lands to Mamalahoa Highway, the main public road in South Kona. Fee title ownership from the road provides an opportunity to improve Refuge access, safety, and visibility, and eventually may enable the Service to open public access to the Refuge's Kona Forest Unit. In addition, the site is important for the recovery of threatened and endangered plants and forest birds and their habitats, and provides important watershed values, including groundwater recharge and prevention of siltation of nearby marine

environments.

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, Florida

In 2023, the Service acquired 2,216 acres at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, completing a multi-year effort to acquire nearly 8,000 acres. The acquisition benefits federally listed species such as red-cockaded woodpecker, wood stork, and frosted flatwoods salamanders, as well as a variety of other resident and migratory species. The acquisition helps preserve a tapestry of Federal, State, and private forest lands that provide over one million acres of unfragmented habitat.

Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge, Indiana

In 2023, the Service used an exchange and a fee purchase to acquire two properties that are surrounded by refuge lands at Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge. The properties were river level farm fields that frequently flooded. The acquisitions eliminated the last two "donut hole" inholdings in the Oatsville Bottoms portion of the Refuge, and will simplify Service management, reduce private trespass, and improve water quality. The Service plans to reforest some areas while allowing the rest to become seasonal wetlands for tens of thousands of resting, feeding, and wintering waterfowl.



Agricultural beanfields at a recent acquisition at Patoka River NWR, Indiana, will be replanted and restored to seasonal wetlands for the benefit of waterfowl. Credit: Heath Hamilton/USFWS.



The newly established Wyoming Toad Conservation Area provides habitat for reintroduction and recovery of its namesake species. Credit: Ben Herndon, The Conservation Fund; used with permission.

Wyoming Toad Conservation Area, Wyoming

In September 2023, the Service used Recreational Access project funding to establish the Wyoming Toad Conservation Area with the acquisition of 1,078 acres. The Wyoming Toad Conservation Area was authorized in 2017 but had 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. Today, Wyoming toads are raised in captivity at several facilities, including the Saratoga National Fish Hatchery. When the

toads reach adulthood, they are released into appropriate habitat in the wild. The property is adjacent to Hutton Lake National Wildlife Refuge in the Laramie Plains and has a diversity of habitat types, including rivers, playa ponds, and sub-irrigated meadows. The property also has existing senior water

FY 2025 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service LWCF Land Acquisition Requested Line-Item Project List

Priority	Project	State(s)	Funding¹	Acres
1	Everglades to Gulf Conservation Area (proposed)	FL	\$2,000,000	200
2	Cache River NWR	AR	\$500,000	120
3	Dakota Grassland CA	Multi - ND/SD	\$8,000,000	8,890
4	Everglades Headwaters NWR/CA	FL	\$8,000,000	600
5	Dakota Tallgrass Prairie WMA	Multi - ND/SD	\$6,000,000	4,000
6	Northern Tallgrass Prairie NWR	Multi - IA/MN	\$750,000	300
7	Rachel Carson NWR	ME	\$1,500,000	146
8	Grasslands WMA	CA	\$1,000,000	250
9	Silvio O. Conte NFWR	Multi - CT/MA/ NH/VT	\$2,000,000	549
10	Willamette Valley CA	OR	\$1,800,000	475
11	Blackwater NWR	MD	\$750,000	160
12	Don Edwards San Francisco Bay NWR	CA	\$4,500,000	79
13	Patoka River NWR	IN	\$1,000,000	200
14	Rappahannock River Valley NWR	VA	\$1,000,000	700
15	Big Muddy NFWR	MO	\$500,000	350
16	Great Thicket NWR	Multi - CT/MA/ ME/NH/NY/RI	\$1,500,000	225
17	Stone Lakes NWR	CA	\$1,000,000	59
18	Petit Manan NWR	ME	\$1,000,000	85
19	Cypress Creek NWR	IL	\$500,000	300
20	Tulare Basin WMA	CA	\$1,000,000	600
21	Middle Mississippi River NWR	Multi - IL/MO	\$500,000	350
22	Bear River Watershed CA	Multi - ID/MT/UT	\$2,750,000	4,200
23	St. Marks NWR	FL	\$1,500,000	300
24	Clarks River NWR	KY	\$1,000,000	500
25	Waccamaw NWR	SC	\$1,000,000	350
26	Minidoka NWR	ID	\$3,000,000	540
27	Okefenokee NWR	Multi - FL/GA	\$5,000,000	1,667
28	Hackmatack NWR	Multi - IL/WI	\$3,290,000	175
29	Mountain Bogs NWR	NC	\$1,000,000	149
30	Rocky Mountain Front CA	MT	\$1,500,000	1,500
	FY 2025 Requested Line-Item Project Total		\$64,840,000	28,019

¹Bureau 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.

FY 2025 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service LWCF Land Acquisition Supplemental Line-Item Project List

Priority	Project	State(s)	Funding¹	Acres
S1	Kilauea Point NWR	HI	\$15,000,000	8
S2	Alaska Refuges (Togiak NWR and Fairbanks Administrative Site)	AK	\$6,000,000	10,034
S3	Rio Mora NWR and CA	NM	\$8,700,000	3,231
S4	Upper Ouachita NWR	LA	\$5,500,000	1,833
	FY 2025 Supplemental List		\$35,200,000	15,106

¹Bureau 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.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Everglades to Gulf Conservation Area (proposed)

Priority: 1

State(s): FL

Congressional District(s): FL-11, FL-16, FL-17, FL-18, FL-26

Location:

Southwest Florida including Charlotte, Collier, Desoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Lee, Manatee, Okeechobee, Polk, and Sarasota Counties.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	200	\$2,000,000
Acquired to Date	0	\$0
Remaining to be Acquired	799,800	\$7,998,000,000

Project Description:

FWS is proposing to establish the Everglades to Gulf Conservation Area, which would conserve a wildlife corridor connecting existing protected lands from Big Cypress National Preserve and Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge north to the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area. The proposed Conservation Area is a collaborative effort to conserve wildlife habitat in Southwest Florida, which could benefit many species of native plants, migratory birds, and wildlife, including 74 federally threatened and endangered species such as the Florida panther and Everglade snail kite. The proposed Everglades to Gulf Conservation Area would protect species and improve their resiliency in the face of climate change and extreme development pressures. Protection and management actions would also support Florida’s family farms and ranches, improve water quality, quantity, and water storage within the Greater Everglades and watersheds entering Charlotte Harbor. The proposal identifies a 4-million-acre Conservation Area in which the Service would pursue conservation easements or fee-title acquisitions from willing sellers only. Conservation easements would provide landowners the opportunity to maintain working lands in their current configuration with no further subdivision or development. Fee-title acquisitions on up to 400,000 acres would provide wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education and interpretation, and opportunities for cultural, traditional, and medicinal uses would be available.

Purpose / Need:

FWS will work with partners and willing sellers to acquire approximately 200 acres in conservation easements and fee title for the proposed Southwest Florida Wildlife Conservation Area. Acquisition will focus on connecting existing protected lands for the benefit of many species of native plants and wildlife.

Cooperator(s):

The 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, Florida Conservation Group, National Wildlife Refuge Association, Trust for

Public Lands, Ducks Unlimited, USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service, The Nature Conservancy, Conservancy of Southwest Florida, Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation, Wildpath, Live Wildly, Defenders of Wildlife, Audubon of Florida, and Audubon of Western Everglades.

Operations & Maintenance

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$12,000	\$10,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs are for monitoring easements and initial habitat restoration. Annual costs include easement monitoring, maintenance, law enforcement, and habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Cache River National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 2

State(s): AR

Congressional District(s): AR-01

Location:

Adjacent to the White and Cache Rivers and Bayou DeView in Monroe, Prairie, Woodruff, Jackson, Cross, and Poinsett Counties.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	120	\$500,000
Acquired to Date	73,978	\$75,806,191
Remaining to be Acquired	212,172	\$529,627,154

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. The Cache River Basin is one of the most important wintering areas for mallard ducks in North America. The 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 the hunting and fishing opportunities provided by the Refuge.

Purpose / Need:

FWS will acquire two tracts totaling 120 acres that will connect several tracts of existing Refuge lands. Acquisition will expand conservation of the floodplain of the White River and protect an important bottomland hardwoods ecosystem containing extant, seasonally flooded forest and permanent hardwood swamp. The tracts contain high value foraging, migrating, and wintering habitat resources for waterfowl, shorebirds, waterbirds, and landbirds, as well as breeding habitat for wood duck and forest-interior birds. Conservation of the tracts will benefit a wide variety of fish and wildlife species, including federally listed endangered northern long-eared bat. Acquisition will expand public wildlife-dependent recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation.

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
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$500

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include boundary sign posting. Annual costs include maintenance.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

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
Estimate for FY 2025	8,890	\$8,000,000
Acquired to Date	107,307	\$54,863,217
Remaining to be Acquired	1,821,273	\$1,734,424,339

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 percent 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. FWS 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 percent of the remaining grassland and 65 percent of wetlands in the PPR have no form of permanent protection. The FWS’s conservation easement acquisition program offers landowners a non-regulatory, financial incentive to permanently protect wildlife habitat on private lands in the PPR.

Purpose / Need:

FWS will acquire conservation easements on approximately 8,890 acres of grassland and wetland habitat in South Dakota and North Dakota. The funding leverages additional funding from Ducks Unlimited and other conservation partners. Acquisitions will benefit migratory birds, plants, and wildlife, including federally listed species such as piping plover, whooping crane, and Dakota skipper. Landscape-scale preservation of the rich mosaic of native grasslands and functional wetlands will bolster the ecosystem’s resiliency to climate change.

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

Describe O&M:

FWS is already monitoring existing easements in the area; the additional costs would be minimal.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area

Priority: 4

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
Estimate for FY 2025	600	\$8,000,000
Acquired to Date	12,580	\$35,398,885
Remaining to be Acquired	138,896	\$405,789,521

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 also 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 provide public outdoor recreational opportunities, such as hiking, hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation.

Purpose / Need:

FWS will acquire approximately 600 acres in fee title 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, benefiting 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, such as hiking, hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation.

Cooperator(s):

The 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, Open Space Institute, Ducks Unlimited, USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service, The Nature Conservancy, and Okeechobee, Osceola, Highlands, and Polk Counties. The FWS is a partner of the Avon Park Air Force Range Sentinel Landscape, which includes the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Avon Park Air Force Range.

Operations & Maintenance

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$12,000	\$10,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include initial habitat restoration and boundary sign posting. Annual costs include easement monitoring, habitat management, and maintenance.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Dakota Tallgrass Prairie Wildlife Management Area

Priority: 5

State(s): ND, SD

Congressional District(s): ND-AL, SD-AL

Location:

South Dakota east of the James River Valley and three counties in the southeast corner of North Dakota.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	4,000	\$6,000,000
Acquired to Date	78,220	\$21,331,026
Remaining to be Acquired	102,780	\$78,125,775

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 slow habitat fragmentation. FWS's long-term goal for the Refuge is to protect 185,000 acres of the remaining tallgrass prairie in the eastern Dakotas using conservation easements. 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 Dakota skipper, Poweshiek skipperling, and monarch butterfly. The tallgrass prairie ecosystem also supports grassland bird species, including Baird’s sparrow, loggerhead shrike, and ferruginous hawk. Conservation easements preserve ecological functions by providing floodwater retention, groundwater recharge, carbon sequestration, improved water quality, and reduced soil erosion. Easements that protect tallgrass prairie reduce disturbance of Native American sites such as burial mounds, stone cairns, teepee rings, and other cultural items.

Purpose / Need:

FWS will acquire wetland and grassland easements on approximately 4,000 acres of tallgrass prairie. Acquisition of these 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	\$0

Describe O&M:

FWS is already monitoring existing easements in the area; the additional costs would be minimal.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 6

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
Estimate for FY 2025	300	\$750,000
Acquired to Date	14,441	\$10,077,441
Remaining to be Acquired	62,259	\$97,811,525

Project Description:

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 patched bumble bee, 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 mitigate 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:

FWS will purchase fee title or conservation easements to protect northern tallgrass prairie habitat. Conservation partners in Iowa and Minnesota will leverage acquisitions by providing matching funds, cost-share opportunities, or donating land. In Iowa, FWS 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 immediately open for public hunting and fishing. Acquisition will increase public wildlife observation, education, and photography opportunities.

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

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$2,000	\$2,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include initial restoration and boundary sign posting. Annual costs include habitat management and easement monitoring.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 7

State(s): ME

Congressional District(s): ME-1

Location: York and Cumberland Counties.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	146	\$1,500,000
Acquired to Date	5,776	\$27,769,190
Remaining to be Acquired	8,962	\$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:

FWS is in negotiations with landowners to acquire tracts that contain riparian and tidal habitats. These acquisitions will support salt marsh migration which is crucial to the long-term viability of this saltmarsh-focused Refuge. One parcel encompasses the west bank of the Little River in Kennebunkport, one of the least developed tidal river habitats in southern Maine. The parcel is adjacent to existing Refuge lands and an additional parcel being acquired at the Refuge. This acquisition would connect these parcels and improve public access for kayaking, fishing, and hunting on the river.

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
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$15,000	\$5,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include initial restoration and boundary sign posting. Annual costs include habitat management, maintenance, and law enforcement.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Grasslands Wildlife Management Area

Priority: 8

State(s): CA

Congressional District(s): CA-13

Location:

Merced County.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	250	\$1,000,000
Acquired to Date	94,997	\$66,318,161
Remaining to be Acquired	38,083	\$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 title 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:

FWS will acquire 250 acres. Acquisition will allow for improved management of adjacent FWS 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.

Cooperator(s):

California Department of Fish and Wildlife, River Partners, Ducks Unlimited, California Audubon Society, Nature Conservancy, and Western Rivers Conservancy.

Operations & Maintenance

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$10,000	\$5,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include boundary sign posting. Annual costs include maintenance and habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 9

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
Estimate for FY 2025	549	\$2,000,000
Acquired to Date	42,699	\$45,916,514
Remaining to be Acquired	54,582	\$81,083,486

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 Refuge provides public recreational opportunities, including wildlife observation, photography, fishing, and environmental education.

Purpose / Need:

FWS will acquire fee title lands or conservation easements on approximately 549 acres. FWS prioritizes tracts that abut existing Refuge lands and other conservation lands, thereby enhancing connectivity for wildlife corridors and public recreation. By conserving floodplains and farms along the mainstem of the Connecticut River, forests in the River's headwaters, and wetlands in between, acquisitions reduce the vulnerability of cities and towns to flooding, and support groundwater recharge in the face of severe drought. Acquisition will expand public recreational opportunities, including wildlife observation, photography, and environmental education.

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, Kestrel Land Trust, Middlesex Land Trust, WildLandscapes International and Connecticut Audubon Society. The four-state congressional delegation provides letters of support annually.

Operations & Maintenance

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$9,000	\$6,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include boundary sign posting. Annual costs include maintenance and habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Willamette Valley Conservation Area

Priority: 10

State(s): OR

Congressional District(s): OR-01, OR-3, OR-4, OR-05

Location:

Willamette Valley including Benton, Lane, Linn, Marion, Polk, and Yamhill Counties.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	475	\$1,800,000
Acquired to Date	0	\$0
Remaining to be Acquired	22,175	\$152,700,000

Project Description:

FWS is proposing to establish the Willamette Valley Conservation Area for the preservation and restoration of oak and prairie ecosystems. FWS is a partner in the Willamette Valley Oak and Prairie Cooperative (Cooperative), which consists of more than three dozen non-governmental organization, 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 and include several federally listed threatened and endangered species such as the Fender's blue butterfly and streaked horned lark. The Conservation Area will complement conservation and public recreation efforts at Ankeny, William Finley, and Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuges.

Purpose / Need:

FWS will acquire a 475-acre conservation easement. The property runs from the valley floor to the top of a hill at 500 feet and contains diverse habitat. The current land use includes approximately 300 acres of mixed woodlands, 200 acres of seed production (orchard grass), a hay field, and pasture with limited grazing. The easement will protect oak and prairie habitat and help provide a wildlife corridor between Baskett Slough NWR to the north and other protected lands to the south. Restoration of native upland prairie will significantly benefit native species such as grassland birds, pollinators, and rare plants.

Cooperator(s):

Willamette Valley Oak and Prairie Cooperative, which is composed of more than three dozen non-governmental organization, 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

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$7,000	\$3,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include initial habitat restoration. Annual costs include easement monitoring.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 11

State(s): MD

Congressional District(s): MD-1

Location:

Dorchester County.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	160	\$750,000
Acquired to Date	33,614	\$33,010,111
Remaining to be Acquired	27,746	\$21,739,889

Project Description:

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1933 as a waterfowl sanctuary for birds migrating along the Atlantic Flyway. The Refuge’s mosaic of tidal marshes and creeks, forested wetlands, and upland forests provide habitat for several high-priority species, including American black duck, prothonotary warbler, wood duck, mallard, brown-headed nuthatch, and wood thrush. The Refuge is home to the largest remaining natural population of the recently delisted Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel and is also home to the largest breeding population of American bald eagles north of Florida on the East Coast. The Refuge contains one third of Maryland’s tidal wetlands. These wetlands provide storm protection to lower Dorchester County, including the town of Cambridge. The Refuge was recognized as a Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention; was named a priority wetland in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan; and is part of a National Audubon Society-designated Important Bird Area. The Refuge has been referred to as the “Everglades of the North,” and has been called one of the “Last Great Places” by The Nature Conservancy. The Refuge provides public recreation, including hunting, fishing, boating, and wildlife observation and photography.

Purpose / Need:

FWS is in discussions with several landowners about acquiring their properties for the Refuge. One property is a 66-acre tract that straddles the tidal swamps of the Nanticoke River and adjacent upland forests. Acquisition of this property will provide a corridor for migration of tidal wetlands into adjacent uplands in response to sea level rise. The property has high quality tidal freshwater swamps along the river and Owens Creek and is adjacent to existing Refuge lands and a Maryland wildlife management area. FWS and conservation partners will restore agricultural lands to shortleaf pine open woodlands for the benefit of migratory birds, the Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel and other wildlife.

Cooperator(s):

The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, the National Park Service (Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park), and the Chesapeake Conservancy.

Operations & Maintenance

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$2,000	\$2,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include initial restoration and boundary sign posting. Annual costs include habitat management and maintenance.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 12

State(s): CA

Congressional District(s): CA-12, CA-14, CA-15, CA-16, CA-17

Location:

Alameda County.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	79	\$4,500,000
Acquired to Date	29,528	\$43,716,134
Remaining to be Acquired	13,478	\$337,090,000

Project Description:

The Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge is 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 seven 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:

FWS will acquire approximately 79 acres as part of the phased acquisition of a 430-acre tract. Acquisition will enable FWS and its 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 conducting listening sessions with the Confederated Villages of Lisjan/Ohlone and other 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

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include boundary sign posting and initial habitat restoration. Annual costs include habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 13

State(s): IN

Congressional District(s): IN - 8

Location:

Pike and Gibson Counties.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	200	\$1,000,000
Acquired to Date	10,774	\$10,111,313
Remaining to be Acquired	11,912	\$38,225,597

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 Indiana bats and whooping cranes. 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:

FWS 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 improve water quality. The tract is easily accessible from county roads and acquisition 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

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$5,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include boundary sign posting. Annual costs include maintenance, law enforcement, and habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 14

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
Estimate for FY 2025	700	\$1,000,000
Acquired to Date	10,048	\$23,775,570
Remaining to be Acquired	9,252	\$27,638,030

Project Description:

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. The Refuge includes freshwater tidal marsh, forest swamp, upland deciduous forest, mixed pine forest, and grassland habitats. 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:

FWS will acquire conservation easements on 700 acres to protect waterfowl habitat along the Rappahannock River. The properties contain emergent wetland plants that provide wintering habitat for thousands of waterfowl, such as Canada geese, mallard, wood duck, and mergansers. This area also holds cultural significance for the Rappahannock Tribe, which owns land adjacent to the Refuge. The proposed acquisitions will support wildlife observation activities, especially for boaters and paddlers.

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
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$2,000	\$1,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up and annual costs include easement monitoring and enforcement.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 15

State(s): MO

Congressional District(s): MO-1, MO-2, MO-3, MO-4, MO-5, MO-6

Location:

In the floodplain of the Missouri River from Kansas City to St. Louis.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	350	\$500,000
Acquired to Date	18,388	\$9,322,203
Remaining to be Acquired	41,359	\$22,366,500

Project Description:

The historic Missouri River, nicknamed "Big Muddy" because of its murky, sediment-filled waters, provides beneficial habitat for many wildlife species. The river's ability to carve through floodplains and create side channels, wetlands, and oxbow lakes has attracted and sustained wildlife since the retreat of glaciers from the region thousands of years ago. Drastic changes began to occur on the Missouri River soon after the journey of Lewis and Clark described its wildlife to the world in the early 1800s. Over the next century, hundreds of steamships sank in the river and efforts began to control it. By the 1980s, over 700 miles of river had been channelized, reducing risks but also crucial habitat. Because of this and further damage by major flooding, the Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge was established in September of 1994 for the development, advancement, management, conservation and protection of fish and wildlife resources. The Refuge stretches across the entire State of Missouri, connecting four of the top five most populated cities in the State and running parallel to Interstate 70, with 60 percent of the State's population living within 30 miles. The Refuge encompasses river features, such as islands, chutes, bends, and tributary confluences. Refuge purposes include reconnecting the Missouri River and its tributaries to their floodplains, restoring hydrology, returning native vegetation, reducing invasive species, and offering wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities. The Refuge provides public recreational opportunities, including hunting, fishing, hiking, and wildlife viewing and photography.

Purpose / Need:

FWS will acquire 350 acres. Acquisitions will improve public access to existing Refuge lands and provide habitat for migratory birds, fish, and wildlife. The acquisitions will enable the FWS to protect and restore bottomland forest and Missouri River floodplain for the benefit of numerous endangered and protected species, including pallid sturgeon, least tern, and a host of mussel species. Restored floodplains will mitigate flooding events for downstream communities. Restoration of lands is vital to the survival of native species and will involve partnerships with landowners to keep working lands intact. Acquisitions will expand public recreational activities, including hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing.

Cooperator(s):

Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, Mysun Charitable Foundation, Great Rivers Greenway, Conservation Federation of Missouri, Audubon Missouri, Ray and Jackson Counties, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Operations & Maintenance

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$10,000	\$2,500

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include boundary sign posting. Annual costs include habitat management, law enforcement, and maintenance.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 16

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
Estimate for FY 2025	225	\$1,500,000
Acquired to Date	401	\$1,682,564
Remaining to be Acquired	14,374	\$97,317,436

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. 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. FWS 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:

FWS is in negotiations with several landowners to acquire property for the Refuge. One target property is a 1,086-acre farm located within the Northern Housatonic focus area. The property has a mix of pastures, woodlands, and wetlands and contains high-quality early successional habitat, rating it as a priority for New England cottontail conservation. The property is located within the Hudson River valley, providing significant potential for landscape-scale conservation. 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); Dutchess Land Conservancy (NY); Housatonic Valley Association; Harlem Valley Conservation Alliance (NY); Open Space Institute of NY; Massachusetts Audubon Society; Connecticut Audubon Society; York Land Trust (ME); Kittery Land Trust (ME); Great Works Regional Land Trust (ME); Maine Coast Heritage Trust; Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire; Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership (NH).

Operations & Maintenance

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$7,000	\$7,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include boundary sign posting. Annual costs include habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 17

State(s): CA

Congressional District(s): CA-07

Location:

Sacramento County.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	59	\$1,000,000
Acquired to Date	6,684	\$7,841,422
Remaining to be Acquired	11,053	\$128,111,017

Project Description:

Established in 1992, Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is an urban Refuge located 10 miles from downtown Sacramento and 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:

FWS will acquire tracts to protect and maintain foraging areas for migrating and wintering birds, which would otherwise be converted to permanent crops that are not wildlife friendly. Acquisition and restoration will benefit migratory birds, such as sandhill cranes, and expand wildlife observation 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
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$3,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include boundary sign posting. Annual costs include maintenance and habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 18

State(s): ME

Congressional District(s): ME-1, ME-2

Location:

Islands along the Maine Coast from off Portland to the Canadian border.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	85	\$1,000,000
Acquired to Date	6,770	\$11,261,448
Remaining to be Acquired	3,651	\$6,073,183

Project Description:

Petit Manan National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1974 to benefit migratory birds. The Refuge protects many diverse habitats across units on the mainland and 64 islands that stretch along the entire coastline of Maine. The islands vary in size from 0.5 to 1,312 acres. Eight of the islands are predominantly forested with mature stands of balsam fir and red spruce. Eleven of these islands currently support active bald eagle nests. While the other 53 islands within the Refuge may provide some forested habitat, their primary resource value is to the open herbaceous habitat that provides valuable nesting habitat for a variety of seabirds, including Atlantic puffins, razorbills, Leach's storm-petrels, and common eiders. The Refuge also contains five lighthouses. Excursion boat trips past the lighthouses and seabird colonies are important to the local economy.

Purpose / Need:

FWS will acquire important seabird nesting habitat. One property is an 8-acre tract that is the last of three inholdings on Metinic Island. The Refuge has a successful seabird restoration project on Metinic Island, which includes one of only four remaining Arctic tern colonies in Maine. Since 1998 the colony has grown from zero pairs to over 1,200 pairs. The tract also has nesting colonies of Leach's storm petrels and common eiders. Acquisition of this tract will expand habitat protection as well as protect existing Refuge lands.

Cooperator(s):

Maine Coast Heritage Trust.

Operations & Maintenance

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$3,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include boundary sign posting. Annual costs include maintenance and habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 19

State(s): IL

Congressional District(s): IL-12

Location:

Pulaski County.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	300	\$500,000
Acquired to Date	16,514	\$13,139,370
Remaining to be Acquired	19,871	\$24,713,750

Project Description:

Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1990 and is 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. 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:

FWS will acquire tracts totaling 300 acres of historical bottomland hardwood forests and wetlands that are currently in agricultural production. FWS will restore the tracts to provide habitat for waterfowl, waterbirds, landbirds, and federally listed endangered Indiana bats. The tracts are accessible 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

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$7,000	\$3,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include initial restoration and boundary sign posting. Annual costs include maintenance, law enforcement, and habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Tulare Basin Wildlife Management Area

Priority: 20

State(s): CA

Congressional District(s): CA-22

Location:

In Kern County, in the southern San Joaquin Valley.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	600	\$1,000,000
Acquired to Date	4,439	\$8,891,554
Remaining to be Acquired	16,961	\$86,804,900

Project Description:

Tulare Basin Wildlife Management Area (WMA) 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:

FWS will acquire tracts totaling 600 acres. Acquisitions 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. 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
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$2,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include boundary sign posting. Annual costs include maintenance and habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Middle Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 21

State(s): IL, MO

Congressional District(s): IL-12, IL-13, MO-1, MO-2, MO-3, MO-8

Location:

Along the Mississippi River, from St. Louis, Missouri to Cairo, Illinois.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	350	\$500,000
Acquired to Date	8,216	\$3,042,400
Remaining to be Acquired	95,566	\$235,497,600

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 wildlife viewing, hunting, and fishing.

Purpose / Need:

FWS 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 will enable FWS to restore the naturally functioning floodplain system, which increases water quality and water storage during flood events. Acquisition will also expand public recreational opportunities.

Cooperator(s):

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, local municipal entities, and the 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, working together since 2004, towards a common goal of restoring and enhancing the natural resources of the river corridor from St. Louis, Missouri, to Cairo, Illinois.

Operations & Maintenance

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$8,000	\$2,000

Describe O&M:

Startup costs include initial restoration and boundary sign posting. Annual costs include habitat management, law enforcement, and maintenance.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Bear River Watershed Conservation Area

Priority: 22

State(s): ID, UT, WY

Congressional District(s): ID-2; UT-1, UT-3; 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
Estimate for FY 2025	4,200	\$2,750,000
Acquired to Date	8,272	\$8,532,140
Remaining to be Acquired	911,173	\$898,220,855

Project Description:

The Bear River Watershed Conservation Area was established in 2016. FWS works with private landowners to coordinate watershed-wide conservation efforts and maintain important wildlife habitat on 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 acquisitions 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:

FWS will acquire conservation easements on two properties totaling 4,200 acres in Idaho. The easements will preserve and protect in perpetuity the habitat quality, functions, and values of the lands, including existing agricultural practices, to maintain aquatic, wetland, riparian, and upland habitat; provide water, cover, food and space for native fish and wildlife; maintain wildlife habitat connectivity and migratory corridors; maintain healthy populations of native wildlife species; and protect and maintain water quality and quantity.

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

Describe O&M:

Annual costs include easement monitoring and enforcement.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 23

State(s): FL

Congressional District(s): FL-2

Location:

In the Florida Panhandle in Wakulla, Jefferson, and Taylor Counties.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	300	\$1,500,000
Acquired to Date	87,738	\$24,457,032
Remaining to be Acquired	23,544	\$59,287,415

Project Description:

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1931 to provide wintering habitat for migratory birds. It encompasses over 80,000 acres 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, as well as 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 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 such as hiking, hunting, photography, and wildlife viewing.

Purpose / Need:

FWS will acquire 300 acres to complete the phased acquisition of a 1,306-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 on these species by enabling them to migrate inland. Acquisition will also benefit Florida black bear and migratory birds. Acquisition will provide public wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, including improving access to existing Refuge lands.

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
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$4,000	\$12,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include boundary sign posting. Annual costs include habitat management and restoration, maintenance, and law enforcement.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 24

State(s): KY

Congressional District(s): KY-1

Location:

McCracken, Graves, and Marshall Counties.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	500	\$1,000,000
Acquired to Date	9,428	\$11,300,623
Remaining to be Acquired	42,973	\$129,544,000

Project Description:

Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1998 to protect, enhance, and manage a valuable bottomland wetland ecosystem along the East and West Forks of the Clarks River, for the benefit of waterfowl, neotropical migratory songbirds, forest wildlife, riverine species, and a wide array of other species associated with bottomland hardwood forest. The Refuge provides public recreational activities, such as horseback riding, hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and photography.

Purpose / Need:

FWS will acquire several tracts totaling 500 acres. The tracts consist primarily of bottomland hardwood forest and agricultural lands. FWS will restore the agricultural lands to bottomland hardwood forest to benefit waterfowl, including wintering mallards, black ducks, ring-necked ducks, hooded mergansers, and common mergansers, as well as migratory songbirds and other wildlife. Acquisition will provide connectivity across Refuge lands and expand public recreational opportunities, including wildlife viewing and photography.

Cooperator(s):

Southern Conservation Corp., USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, USFS-Land Between the Lakes, The Nature Conservancy, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl Foundation, and Friends of Clarks River NWR.

Operations & Maintenance

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$20,000	\$5,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include initial restoration, development of public access points, and boundary sign posting. Annual costs include habitat management and maintenance.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 25

State(s): SC

Congressional District(s): SC-7

Location:

Adjacent to the Great Pee Dee and Waccamaw Rivers in Georgetown and Horry Counties.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	350	\$1,000,000
Acquired to Date	37,579	\$25,805,505
Remaining to be Acquired	19,903	\$86,026,387

Project Description:

Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1997 and consists of wetland habitats ranging from historic, broken, and actively managed tidal rice fields, to black water and alluvial flood plain forested wetlands of the Waccamaw and Great Pee Dee Rivers. These tidal freshwater wetland ecosystems are some of the most diverse freshwater wetland systems found in North America. They not only provide important habitat corridors for wildlife, but they also play a critical role in the filtration and storm water retention for the primary drinking water resource of the greater Grand Strand region. The Refuge provides public recreation activities, including fishing, birding, hiking, wildlife observation, photography, and hunting.

Purpose / Need:

FWS will begin phased acquisition of a 9,100-acre parcel on Sandy Island, which FWS has leased since 2012. Sandy Island is an interior barrier island bounded by the Waccamaw River on the east and the Great Pee Dee River on the west. Habitats include old-growth longleaf pine, pocosin wetlands, and tidal freshwater wetlands. The acquisition will secure habitat for federally listed threatened and endangered species, including the red-cockaded woodpecker, northern long-eared bat, and wood stork, as well as other rare and imperiled plants and animals. Resident and migratory species, including swallow-tailed kites and wood ducks, will benefit from the acquisition. These lands are also part of an essential corridor for black bears and provide coastal black bear habitat. FWS has a strong working relationship with the intact, thriving Gullah Geechee Community on Sandy Island and acquisition will help protect their cultural landscape.

Cooperator(s):

The Nature Conservancy, Open Space Institute, Gullah Geechee Community, and Black River Tribal Interest Working Group.

Operations & Maintenance

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$5,000

Describe O&M:

Startup costs include boundary sign posting. Annual costs include habitat management, maintenance, and law enforcement.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 26

State(s): ID

Congressional District(s): ID-2

Location:

Blaine County.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	540	\$3,000,000
Acquired to Date	24,618	\$0
Remaining to be Acquired	823.70	\$4,576,106

Project Description:

Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1909 to preserve native birds and their breeding grounds. About half of the Refuge is open water and wetlands. The surrounding landscape is arid, and the wetlands are an oasis attracting numerous wildlife species. Colony nesting birds include Western and Clark's grebes, cormorants, great blue herons, and American white pelicans. The remaining Refuge has low, rolling uplands covered by sagebrush, grasses, and isolated juniper patches amongst scattered outcrops of basalt. This habitat supports St. Anthony Dunes tiger beetles, a candidate species for listing under the ESA. The North Alternate Branch of the Oregon Trail ran across the north side of the Refuge. Even though some stretches of the trail are now under water, visitors can still see ruts from the wagons in many places. The Refuge headquarters building, manager's residence, and stone walls are remaining historical relics of the Civilian Conservation Corp's Camp Minidoka that operated from 1935 through 1942. The Refuge provides public outdoor recreation including hiking, fishing, hunting, and wildlife viewing.

Purpose / Need:

FWS will acquire two properties totaling 540 acres. The first acquisition is approximately 500 acres that border the Snake River. The property has historically been grazed, resulting in highly degraded riparian habitat. FWS will restore the habitat, benefiting many species including warblers, flycatchers, orioles, and raptors. Acquisition will also expand public recreational activities, such as fishing, hunting, and wildlife viewing. The second acquisition will be either a conservation easement or fee purchase of 40 acres of wetland and river habitat. The banks along the waterbodies of this property are severely eroding from farming up to the edge of the water; restoration will benefit waterfowl including Canada geese, mallards, pintails, gadwall, and teal. If not acquired by FWS, this property will likely be developed for private residences, exacerbating trespass issues and further fragmenting habitat.

Cooperator(s):

State of Idaho

Operations & Maintenance

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$15,000	\$5,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include boundary sign posting and habitat restoration. Annual costs include habitat management and restoration, maintenance, and law enforcement.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 27

State(s): FL, GA

Congressional District(s): FL-3; GA-1, GA-8

Location:

East of the Suwannee River in Charlton, Clinch, and Ware Counties in Georgia and Baker County in Florida.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	1,667	\$5,000,000
Acquired to Date	406,936	\$5,625,271
Remaining to be Acquired	114,976	\$228,423,000

Project Description:

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1937 as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife, and to conserve the unique qualities of the Okefenokee Swamp. The Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge has been nominated as a World Heritage Site and if inscribed would be the only World Heritage Site wholly managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Refuge is the headwaters of the Suwannee and St. Marys Rivers. Habitats provide for federally listed threatened and endangered species, such as red-cockaded woodpecker, wood storks, indigo snakes, and a wide variety of other wildlife species. More than 600 plant species have been identified on Refuge lands. In addition, the Refuge is a Wetland of International Importance (RAMSAR Convention – 1971) because it is one of the world’s largest intact freshwater ecosystems. The Refuge provides public recreational opportunities, including canoeing, hiking, fishing, hunting, and wildlife observation and photography.

Purpose / Need:

FWS will begin phased acquisition of a 6,100-acre tract that is adjacent to the western border of the Refuge. Acquisition of this land ties in the western boundary of the Refuge with State Highway 177, which will be a natural firebreak for natural and prescribed fires and will provide better protection for private lands. FWS will restore slash pine plantations to longleaf pine, providing a more fire resilient buffer tree species. Acquisition will create a buffer around the swamp from future development, such as ranchette subdivisions and mineral mining, thereby protecting water quality. The tract will expand public recreational opportunities, including providing access to existing Refuge lands that are not currently open due to the juxtaposition of private land ownerships. In addition, the acquisition will expand protection for a proposed Traditional Cultural Property by the Muscogee Nation.

Cooperator(s):

The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, Okefenokee-Osceola Longleaf Initiative, the Muscogee Nation, and the Great Okefenokee Association of Lands Owners (GOAL), which is an organization of approximately 28 Federal and State land management agencies, along with large timber companies and numerous small landowners.

Operations & Maintenance

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$7,000	\$20,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include boundary sign posting. Annual costs include maintenance and habitat management. Some costs for restoration and habitat enhancement projects are shared with conservation partners.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 28

State(s): IL, WI

Congressional District(s): IL-10, IL-11, IL-16; WI-1

Location:

Walworth County in Wisconsin and McHenry County in Illinois.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	175	\$3,290,000
Acquired to Date	538	\$2,867,720
Remaining to be Acquired	10,893	\$56,863,280

Project Description:

Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge was established in 2012 and is an urban refuge that is centrally located between the communities of Chicago and Rockford, Illinois, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It is a conservation and outreach hub for the 12 million people that reside within these communities. The Refuge purposes include the protection, restoration, and management of remnant oak savannah, tallgrass prairie, riparian corridors, and wetlands. Of the ecosystems that once defined this area, less than 0.01 percent of the tallgrass prairie and 12 percent of remnant oak ecosystems remain. The Refuge complements State and local plans, including the Chicago Wilderness Green Infrastructure Vision; the Chicago Wilderness Oak Ecosystem Recovery Plan; the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan; the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan; Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan; the Grassland Bird Conservation Design in the Chicago Region; the McHenry County Green Infrastructure Network; and the Nippersink Watershed Initiative. The Refuge provides habitat for breeding migratory birds such as Henslow’s sparrows, bobolink, and eastern meadowlark, and several federally listed endangered and threatened species, including prairie bush clover, eastern prairie fringed orchid, whooping crane, and rusty patched bumble bee. Public recreational opportunities include hunting, fishing, hiking, birding, photography, environmental interpretation, and education.

Purpose / Need:

FWS will begin phased acquisition of a 950-acre tract. The tract contains a large, intact wetland, a spring-fed stream, and one of the largest remaining stands of white and burr oak savanna in the Midwest. The Service will restore agricultural areas to wetland and grassland habitat. Acquisition will expand public recreational opportunities, such as hunting, fishing, hiking, birding, photography, environmental interpretation, and education, all in an urban area.

Cooperator(s):

Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Openlands, The Land Conservancy of McHenry County, Ducks Unlimited, McHenry County Conservation District, McHenry County Conservation Foundation, Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge, Geneva

Lake Conservancy, Nippersink Watershed Association, Kettle Moraine Land Trust, Illinois Audubon Society, 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:	\$20,000	\$10,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include initial restoration, development of public access points, and boundary sign posting. Annual expenses include habitat management and maintenance.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Mountain Bogs National Wildlife Refuge

Priority: 29

State(s): NC

Congressional District(s): NC-5, NC-11, TN-1

Location:

Located in Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Clay, Graham, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, McDowell, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, and Wilkes Counties within western North Carolina, and Carter and Johnson Counties, Tennessee.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	149	\$1,000,000
Acquired to Date	1,641	\$0
Remaining to be Acquired	21,688	\$92,748,000

Project Description:

Mountain Bogs National Wildlife Refuge was established in 2015 to preserve Southern Appalachian bogs in North Carolina and Tennessee, where about 90 percent of the area's mountain bogs have been lost. Bogs are defined by their nutrient-poor, acidic, and saturated soil, and are usually found in depressions or low-lying areas filled by precipitation. Mosses and shrubs thrive while mature trees are rare. Bogs act as buffers in times of both drought and flood, replenishing springs during dry spells and catching overflow during heavy rain. They provide vital habitat for several federally threatened and endangered species, neotropical migratory birds, pollinators, and a variety of herpetofauna.

Purpose / Need:

FWS will acquire several parcels totaling 149 acres at Skunk Cabbage Bog within the Cherry Conservation Partnership Area. The parcels contain forested uplands and open and forested wetlands (i.e., swamp forest-bog complex, Southern Appalachian bogs, open meadow bogs, and floodplain pools). Southern Appalachian Mountain bogs are some of the rarest wetland habitats in North America and are recognized hotspots for biodiversity and endemic species. In addition to bog turtles, the acquisitions support State listed species such as eastern hellbender (recently petitioned for Federal status), Kanawha darter, and 13 species of State listed plants including bog jack-in-the-pulpit and marsh marigold. Other federally listed and at-risk species that would benefit from acquisition are northern long-eared bat, gray bat, monarch butterfly, tricolored bat, and little brown bat. There is urgency to these acquisitions due to the explosion of development in the Southern Appalachian Mountains, with associated wetland ditching and draining.

Cooperator(s):

The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, Blue Ridge Conservancy, North Carolina Natural Heritage Program, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, and 130 of Chatham, LLC (a private company heavily involved in land protection efforts).

Operations & Maintenance

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$5,000	\$10,000

Describe O&M:

Start-up costs include initial habitat restoration and boundary sign posting. Annual costs include habitat management.

Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year: 2025

Project / Unit: Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Area

Priority: 30

State(s): MT

Congressional District(s): MT-1, MT-2

Location:

Western Montana.

Project Estimates

Land/Cost	Acres	Cost
Estimate for FY 2025	1,500	\$1,500,000
815 Acquired to Date	101,287	\$33,774,500
Remaining to be Acquired	525,213	\$525,213,000

Project Description:

Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Area is part of the Crown of the Continent—one of the largest intact ecosystems in the United States. The Conservation Area protects a wild landscape of sage steppe, mixed grass prairie, montane forest, lakes, and rivers, and supports habitat for priority wildlife species including grizzly bear, wolverine, Canada lynx, trumpeter swan, grassland nesting birds, bull trout, and migration corridors for large herds of ungulates.

Purpose / Need:

FWS will acquire conservation easements on approximately 1,500 acres of native grassland. A priority property for easement acquisition is a working ranch that includes several miles of Dearborn River frontage and is dotted with seasonal wetlands. The proposed acquisition is in the heart of the "Continental Divide to Rocky Mountain Front East" priority area identified in the State Action Plan to protect critical elk, deer, and pronghorn antelope wintering habitat and migration corridors. The property is also within a significant raptor flyway. Conservation easement acquisition will protect nesting habitat for grassland birds and waterfowl as well as critical habitat for the threatened grizzly bear. The proposed easement acquisition buffers public lands open to hunting and supports the rural ranching economy.

Cooperator(s):

The Conservation Fund; The Nature Conservancy; The Richard King Mellon Foundation; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation; Rocky Mountain Front Landowner Advisory Group; Mule Deer Foundation; and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

Operations & Maintenance

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$0	\$2,500

Describe O&M:

Annual costs are for easement monitoring and enforcement.

LWCF Category: Grants to States

Activity: Highlands Conservation Act

	2023 Actual	2024 Estimate	2025				Change from 2024 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Grants to States							
Highlands Conservation Act	10,000	10,000	0	0	0	10,000	0
<i>FTE</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>			<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>

All FY 2023 and 2024, and 2025 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 Program¹](#), and works in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, State Conservation Agencies, and conservation organizations.

Since passage of the HCA in 2004, 15,852 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 turtle²](#), [northern long-eared bat³](#), [brook floater mussel⁴](#), and the [New England cottontail⁵](#). 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.

¹ <https://www.fws.gov/program/highlands-conservation-act-grant>
² <https://www.fws.gov/species/bog-turtle-glyptemys-muhlenbergii>
³ <https://www.fws.gov/species/northern-long-eared-bat-myotis-septentrionalis>
⁴ <https://www.fws.gov/species/brook-floater-alasmidonta-varicosa>
⁵ <https://www.fws.gov/species/new-england-cottontail-sylvilagus-transitionalis>

The following are examples of recent HCA projects from the past year:



Credit: Nicholas Tonelli

In September 2023, the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry partnered with the regional land trust, Natural Lands to add 47 acres to the Ruth Zimmerman Natural Area, protecting a unique ecosystem of pin oak, swamp white oak, winterberry holly, and poison sumac growing together in their native habitat. Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn described the benefits of the HCA program for the Commonwealth. “We are pleased to add this land to the William Penn Forest District and to expand the Zimmerman Natural Area. As the Commonwealth faces growing development pressures of our natural spaces, it is important to celebrate acquisitions of this type for the impact they have in preserving plant and wildlife habitat, as well as providing open spaces that are accessible for recreation.”

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Affairs conserved seven properties with funding from the HCA program, including three conservation easements that expanded the Hidden Valley Preserve by 187 acres, to be managed by the Steep Rock Association land trust. The project adds to a large network of conservation and recreation land and expands opportunities for hiking, biking, fishing, and bird watching, in addition to protecting drinking water well recharge areas for a nearby school.



Colleen Sculley, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Assistant Regional Director, cutting the ribbon at the Hidden Valley Expansion opening. Credit: Steep Rock Association



Credit: Liz Willey

The Highlands Summit met in New Jersey on November 6. This conference brought together over 100 representatives from the Service, State partners, and land conservation organizations to train and share resources related to conserving land in the Highlands region.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Highlands is \$10,000,000 and 2 FTE, level with FY 2024.

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), \$14,442,000, to remain available until expended, to be derived from the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund.

Note.--A full-year 2024 appropriation for this account was not enacted at the time the Budget was prepared; therefore, the Budget assumes this account is operating under the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2024 and Other Extensions Act (Division A of Public Law 118–15, as amended). The amounts included for 2024 reflect the annualized level provided by the continuing resolution.

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

	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change from 2024 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Conservation Grants (\$000)	13,500	13,500	0	0	-5,500	8,000	-5,500
Conservation Planning Assistance Grants (\$000)	8,362	8,362	0	0	-4,622	3,740	-4,622
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
Total Current Year Appropriated Funds	24,564	24,564	0	0	-10,122	14,442	-10,122
<i>FTE</i>	11	11	0	0	0	11	0
Land and Water Conservation Fund – Species Recovery Land Acquisition (Mandatory)* (\$000)	11,162	14,162	0	0	0	14,162	0
Land and Water Conservation Fund – HCP Land Acquisition (Mandatory)* (\$000)	21,638	26,000	0	0	0	26,000	0
Total Current Year (CESCF + LWCF)	57,364	64,726	0	0	-10,122	54,604	-10,122
Mandatory – Unavailable Receipts** (\$000)	100,313	86,196	0	0	+10,156	96,352	+10,156

*FY 2025 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. Additional tables related to the entirety of LWCF funding provided to the Service are in the Land Acquisition chapter. LWCF CESCF Species Recovery Land Acquisition and HCP Land Acquisition amounts are compared to the 2024 request.

**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 2025 Program Changes for Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
Conservation Grants	-5,500	0
HCP Assistance Grants	-4,622	0
Program Changes	-10,122	0

FY 2025 LWCF CESCOF Summary Table (\$)

Budget Authority/ Activity	Amount
FY 2025 New Budget Authority	40,135,102
FY 2025 Estimated Sequestration Reduction (-5.7%)	-2,287,701
FY 2025 Estimated Pop Up (+5.7% of 2023)	2,314,599
FY 2025 Net Budget Authority	40,162,000

Program Overview

The Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF; Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act), 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 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 CESCF 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.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget supports:

Traditional Conservation Grants

The Service published notices of funding opportunities in December 2023 and anticipates making award

announcements in the spring of FY 2024. With the requested program funding, the Service expects to make 48 fewer awards in FY 2025 as compared to what is estimated to be awarded with the FY 2024 annualized CR level (assuming the average grant amount is consistent with that of FY 2023).

The Service awarded 130 Traditional Conservation Grants in FY 2023. Each project includes Federal funds provided through the CESCOF program, but, in all cases, funds were leveraged by State, county, city, or private matching funds. Some examples include:

- Yellow-billed Cuckoo Habitat Restoration and Connectivity on the Snake River in Idaho, \$60,000;
- Habitat restoration for the eastern massasauga rattlesnake in Ohio, \$59,353;
- Attributes of Canada Lynx Reproduction in Colorado, \$80,000;
- Endangered Pallid Sturgeon Program in Montana, \$30,524; and
- Piping Plover Recovery in Maine, \$39,867.



*Collared adult male Canada lynx. Photo by
Lisa Hupp, USFWS*

Conservation Planning Assistance Grants

The Service published a notice of funding opportunity in September 2023 and anticipates making award announcements in the spring of FY 2024. With the requested program funding, the Service expects to make 7 fewer awards in FY 2025 as compared to what is estimated to be awarded with the FY 2024 annualized CR level (assuming the average grant amount is constant with that of FY 2023).

The Service awarded 6 Conservation Planning Assistance Grants in FY 2023. 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>).

- Lower Flint River Basin Habitat Conservation Plan (Multiple Counties, Georgia) \$663,710. This grant will support the completion of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Lower Flint River Basin HCP. The HCP is aimed at protecting and enhancing aquatic habitat to support the persistence of federally listed freshwater mussel species. The Lower Flint River Basin's (LFRB) economy is primarily agriculture-based,

so the HCP will result in a better understanding of how waterflow affects the listed freshwater mussel species, and how to mitigate population loss resulting from drought and/or irrigation. The HCP is aimed directly at 8 species of federally listed freshwater mussel species, but the benefits will extend to the ecosystem level in the streams of the LFRB.

- Oregon Private Forest Accord Aquatic Habitat Conservation Plan (State-wide) \$1,000,000. This grant will support further development of the Oregon Department of Forestry's Oregon Private Forest Accord Aquatic HCP. The HCP is being created to update Oregon's Forest Practices Act and to promote conservation of aquatic species including the Columbia torrent salamander, bull trout, green sturgeon, eulachon, coastal and cutthroat trout, Great Basin redband trout, Columbia River chum, as well as various subspecies of steelhead, coho, and Chinook.

Recovery Land Acquisition Grants

The Service published a notice of funding opportunity in September 2023 and anticipates making award announcements in the spring of FY 2024. With the requested program funding derived from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Service expects to make the same number of awards in FY 2025 compared to FY 2024.

The Service awarded 5 Recovery Land Acquisition Grants in FY 2023. 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.

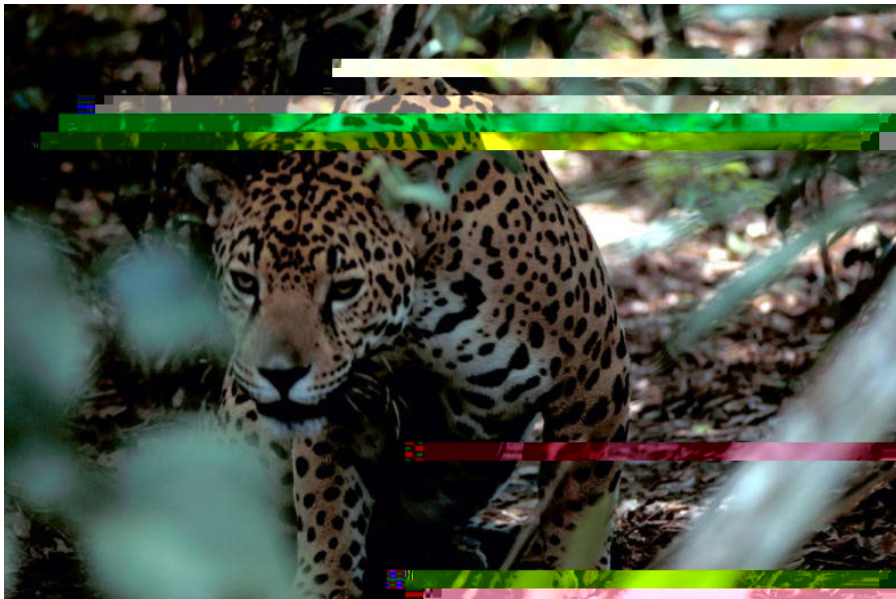
(For more information, please see <https://www.fws.gov/program/cooperative-endangered-species-conservation-fund>).

- Permanent Protection for Endangered Species in the U.S. Virgin Islands (St. Croix) \$1,376,832. This is the first land acquisition award for the U.S. Virgin Islands in program history. This grant will enable the acquisition of 42 acres located on the southern shore of St. Croix containing a significant portion of the only known population of the endangered *Catesbea melanocarpa* population occurring on the island. The purchase of this property will also directly support recovery goals for the federally endangered St. Croix agave, leatherback turtle, Egger's century plant, and St. Croix ground lizard. The property will expand and connect a range of protected habitats including nearshore upland, beach, and nearshore marine. The adjacent property to the south consists of a protected beach which serves as important habitat for nesting leatherback, hawksbill, and green sea turtles.



Green sea turtle. Photo by Eric Dale, USFWS

- Sonoita Creek Headwaters and Spring Protection (Santa Cruz) \$2,331,727. This grant will support the acquisition of properties totaling 1,272 acres that will directly contribute to the recovery of federally listed species including the Gila topminnow, ocelot, Chiricahua leopard frog, and jaguar. These acquisitions will preserve an ecologically significant stretch of Sonoita Creek and improve landscape connectivity between existing protected areas.



Jaguar. Photo by Gary Stolz, USFWS

Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants

The Service published a notice of funding opportunity in September 2023 and anticipates making award announcements in the spring of FY 2024. With the requested program funding derived from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Service expects to make the same number of awards in FY 2025

compared to FY 2024.

The Service awarded 5 HCP Land Acquisition Grants in FY 2023. 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.)

- Davis County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition (Davis County, Iowa) \$1,723,125. This grant enables the acquisition and permanent protection of 510 acres of priority watershed habitat for the benefit of species covered by the MidAmerican Energy Company HCP including the Indiana bat, little brown bat, northern long-eared bat and tricolored bat. The site targeted for acquisition has high ecological functioning with forest, grassland, and water habitats and is directly adjacent to a mitigation site protected for the HCP and more than doubles the protected area.
- Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition (Riverside County, California) \$8,971,625. This grant will enable the acquisition and permanent protection of up to 336 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 Quino checkerspot butterfly, least Bell's vireo, Munz's onion, Riverside fairy shrimp, coastal California gnatcatcher, Stephens' kangaroo rat, western pond turtle and western spadefoot toad.

Justification for 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund is \$14,442,000 and 11 FTE, a program change of -\$10,122,000 and -0 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

Conservation Grants (-\$5,500,000/ -0 FTE) – This reduction will result in 48 fewer awards being given to States and Territories to implement recovery actions for listed species, implement conservation measures for candidate species, and perform the research and monitoring critical to conservation of at-risk species.

Conservation Planning Assistance Grants (-\$4,622,000/ -0 FTE) – This reduction will result in 7 fewer awards being given 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 and candidate conservation agreements with assurances. 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.

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 (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.

Appropriation: Great American Outdoors Act – NPLLRF

	2023 Actual	2024 Estimate	2025				Change from 2024 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Estimate	
Obligation Authority for Deferred Maintenance Reduction (\$000)	95,191**	95,000	0	0	0	95,000	0
TOTAL, Great American Outdoors Act (\$000) <i>FTE</i>	95,191** <i>71</i>	95,000* <i>71</i>	0 <i>0</i>	0 <i>0</i>	0 <i>0</i>	95,000 <i>71</i>	0 <i>0</i>

**The 2023 actual amount includes the Earnings on Investments applied to the FWS Contingency Fund.

FY 2025 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Allocation Summary Table	
<i>(Dollars in Thousands)</i>	
Budget Authority/Activity	Amount
FY 2025 Allocation (estimate)	95,000
FY 2025 Sequestration (estimate)	-5,415
FY 2025 Sequestration Pop-Up (FY 2024 estimate)	+5,415
FY 2025 Proposed Projects	-95,000
Total Available/Unallocated (estimate)	0

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 consistent with lifecycle investment plans 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 has authorized up to \$1.9 billion annually to be deposited in the LRF Fund for projects that address deferred maintenance. 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 into the Treasury as miscellaneous receipts under Federal law in the preceding fiscal year. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service currently receives 5 percent of the authorized

LRF amount available.

This funding provides an opportunity to strategically address DM backlog projects at priority-National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) locations. The assets of the NWRS comprise a taxpayer investment of \$57,247,996 billion in 46,634 assets. Of these assets, approximately 45 percent 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 the GAOA LRF program as administered through the NWRS are:

- 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 percent most visited field stations, which support 80 percent 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.
- 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 DM 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 DM 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 NWRS 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 no-year appropriations and are not subject to time constraints for obligation. The FWS will continue to emphasize the priority of the GAOA program with internal metrics.

Actual and Planned Accomplishments

Overall, FWS made significant progress in funds obligation and construction progress in executing the GAOA program in FY 2023. By the end of FY 2023, the FWS had all FY 2021 funded projects in the construction phase, as well as significant components of the FY 2022 and FY 2023 funded project lists. Many component projects from the FY 2021-FY 2023 project lists have been completed. Throughout these fiscal years, the FWS continued to execute significant DM retirement projects with the MAT members funded from the GAOA legislation.

Examples of accomplishments during the year included the construction completion and ribbon-cuttings on the replacement Visitor Center at the Crab Orchard NWR in Illinois and the replacement Administrative and Visitor Center building at the Bombay Hook NWR in Delaware. Additionally, the replacement Administrative and Visitor Center building for the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Tule Lake NWR, California) was completed and placed into use. At the Kenai NWR in Alaska, the rehabilitation of the Jim's Landing Boat Launch, parking, and public use area was completed to reopen this highly used recreational site.



Crab Orchard NWR – Replacement Visitor Center, completed in August 2023. Credit: USFWS



Bombay Hook NWR – Ribbon Cutting on the Replacement Administrative and Visitor Center Building, completed in September 2023. Credit: USFWS

FY 2023 program performance saw the preparation and FY 2024 budget submittal of an additional 10 key NWRs locations designated to receive initial GAOA funding, and one facility designated to receive funding for additional phases of GAOA/LRF work. All projects will address the highest priority DM needs of the NWRs. The FY 2024 Project List also included the continuation of the MAT project, and Year 3 funding of the NWRs's Supplemental Conservation Workforce program.

Examples of high priority FY 2025 proposed projects include high-hazard Dam Safety projects at the Crab Orchard NWR, projects with funding contributions at the National Elk Refuge in Wyoming, and a joint-funded project with the Bureau of Land Management at the Koyukuk/Nowitna/Innoko NWRs in Alaska. That joint BLM project will promote interagency efficiency with a shared multipurpose facility utilized by the FWS, BLM, and Alaska Fire Services.

NWRS Wage Grade maintenance professionals are critical to accomplish smaller-scale DM activities. Through the GAOA program, the NWRS will continue maintaining and funding a surge workforce to execute rehabilitation, demolition, and other low-risk construction activities. Along with performing DM retirement projects, this group of Maintenance Professionals has been instrumental in the removal of unusable or derelict buildings from the FWS' inventory. This removal of excess square footage decreases the overall carbon footprint of the FWS and reduces the asset base.



*Kenai NWR – Replacement Boat Launch, Parking Improvements and Public Restrooms at Jim’s Landing.
Credit: PND Engineers, Inc*

For FY 2025 the FWS will continue prioritizing DM retirement projects within the NWRS that are consistent with the *NWRS Deferred Maintenance and Transportation Allocation and Strategic Investment Strategy*, Departmental guidance, and Presidential Administration initiatives.

Project List

To maximize the impact of the once-in-a-generation Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) investments, the FWS implements a strategic asset management approach in line with Interior’s Asset Management Vision. While addressing deferred maintenance and repairs, LRF project development integrates considerations to reduce overall lifecycle costs. By including resilience and sustainability in designs, LRF projects seek to ensure assets receiving investments can withstand natural hazards and reduce long-term operations and maintenance costs.

Across diverse asset portfolios and in support of unique missions, LRF projects are developed to make investments within three standard investment categories (Maintenance, Modernization and Renewal, and Divestiture). Modernization and renewal investments seek to achieve a lower total cost of ownership as assets reach the end of their useful life. The replacement of an asset or its components helps to extend an asset’s life while addressing outstanding deferred maintenance and repairs. The FY 2025 LRF project data sheets include these standard investment categories to consistently describe the lifecycle investments FWS is prioritizing across the asset portfolio to strategically address deferred maintenance and repair backlogged and future maintenance responsibilities.



GAOA MAT Strikeforce Team Members Constructing a Replacement Accessible Trail Bridge at the William I. Finley NWR. Credit: USFWS

Consistent with Congressional direction, the FWS submits the following LRF projects as part of the FY 2025 Budget process. Detailed project data sheets will be submitted separately for each identified project. The project lists below have been thoroughly deliberated and vetted and are considered ready for implementation in FY 2025. The Department will keep Congress informed should the circumstances of a specific project change during the course of the FY 2025 Budget process.

The FY 2025 project list below assumes the full \$1.9 billion allowable for deposit into the Legacy Restoration Fund is realized. Because determination of the deposit relies on the amount of qualifying energy revenue collected in the prior year, the actual amount available for FY 2025 projects will not be finalized until the start of FY 2025. Projects listed below are ranked and prioritized. FWS will select and implement projects based on the prioritized list below until the LRF allocation (net of mandatory funding sequestration and previously unavailable sequestration funding) is exhausted. Projects not funded with the FY 2025 allocation may be considered for other appropriations in the future.

FY 2025 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 (\$000)	Estimated DM Addressed (\$000)
F001	1	National Wildlife Refuges	National Maintenance Action Team, Year 5	Multiple	Multiple	30,000	57,525
F004b	2	Crab Orchard NWR	Modernize Public Use Facilities, Repair Seismic Issues and Improve Recreational Access (Ph. II)	IL	IL12	27,300	50,221
F010	3	National Wildlife Refuges	Salary Funding for Supplemental Conservation Workforce, Year 4	Multiple	Multiple	4,400	6,720
F042	4	National Elk Refuge	Replace Visitor Center & Deferred Maintenance Retirement at National Elk Refuge	WY	WYAL	17,200	17,200
F043	5	Koyukuk/ Nowitna/ Innoko NWRs	Replacement of the Galena Headquarters with BLM	AK	AKAL	8,000	8,240
			Program Administration (Indirect Costs)			2,850	
			Contingency Fund			5,250	
Total						95,000**	139,906*

Note: See project data sheets for detailed project descriptions.

* Estimated deferred maintenance numbers reflect the maintenance and repair work that will be addressed upon completion of the project, not necessarily within the funding year.

** Total amount is net of FY 2025 sequestration and previously unavailable funds from FY 2024 (sequestration "pop-up").

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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.), \$33,000,000 to remain available until expended. Provided, That section 8(a)(1) of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 4407(a)(1)), is further amended by striking "4 percent" and inserting "7 percent".

Note.--A full-year 2024 appropriation for this account was not enacted at the time the Budget was prepared; therefore, the Budget assumes this account is operating under the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2024 and Other Extensions Act (Division A of P.L. 118-15, as amended). The amounts included for 2024 reflect the annualized level provided by the continuing resolution.

Justification of Language Change

Addition of the following wording:

Provided, That section 8(a)(1) of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 4407(a)(1)), is further amended by striking "4 percent" and inserting "7 percent".

This language amends the underlying statute to raise the allowable percentage for administrative expense from 4 percent to 7 percent. The administrative responsibilities to oversee Federal grants have significantly increased in the last ten years, along with inflationary costs, requiring the Service to dedicate more staff time to meeting these requirements. This change would enable the Service to ensure better compliance with Federal financial assistance requirements to improve grantee performance and conservation delivery, and lead to more successful future applicants; improve monitoring of grant recipients and closed awards; provide more strategic guidance on wetland-dependent migratory bird conservation priorities; more effectively track acquired lands and other accomplishments to achieve regulatory requirements; and increase outreach and awareness of the NAWCA grant program.

Authorizing Statutes

The *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 from the sale of hunting equipment to be deposited and used for wetlands conservation grants and costs for administering this

grant program. Such amounts have been permanently appropriated as provided in P.L. 103-138.

The *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.

The *Wallop-Breaux Amendment* to the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program established the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund, (26 U.S.C. 9504) and 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

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Change From 2024 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
<i>Appropriations:</i>								
North American Wetlands Conservation Fund	(\$000)	50,000	50,000	0	0	-17,000	33,000	-17,000
<i>Receipts (Mandatory):</i>								
Migratory Bird Treaty Act Fines	(\$000)	1,866	142	0	0	-1	141	-1
Total, North American Wetlands Conservation Fund	(\$000) <i>FTE</i>	51,866 8	50,142 8	0 0	0 0	-17,001 0	33,141 8	-17,001 0

* 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



Blue winged teal in the Yucatan. Credit: Ernesto Gomez (used with permission)

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 benefitted nearly 34 million acres of wetlands in over 3,300 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, 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.

**NORTH AMERICAN WETLAND CONSERVATION ACT GRANT
PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS 1991-2023**

Country	Protected Acres	Enhanced, Restored, and Created Acres	Number of Projects
Canada	15,344,011	3,470,871*	601
Mexico	2,695,572	1,937,408	366
U.S.	5,413,929	5,067,244	2,335
All Countries	23,453,512	10,475,523	3,302

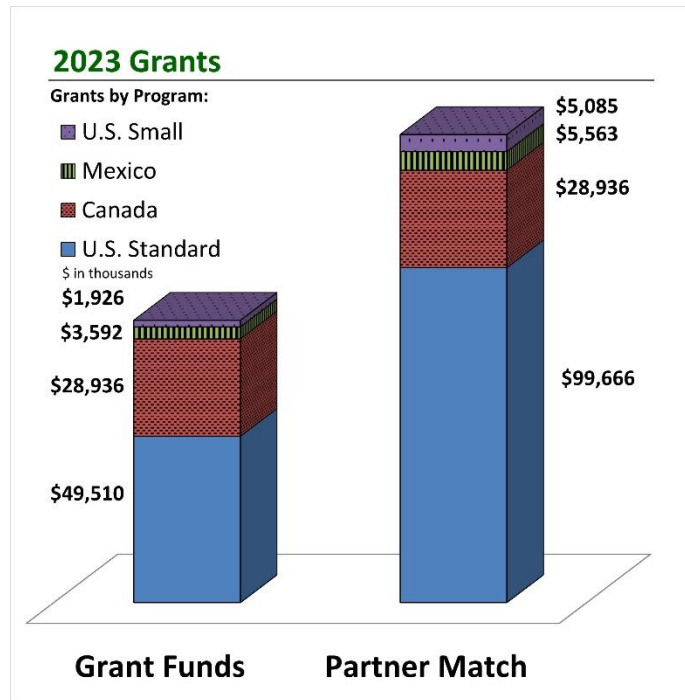
Acres represent total proposed acres approved for funding in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico from FY 1991 through FY 2023. Some acres are included in both “Protected” and “Enhanced, Restored, and Created” due to multiple activities occurring on the same properties. Additionally, some protection is not perpetual. 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

The North American Wetland Conservation Fund is a critical funding source for migratory bird habitat conservation and is an important tool to protect habitat and help address 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 are unlikely to participate in broader conservation efforts.



2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will:

- Process and issue NAWCA grants that support wetland habitat conservation for migratory birds and other ecosystem benefits.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for North American Wetlands Conservation Fund is \$33,000,000 and 8 FTE, a program change of -\$17,000,000 and 0 FTE from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

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 2025 estimate is \$141,450 for this account.

NAWCA – Discretionary (-\$17,000,000/ -0 FTE) –The proposed funding reduction would result in the Service issuing approximately seven fewer standard grants that would translate to fewer acres of wetland habitat conserved.



Great egrets in the Yucatan. Credit: Ernesto Gomez (used with permission)

Multinational Species Conservation Fund

Multinational Species Conservation Fund

Appropriations Language

For expenses necessary to carry out the African Elephant Conservation Act (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, to remain available until expended.

Note.--A full-year 2024 appropriation for this account was not enacted at the time the Budget was prepared; therefore, the Budget assumes this account is operating under the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2024 and Other Extensions Act (Division A of P.L. 118–15, as amended). The amounts included for 2024 reflect the annualized level provided by the continuing resolution

Authorizing Statutes

The *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.

The *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.

The *Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 5301-5306, 1538) authorizes funding to assist in the conservation of tigers in Asia and rhinos 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.

The *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.

The *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.

The *Multinational Species Conservation Fund Semipostal Stamp Act* (39 U.S.C. 416), 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 (P.L. 111-241) and reauthorized in the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Reauthorization Act of 2021 (P.L. 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

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025			Budget Request	Change From 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
African Elephant Conservation Fund	(\$000)	4,796	4,796	0	0	0	4,796	0
Asian Elephant Conservation Fund	(\$000)	3,017	3,017	0	0	0	3,017	0
Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund	(\$000)	6,388	6,388	0	0	0	6,388	0
Great Ape Conservation Fund	(\$000)	3,802	3,802	0	0	0	3,802	0
Marine Turtle Conservation Fund	(\$000)	2,997	2,997	0	0	0	2,997	0
Total, Multinational Species Conservation Fund	(\$000)	21,000	21,000	0	0	0	21,000	0
	<i>FTE</i>	5	5	0	0	0	5	0

Program Mission

To collaborate with partners around the world, providing technical and financial assistance to local communities, wildlife authorities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in range countries. The program supports on-the-ground work to conserve elephants, rhinos, tigers, apes, marine turtles, tortoises, and freshwater turtles, while promoting individual, institutional, and governmental capacity, evidence-based conservation, and science diplomacy to ensure long-term success.

Program Overview

Elephants, rhinos, tigers, apes, marine turtles, tortoises, and freshwater turtles 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, human-wildlife conflict, 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 COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on these at-risk species. During the pandemic, increases in habitat loss and poaching, including for consumption, occurred alongside significant reductions in tourist and donor revenue that reduced the ability to effectively manage protected areas and wildlife in many parts of the world. Today, tourism is bringing revenue back into some protected areas, but not enough to ensure long-term conservation success.

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 NGOs 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 2013 to 2023, the MSCFs provided more than \$124 million in appropriated funds through grants and cooperative agreements for on-the-ground conservation. Since 2013, the MSCFs have engaged more than 250 domestic and foreign partners in over 60 countries. The financial and technical assistance provided by the Service to conserve these priority species helps ensure their survival for the benefit of the American people and others around the world.

MSCF-supported projects go through a competitive review process. This enables the Service to provide direct assistance to key wildlife populations and the most urgently needed activities. Priorities include supporting the effective management of protected and conserved areas; monitoring wildlife populations; combating poaching and wildlife trafficking; reducing consumer demand for illegal wildlife products; managing 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 rhinos, tigers, and elephants, are under unprecedented pressure due to habitat loss, human-wildlife-conflict, poaching, and trafficking. These programs provide essential and consistent support to ensure effective and strategic responses.

Project Spotlight: Simple Solutions to Prevent Human-elephant Conflict



*By adding metal strips and strobe lights to fencing, elephant crop raiding dropped by more than 50 percent.
Credit: Matthew Luizza/USFWS*

A simple solution resulted in exciting results to address human-elephant conflict (HEC) in Africa. Villages in the Kilombero Valley, Tanzania are seeing tangible livelihoods benefits from piloting low-cost, locally appropriate, and evidence-based HEC interventions. This work is supported by the African Elephant Conservation Fund, in partnership with the Southern Tanzania Elephant Program (STEP).

Village farms at the edge of Nyerere National Park were subject to high rates of crop raiding by elephants. With Service support, 3.5 kilometers of elephant-proof fencing has been erected, comprised of fenceposts with solar-powered strobe lights and a mobile section of metal strips. With the addition of the strobe lights, monthly rates of crop raiding dropped by more than 50 percent, and in the first month of installing the metal strips, there were zero incidents of crop raiding.

STEP has been a long-term partner through the African Elephant Conservation Fund and has gone to great lengths to build trust with local communities. This is reflected by the fact that they are very willing to test different approaches, adjust their strategy as needed, and try again, through an iterative and adaptive process of HEC prevention and mitigation in this key elephant landscape.



The African Elephant Conservation Fund supports projects that benefit wild elephants such as these in Tanzania's Ruaha landscape. Credit: Matthew Luizza/USFWS

African Elephant Conservation Fund

The African elephant was recently classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as two separate species, with the forest elephant now listed as critically endangered and the savanna elephant as endangered.¹ African elephant numbers declined by approximately 110,000 from 2006 to 2015, and the continent-wide estimate for the two species combined has been revised downward to 415,000 elephants, according to the latest IUCN African Elephant Status Report (2016).

The African Elephant Conservation Fund provides critical support to ensure healthy African elephant populations in the wild, while improving pathways for human-elephant coexistence. This is achieved by addressing key threats to elephants, including poaching for the illegal ivory trade, habitat loss, and human-elephant conflict (HEC). In recent years, these funds have supported essential frontline protection and biological monitoring in elephant habitat in West, Central, East, and Southern Africa. Such work includes sponsoring technological innovations to detect and intercept ivory in transit and to more reliably and economically identify the geographic origin of confiscated ivory samples. Also, it has improved governance in range countries through the targeted development of individuals, organizations, and government institutions; bolstered efforts to reduce and prevent HEC and promote coexistence; and supported the installation of modern management systems for seized ivory in range countries.

The African Elephant Conservation Fund



The Asian Elephant Conservation Fund is the only one dedicated exclusively to this species. 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

¹ The African elephant taxonomy used by IUCN is not a legal authority for statutory or regulatory purposes.

continues to increase. The resulting HEC 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 as a result of conflicts between humans and elephants.

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 HEC prevention, response, and 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.

Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund

In the 1970s, more than 70,000 rhinos roamed Africa. Currently, Africa is home to only 6,487 critically endangered black rhinos and 16,803 near threatened white rhinos. Although the annual population increased by 5.2 percent over the last year, poaching for rhino horns for consumption in Vietnam and China remains the greatest threat to Africa's rhinos. Recently poaching patterns are changing, with organized poaching rings shifting their focus from the largest rhino populations to smaller, more susceptible ones with less support. Large national parks greatly increased security measures and dehorning to reduce the number of poaching incursions. However, they also have fewer rhinos to poach due to significant losses. Unfortunately, these organized poaching syndicates reacted by targeting smaller province-run sites instead. In Kenya, national rhino populations are increasing due to successful management and anti-poaching efforts. The Kenyan government together with private and



The Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund support projects to increase black rhino populations in the wild. Credit: Frank Kohn/USFWS



Some tiger populations are growing thanks to successful conservation work. Credit: Harshawardhan Dhamwatey/Tiger Research and Conservation Trust.

community land rhino sanctuaries are working to expand the rhino range with hopes of doubling their population of black rhinos by 2030.

In Asia, the status of rhinos and tigers is mostly bleak, but there are a few bright spots. In the last 100 years, Asia's wild tiger populations have reduced by 97 percent due to poaching, habitat loss, and human-wildlife conflict. Once abundant throughout Asia, with a wild population of 100,000 at the turn of the 20th century, tigers now live in small, fragmented groups. However, since 2015, population numbers have rebounded, growing from 3,200 to an estimated 4,500 tigers in the wild today, largely due to conservation successes in India and Nepal. Tigers are

estimated to inhabit less than seven percent of their historic range and with the exception of Thailand, are faring far worse in Southeast Asia.

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 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 subspecies of tiger have already gone extinct.



The English translation of Seve is service and that is exactly what this program does. It serves communities by providing an early human-wildlife conflict response program that ensures expedited action during incidents involving crop loss, property damage, livestock loss, human injury, or death caused by wildlife such as tigers. Credit: Frank Kohn/USFWS

The Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund continues to support the *Wild Seve* program in rural India where conflict between farmers and tigers and elephants is the highest in the world.

The government of India has a payment program that provides compensation for victims of human-wildlife conflict, but accessing these funds is difficult for local communities. The Wild Seve program, implemented by the Centre for Wildlife Studies, facilitates local communities in accessing compensation by providing rapid human-wildlife conflict response teams that ensure expedited action during incidents involving crop loss, property damage, livestock loss, and human injury or death caused by wildlife.

A toll-free hotline advertised across the landscape allows farmers to contact Wild Seve staff, who are immediately dispatched to the site. Field assistants document each conflict incident and file a claim for

the compensation on behalf of the affected farmer. The program helps transcend barriers of illiteracy, inherent transaction costs, and a complex government process to provide free and transparent access to compensation for conflict incidents.

The Wild Seve team has assisted farmers and their families in filing compensation claims for more than 20,000 conflict incidents and on behalf of more than 9,000 families. Local communities have received approximately \$1 million through the direct intervention and assistance of this program.

Greater one-horned rhino populations represent a conservation success in South Asia. They now total 4,014 individuals, up from only 1,500 in the 1980s. This population increase is mainly due to strict protections from Indian and Nepalese wildlife authorities; however, poaching; habitat encroachment, fragmentation, and loss; and conflicts between humans and rhinos still represent major threats to the one-horned rhino.

Sumatran rhinos, which previously existed in dense tropical forests across Southeast Asia, now number fewer than 40 wild individuals in a single forest landscape of northern Sumatra. The world's last 75 Javan rhinos are confined to a single, vulnerable population in Indonesia's Ujung Kulon National Park on the tip of the island of Java. The greatest threat to the survival of Javan rhinos is their small population size and loss of genetic diversity due to inbreeding, as well as vulnerability to natural disasters. Unfortunately, 2023 saw the first poaching event of a Javan rhino in 20 years and an uptick in snares in the park. In light of this renewed threat, the authorities closed the park to visitors and increased monitoring and protection.

The Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund, which supports conservation in both Asia and Africa, has been essential in responding to the poaching and trafficking crises 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, conduct monitoring and biological management, combat trafficking of tigers and rhinos and their products, manage and mitigate human-wildlife conflict with these species, support protected area management, strengthen local conservation stewardship, and improve transboundary conservation.



The Great Ape Conservation Fund supports efforts to conserve all apes, including chimpanzees, gorillas, and bonobos in Africa, and orangutans and gibbons in Asia. These are western lowland gorillas in Loango National Park, Gabon. Credit: Lisa Korte/USFWS

Great Ape Conservation Fund

The Great Ape Conservation Fund supports African apes (including gorillas, chimpanzees, and bonobos) and Asian apes (including orangutans and gibbons). These highly intelligent beings are humans' closest living relatives. Their slow rates of reproduction make their populations less resilient to losses and all are at risk of extinction. With the exception of mountain gorillas, all ape species are in decline.

Gorillas are found in Central Africa, where three of the four subspecies are critically endangered. Of the nine African great apes, only the mountain gorilla is increasing in numbers. Chimpanzees are found in equatorial Africa (East, Central and West Africa), where all four subspecies are

endangered. Bonobos, also endangered, are found only in the forests of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Throughout their ranges, African apes face numerous threats, including poaching, habitat loss, and infectious diseases.

Orangutans are found only on two islands in Indonesia and Malaysia, with approximately 55,400 left in the wild. All three species are critically endangered. Sumatran orangutans are found only in northern Sumatra and fewer than 14,000 remain in the wild, and 75 percent of these exist outside of protected areas. Tapanuli orangutans were first described as a distinct species in 2017 and are found on the island of Sumatra in an isolated population of 800 individuals about 100 km south of their cousins to the north. Bornean orangutans, found only on the island of Borneo, number around 57,000, down from 288,500 individuals 50 years ago. In addition to orangutans, the Great Ape Conservation Fund also protects 19 species of gibbons across ten 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 Great Ape Conservation Fund supports combating poaching and trafficking in ape species; enhancing habitat protection; supporting effective management of protected areas; using applied research on diseases of apes; strengthening capacity to address conservation threats; rescue, rehabilitation, and release of trafficked apes; and creating long-term buy-in and stewardship for ape conservation among local communities.



*The Marine Turtle Conservation Fund supports projects that protect marine turtles including these loggerhead hatchlings.
Credit: USFWS*

Marine Turtle Conservation Fund

The Marine Turtle Conservation Fund annually supports about 50 conservation projects in over 30 countries, conserving the most important and critically endangered marine turtle populations in the world. The Fund supports initiatives that promote marine turtle conservation 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. 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 tortoises and freshwater turtles.

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 tortoises and freshwater turtles 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 \$7.6 million, supporting projects in almost 30 countries and contributing directly to the

conservation of some of the most beloved endangered species on Earth. In FY 2023, sales of the stamp raised more than \$555,000, split evenly between each of the five Multinational Species Conservation Funds. 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 remaining Tiger Stamps, enabling the public to continue voluntarily contributing further critical funds to international wildlife conservation.



2025 Program Activities

The 2025 budget will:

- Support the Service's work with partners around the world to improve the conservation of elephants; rhinos; tigers; apes; marine turtles, tortoises, and freshwater turtles and their habitats through technical and financial assistance programs.
- Work with grantees to support continuation of projects in the face of unexpected challenges.
- Support healthy wildlife populations and habitats, which in turn support healthy human communities, by protecting 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 worlds' 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 the illegal wildlife trade.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for the Multinational Species Conservation Fund is \$21,000,000 and 5 FTE, equal to the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

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 to remain available until expended: Provided, That section 5(e)(1) of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 6104(e)(1)) is amended by striking "25 percent" and inserting "50 percent": Provided further, That section 9(c)(2) of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 6108(c)(2)), is amended by striking "3 percent" and inserting "5 percent".

Note.--A full-year 2024 appropriation for this account was not enacted at the time the Budget was prepared; therefore, the Budget assumes this account is operating under the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2024 and Other Extensions Act (Division A of P.L. 118-15, as amended). The amounts included for 2024 reflect the annualized level provided by the continuing resolution.

Justification of Language Change

Addition of the following wording:

Provided, That section 5(e)(1) of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 6104(e)(1)) is amended by striking "25 percent" and inserting "50 percent": Provided further, That section 9(c)(2) of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 6108(c)(2)), is amended by striking "3 percent" and inserting "5 percent".

This language amends the underlying statute by raising the allowable percentage for administrative expense from 3 percent to 5 percent. This amendment is necessary due to changes in Statutory requirements and Departmental and Service financial assistance policies, which require additional capacity to maintain compliance. Working in over 35 countries in the Western Hemisphere requires navigating many diverse conservation challenges and unique circumstances. With increased administrative funding, Service staff will guide grantees through grant complexities, provide more strategic guidance on neotropical migratory bird conservation priorities, and increase outreach and awareness of the NMBCA grant program.

The proposed language also changes the match requirement from 75 percent to 50 percent. The Service has anecdotal evidence that some partners in Latin America and the Caribbean cannot meet the current 3:1 match requirement, which prevents participation. Lowering the match requirement to 1:1 will lead to more equity and inclusion of a wider variety of bird conservation implementers.

Authorizing Statute

The *Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Improvement Act of 2006*, (16 U.S.C. 6101-6109) authorizes a competitive grant program for the conservation of Neotropical migratory birds in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Appropriation: Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund

	2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change From 2024 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (\$000)	5,100	5,100	0	0	0	5,100	0
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.

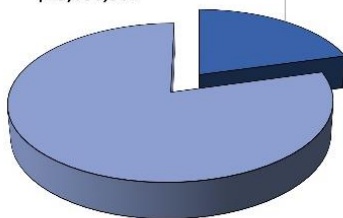
Program Overview

The impacts of NMBCA grant program are internationally renowned. Since the first projects were funded in 2002, 717 grants have been awarded, totaling over \$89 million and leveraging over \$346 million in matching contributions. These projects benefit almost all 390 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 collectively help maintain the ecological and economic benefits of birds throughout the Americas.

2023 Grants

Match Ratio: 3.8 to 1
 Projects: 32
 Countries/Territories: 30

Partner Match: \$19,650,507
 Grant Funds: \$5,133,565



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 provide crucial resources for partners working to conserve bird species on their migrating and wintering grounds. NMBCA grants also require a partner to match funds. NMBCA grants are highly competitive, with demand for projects greatly exceeding available funds. In fiscal year 2024 alone, applicants requested over \$7.5 million in funding for NMBCA projects.

Supporting Administration and Agency Priorities

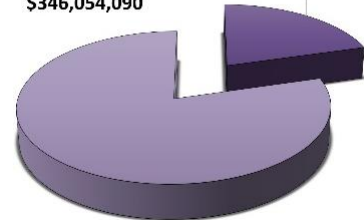
The NMBCA grants are an important tool to protect habitat and help address the 3 billion birds lost over the last half century, conserve at-risk birds of conservation concern, support the Administration’s and Department’s priorities, and facilitate international initiatives, to improve resilience to 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 making available one-quarter of its funding to conserve birds and their habitats within the U.S.; the remaining 75 percent of NMBCA funding will contribute to hemispheric migratory 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 the essential 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 2022, 96 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.

Program Impacts Since 2002

Match Ratio: 3.9 to 1
 Projects: **717**
 Countries/Territories: **43**

Partner Match: **\$346,054,090**
 Grant Funds: **\$89,422,644**



NMBCA Project Highlights

The NMBCA grants focus 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 examples of completed NMBCA projects include:

Improving and Conserving Critical Bird Habitat on Antigua & Barbuda’s Offshore Islands



Redonda Island, part of the newly designated Redonda Ecosystem Reserve, before and after habitat restoration. Credit: Environmental Awareness Group

Caribbean islands provide critical stopover habitat for birds migrating across the region each spring and fall. In Antigua and Barbados, Environmental Awareness Group (EAG) and their partners used NMBCA funding to enhance habitat on fourteen islands totaling over 1900 acres to provide safe habitat for birds to rest and refuel during migration. Partners also increased the capacity of island managers to sustainably restore and manage bird habitat. As evidenced by this before-and-after photo of Redonda Island (1780 acres), the restoration is impressive. EAG and their partners worked with the government of Antigua and Barbuda to establish the new Redonda Ecosystem Reserve, protecting the Redonda Island and more than 74,000 acres of surrounding marine habitat. The Redonda Ecosystem Reserve is now one of the biggest protected areas in the Caribbean.

Birdscaping Guatemala’s Q’eqchi’ Maya Highlands II

In the remote villages of the Maya highlands of Guatemala, establishing agroforest parcels is a great way



Young adult women students learning in CCFC’s Women in Agroecology Leadership for Conservation and Sustainable Living program. Credit: CCFC

to restore and improve bird habitat, and to confront social issues of chronic malnutrition and extreme poverty among subsistence and smallholder farmers. NMBCA grantee Community Cloud Forest Conservation (CCFC), is working with villagers in the Q’eqchi’ Maya highlands to improve habitat in this



Maya Q’eqchi’ women in the field learning about migratory bird habitat and ecology. Credit: CCFC

fragmented habitat matrix that is important to dozens of birds of conservation concern including the golden-winged warbler and endangered species such as the golden-cheeked warbler. Implementing CCFC’s Women in Agroecology Leadership for Conservation and Sustainable Living program, 718 young adult women students increased their leadership in nature conservation,

improved their ecological understanding of the complex environmental issues in the area, and used that information to restore ecological integrity to their environment. Participants improved neotropical migratory bird habitat on their parcels and restored or enhanced over 600 acres of habitat.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 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.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund is \$5,100,000 and 1 FTE, equal to the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

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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, to remain available until expended: Provided, That of the amount provided herein, \$6,200,000 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 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 2025 to any State, territory, or other jurisdiction that remains unobligated as of September 30, 2026, shall be reapportioned, together with funds appropriated in 2027, in the manner provided herein.

Note.--A full-year 2024 appropriation for this account was not enacted at the time the Budget was prepared; therefore, the Budget assumes this account is operating under the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2024 and Other Extensions Act (Division A of P.L. 118-15, as amended). The amounts included for 2024 reflect the annualized level provided by the continuing resolution.

Authorizing Statutes

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 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).

The *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.

The *Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act* (16 U.S.C. 661-666(e)) authorizes the Secretary of the Interior 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

		2023 Actual	2024 Annualized CR	2025				Change From 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Request	
State Wildlife Grants (Formula)	(\$000)	60,000	60,000	0	0	0	60,000	0
State Wildlife Grants (Competitive)	(\$000)	7,612	7,612	0	0	0	7,612	0
Tribal Wildlife Grants	(\$000)	6,200	6,200	0	0	0	6,200	0
Total, State and Tribal Wildlife Grants	(\$000)	73,812	73,812	0	0	0	73,812	0
	FTE	19	19	0	0	0	19	0

Program Overview

The State and Tribal Wildlife Grant (STWG) Program provides Federal grant funds to States, the District of Columbia, Commonwealths, Territories (States), and 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 State Wildlife Grant 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 Tribal Wildlife Grant 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 initiative. The TWG Program is covered 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 2023. For more information, see the State and Tribal Wildlife Grant Programs 20th Anniversary Report

(https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/2616/0087/6829/STWG_2020_Report_Final.pdf).

SPECIES	STATE(S)	STATUS	YEAR	REPORT PAGE
Sierra Nevada red fox – Southern Cascades DPS	CA	Not warranted	2015	127
Greater sage-grouse	CA, CO, ID, MT, OR, SD, WA	Not warranted	2015	109
New England cottontail rabbit	CT, ME, MA, NH, NY, RI	Not warranted	2015	n/a
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
White-tailed prairie dog	CO, UT, WY	Not warranted	2017	151
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 Basin DPS)	NM	Not warranted (proposed Apr 2022)	2022	n/a
Snail darter	GA	De-listed – recovery	2022	n/a
Fender’s blue butterfly	OR	Down-listed	2023	n/a
Wood stork	FL	De-listed – recovery (proposed Feb 2023)	2023	n/a
Illinois chorus frog	IL	Not warranted (proposed Jul 2023)	2023	n/a
Apache trout	AZ	De-listed – recovery (proposed Aug 2023)	2023	n/a
Relict darter	KY	Down-listed	2023	n/a

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 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 an important role in reducing or preventing Federal listings of species such as the least tern, Fender's blue butterfly, relict darter, and many others.

Recent SWG Program investments include:



Xerces Society's Senior Conservation Biologist, Rich Hatchfield, shows volunteers how to capture bumblebees at a workshop. Rich is holding a net while the volunteers look on. Credit: Steve Lenz Photography

An alliance in the Northwest consisting of State governments, non-governmental organizations, private landowners, and volunteers used SWG Program funding to publish a [Bumble Bee Atlas](#)¹. The project is an example of how diverse entities can come together with volunteers to help prevent the extinction of imperiled species. Cooperators including the State fish and wildlife agencies of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington established grids for data collection by citizen scientists. The partners also developed a training program for these volunteers, and a protocol for submitting data and photos of bee species of greatest conservation need. This critical information is an important first step toward future landscape-scale

conservation efforts to identify, improve, and protect bumble bee populations and habitats. Since its creation, the Bumble Bee Atlas concept has spread to other States, supported by the Competitive State Wildlife Grant Program.

Hawai'i's [Snail Extinction Prevention Program](#)² used SWG Program funding to create a new snail propagation facility in Pearl City on the Island of O'ahu. For the past seven years, Dr. David Sischo and his team have cared for 8,000 snails, representing 38 critically imperiled species, in a small trailer. The new lab doubles their capacity for rearing these rare and beautiful snails. Once they are raised in the facility, the snails are released in higher elevation forests where the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources has established walled areas that exclude predators. In many cases, the Snail Extinction Prevention Program is ensuring the future viability and potential recovery of these unique Hawai'ian terrestrial snails.

¹ <https://www.pnwbumblebeeatlas.org/>

² <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/ecosystems/sepp/>

The Tribal Wildlife Grant Program

The Tribal Wildlife Grant (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:

Snowshoe Hare and Fisher Conservation - The Service provided the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe with a Tribal Wildlife Grant Program award to research the influence of forest structure and composition on the space use, survival, and interactions of Snowshoe Hare and Fisher. As part of this research, tribal biologists trapped and used radio telemetry collars to study Snowshoe Hares and Fishers to understand how the two species interact in reservation forests. The project was intended to inform forest management practices, helping the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe manage sustainable populations of the two interrelated species. The project helped the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe find solutions to the declining Hare and Fisher populations and allow Tribal members to continue their subsistence living by hunting Snowshoe Hare for traditional meals. The Snowshoe Hare is a traditional and cultural resource for its meat and fur, playing an integral part of subsistence living. Snowshoe Hares are also a prey species for many predators. Keeping their populations healthy benefits the entire food web.



This Snowshoe Hare was trapped and collared by the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Division of Resource Management. Credit: Alejandro Morales/USFWS



The Fisher (Martes pennanti), also referred to as fisher cat, is a medium-sized mammal native to North America. Credit: Ron Dunnington

The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe uses science and their traditional ecological knowledge to assess Snowshoe Hare and Fisher populations on their reservation located in north-central Minnesota. Ongoing funding for the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe is important for future actions that use new information obtained in this project to improve survival of Snowshoe Hare on Tribal lands. Additional resources are needed for further investigations that can help the Band identify specific strategies that will ensure abundant

populations of the species for the benefit of future generations.

Pacific Lamprey - The Service provided the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe of Washington with a Tribal Wildlife Grant Program award to document the recolonization of the Elwha River drainage by Pacific Lamprey following the removal of two dams in what remains the world's largest dam removal effort. Pacific Lamprey have long been a celebrated species among the Tribe as a cultural and traditional resource. Tribal staff documented successful adult migration to spawning sites, nest building, and larval rearing using radiotelemetry and passive integrated transponder (PIT) tags. Nest surveys confirmed successful spawning.

Electrofishing surveys and analysis of larvae also demonstrated successful larval rearing and evaluated the colonization rates in the Elwha River drainage.

The Tribe collaborated with other scientists, agencies, and students, giving Tribal staff the knowledge and tools necessary to continue monitoring Lamprey beyond the funding period. Technical support from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Olympic National Park, and U.S. Geological Survey scientists broadened the knowledge base of Tribal biologists. Working with other agencies fostered relationships resulting in long-term partnerships and future opportunities to collaborate. Mentoring local students helped the Tribe recruit future employees and will provide advancement opportunities for tribal youth.

Armed with the results of this research, the Tribe will be able to make adaptive management decisions that will increase the overall success of their ecosystem restoration efforts benefiting Pacific Lamprey and other species. An additional benefit from this research is that training and equipment obtained in the course of this project will position the Tribe in its goal to reclaim management and stewardship of its cultural and natural resources.

2025 Program Activities

The 2025 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 partners 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 contributors. Implementation activities include a wide range of strategies from research and monitoring to species and habitat management.
- Help States incorporate and use best-available climate science to address changing habitat conditions, shifts in temperature and precipitation, and extreme weather events. The Service will continue offering grants that help advance the Administration's goal of improving species and habitat adaptation and resiliency as the climate changes. Summaries of all of the



Lower Elwha Klallam Tribal elder and Fisheries Technician Ernest "Sonny" Sampson releasing a newly radio tagged Pacific Lamprey into the Elwha River. Credit: Tiffany Royal, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

States' Plans are provided in the Service publication, [*The State and Tribal Wildlife Grant Programs: 20 Years of Conservation Success*](#)³.

- Make strategic investments focused on at-risk species that have the potential to be listed under the ESA. Within just the past decade, States played an important role in helping to preclude listing of ten declining species and in helping to de-list or down-list seven threatened and endangered species using SWG Program funds along with matching non-Federal resources. The Service provides incentives to encourage State fish and wildlife agencies to focus efforts on ESA candidate, proposed, and 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 SWG Program funding for use 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 2025 include conservation of at-risk frogs, turtles, and pollinators that occur throughout the Northeast and Midwest. Similar efforts to identify and collaboratively conserve regional species of greatest conservation need across State lines are underway in nearly every State.
- 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 2025, 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.

Justification of 2025 Program Changes

The 2025 budget request for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants is \$73,812,000 and 19 FTE, no change from the 2024 Continuing Resolution.

³ https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/2616/0087/6829/STWG_2020_Report_Final.pdf

Table 2
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
FINAL APPORTIONMENT OF STATE WILDLIFE GRANTS
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023
CFDA: 15.634

STATE	State Wildlife - 5620⁴
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

⁴ 65/35 match for conservation implementation and 75/25 match for planning.

STATE	State Wildlife - 5620
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
TOTAL	\$56,493,864⁵

⁵ 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 2024
CFDA: 15.634

STATE	State Wildlife - 5620⁶
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

⁶ 65/35 match for conservation implementation and 75/25 match for planning.

STATE	State Wildlife - 5620
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
TOTAL	\$56,493,864⁷

⁷ 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
2025
CFDA: 15.634

STATE	State Wildlife – 5620⁸
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

⁸ 65/35 match for conservation implementation and 75/25 match for planning.

STATE	State Wildlife - 5620
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
TOTAL	\$60,000,000

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 21st 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 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

		2023 Actual	2024 Estimate	2025			Budget Estimate	Change From 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Payments to States	(\$000)	415,870	375,233	0	0	+55,255	430,488	+55,255
Administration	(\$000)	13,775	14,992	0	0	+1,234	16,226	+1,234
Clean Vessel	(\$000)	14,441	13,040	0	0	+1,905	14,945	+1,905
Boating Infrastructure Grant Program	(\$000)	14,441	13,040	0	0	+1,904	14,944	+1,904
National Outreach	(\$000)	14,441	13,040	0	0	+1,905	14,945	+1,905
Multistate Conservation Grant Program	(\$000)	3,000	3,000	0	0	0	3,000	0
Coastal Wetlands	(\$000)	20,224	18,262	0	0	+2,668	20,930	+2,668
Fishery Commissions	(\$000)	800	800	0	0	0	800	0
Sport Fishing & Boating Partnership Council	(\$000)	400	400	0	0	0	400	0
Subtotal	(\$000)	497,392	451,807	0	0	+64,871	516,678	+64,871
North American Wetlands	(\$000)	20,224	18,262	0	0	+2,668	20,930	+2,668
TOTAL, Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration	(\$000)	517,616	470,069	0	0	+67,539	537,608	+67,539
	<i>FTE</i>	60	60	0	0	+0	60	+0

The 2023, 2024, and 2025 amounts include sequestration in accordance with section 251A of the BBDECA, 2 U.S.C. 901a. In addition, the amounts in 2023, 2024, and 2025 include amounts previously sequestered, which are now available in accordance with said Act. 2023, 2024 and 2025 amounts 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 \$11.3 billion to these agencies (\$17.5 billion in dollars adjusted for inflation). 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. Additional data on Sport Fish Restoration apportionments to States is available at: <https://www.fws.gov/program/sport-fish-restoration>

The economic impacts of boating and sport fishing in the United States are considerable. According to the *2022 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*, 39.9 million U.S. residents 16 years old and older enjoyed a variety of fishing opportunities in 2022. Throughout the U.S., anglers fished 785 million days and took 463 million fishing trips, spending \$99.4 billion in fishing-related expenses during the year, which is important to the U.S. economy. More National Survey data and addendum reports can be viewed here: <https://www.fws.gov/program/national-survey-fishing-hunting-and-wildlife-associated-recreation-fhwar>

All grant programs funded by SFR, except the Multistate Conservation grant program (MSCGP), leverage the Federal funds by requiring a minimum of a 25 percent cost share. The MSCGP does not require any 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 **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 recreational boat 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 2023 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 2023 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 2023 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 2023 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), was the FY 2023 recipient of this nationally competitive grant program.

SFR funds many important projects across the United States including:

In **California**, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has used SFR funds to study golden trout – a fish species native only to the high southern Sierra Nevada Mountains. Golden trout in two streams have received much attention from CDFW and biologists have assessed populations, collected trout tissues for genetic analysis, and built and monitored fish barriers. Research projects like this help build resilient ecosystems in the face of climate change.

Colorado's State fish hatcheries turn out good numbers of Rio Grande cutthroat trout, and operations are funded in part by SFR. In 2022, 59,000 individual Rio Grande cutthroat trout were stocked in 26 Colorado waters. Costilla Creek originates in Colorado and flows partly through Vermejo Park Ranch in New Mexico whose



*A golden trout in California.
Credit: CDFW*

managers have also taken an interest in conserving Rio Grande cutthroats. Costilla Creek and its tributaries flow over the 160-square-mile Valle Vidal, a healthy high-elevation ecosystem where these native trout thrive along with elk and deer, bear and mountain lion, pronghorn antelope and dusky grouse. Colorado Parks and Wildlife's Native Aquatic Species Hatchery in Alamosa has also supplied the **New Mexico** biologists with Rio Grande chub and Rio Grande sucker. SFR funds paid for concrete barriers to keep downstream non-native fish out of the system, staff time, data analysis, report writing, and gear needed to prepare Colorado and New Mexico's interconnected waters to receive native fish. SFR funds also pay for the operation of Seven Springs Hatchery near Los Alamos, New Mexico where the professional fish culturists manage Rio Grande cutthroat brood stocks at the genetic level to ensure purity of the populations that go back out into the wild. Research projects like this help build resilient ecosystems in the face of climate change, and support at-risk species.

The Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation, Inc. received SFR funds through a Multistate Conservation Grant for a project titled, "Native Americans Fishing Participation and Perceptions." This project will provide a better understanding of Native American barriers to entry, access to lands and waters both on and off reservation properties, and thoughts on current laws, regulations, licensing and perception of industry and State and Federal wildlife agencies. With a grant team that includes market researchers and Tribal members, the information gathered through this study will help guide development of future angler recruitment, retention, and re-activation (R3) efforts dedicated to Native Americans. Research projects like this help strengthen Tribal nations' capacity for fish conservation programs.

Budget Estimate

The FY 2025 budget estimate for the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act programs is \$537,608,000 and 60 FTE. The estimate is based on current law projections provided by the Department of the Treasury's Office of Tax Analysis.

Table 1

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE ESTIMATED APPORTIONMENT
OF DINGELL-JOHNSON SPORT FISH RESTORATION FUNDS***

CFDA: 15.605

<u>STATE</u>	<u>FY 2023</u>	<u>FY 2024</u>	<u>FY 2025</u>
ALABAMA	6,877,146	6,053,693	6,945,128
ALASKA	21,234,157	18,761,660	21,524,401
AMERICAN SAMOA	1,415,611	1,250,777	1,434,960
ARIZONA	9,003,432	7,969,336	9,142,858
ARKANSAS	6,355,865	5,594,232	6,418,009
CALIFORNIA	20,059,004	17,737,091	20,348,960
COLORADO	12,242,685	10,849,439	12,447,070
CONNECTICUT	4,246,832	3,752,332	4,304,880
DELAWARE	4,246,832	3,752,332	4,304,880
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	1,415,611	1,250,777	1,434,960
FLORIDA	15,312,788	13,539,851	15,533,657
GEORGIA	10,425,495	9,191,743	10,545,270
GUAM	1,415,611	1,250,777	1,434,960
HAWAII	4,246,832	3,752,332	4,304,880
IDAHO	7,905,906	6,990,397	8,019,766
ILLINOIS	7,637,327	6,765,334	7,761,561
INDIANA	5,955,250	5,284,203	6,062,327
IOWA	5,464,600	4,844,578	5,557,964
KANSAS	6,114,074	5,421,445	6,219,777
KENTUCKY	6,056,010	5,366,383	6,156,608
LOUISIANA	7,945,269	6,992,251	8,021,892
MAINE	4,246,832	3,752,332	4,304,880
MARYLAND	4,246,832	3,752,332	4,304,880
MASSACHUSETTS	4,246,832	3,752,332	4,304,880
MICHIGAN	12,913,189	11,422,435	13,104,442
MINNESOTA	14,799,869	13,078,902	15,004,831
MISSISSIPPI	4,585,754	4,043,570	4,639,006
MISSOURI	8,541,090	7,540,114	8,650,431
MONTANA	10,176,423	8,991,832	10,315,921
N. MARIANA ISLANDS	1,415,611	1,250,777	1,434,960
NEBRASKA	5,526,461	4,893,722	5,614,345
NEVADA	6,525,945	5,774,278	6,624,567
NEW HAMPSHIRE	4,246,832	3,752,332	4,304,880
NEW JERSEY	4,246,832	3,752,332	4,304,880
NEW MEXICO	7,532,727	6,651,486	7,630,948
NEW YORK	9,014,056	7,927,053	9,094,349
NORTH CAROLINA	12,993,928	11,458,376	13,145,676
NORTH DAKOTA	4,940,293	4,366,879	5,009,923
OHIO	8,489,201	7,507,764	8,613,317

<u>STATE</u>	<u>FY 2023</u>	<u>FY 2024</u>	<u>FY 2025</u>
OKLAHOMA	8,710,258	7,642,086	8,767,419
OREGON	9,229,182	8,148,245	9,348,113
PENNSYLVANIA	10,198,210	9,025,946	10,355,058
PUERTO RICO	4,246,832	3,752,332	4,304,880
RHODE ISLAND	4,246,832	3,752,332	4,304,880
SOUTH CAROLINA	5,758,227	5,074,205	5,821,405
SOUTH DAKOTA	5,381,426	4,763,036	5,464,415
TENNESSEE	8,477,187	7,479,366	8,580,738
TEXAS	21,234,157	18,761,660	21,524,401
UTAH	8,235,978	7,298,185	8,372,877
VERMONT	4,246,832	3,752,332	4,304,880
VIRGIN ISLANDS	1,415,611	1,250,777	1,434,960
VIRGINIA	6,226,128	5,478,905	6,285,699
WASHINGTON	8,911,194	7,876,381	9,036,215
WEST VIRGINIA	4,246,832	3,752,332	4,304,880
WISCONSIN	13,133,476	11,621,746	13,333,102
WYOMING	6,519,731	5,763,515	6,612,220
TOTAL	424,683,137	375,233,192	430,488,026

*This table includes reverted funds and sequester returns from prior years.

Table 2

FY 2023 Clean Vessel Act Grant Program Awards*

State	Coastal or Inland	Federal Share
Alabama	Coastal	\$ 235,622.00
Alabama	Inland	\$ 101,906.00
Alaska	Coastal	\$ 22,500.00
Arizona	Inland	\$ 347,403.00
Arkansas	Inland	\$ 1,499,689.00
California	Coastal	\$ 782,812.00
California	Inland	\$ 916,150.00
Connecticut	Coastal	\$ 1,500,000.00
Connecticut	Inland	\$ 58,040.00
District of Columbia	Inland	\$ 26,860.00
Florida	Coastal	\$ 1,466,155.16
Florida	Inland	\$ 914,267.65
Georgia	Coastal	\$ 185,952.00
Georgia	Inland	\$ 138,172.50
Kansas	Inland	\$ 152,814.00
Maryland	Coastal	\$ 930,930.00
Massachusetts	Coastal	\$ 852,857.00
New Hampshire	Coastal	\$ 90,240.00
New Hampshire	Inland	\$ 32,590.00
New York	Coastal	\$ 504,361.25
New York	Inland	\$ 86,876.25
North Carolina	Coastal	\$ 120,000.00
Ohio	Coastal	\$ 190,134.56
Oklahoma	Inland	\$ 802,034.00
Oregon	Coastal	\$ 546,000.00
South Carolina	Coastal	\$ 143,098.00
South Carolina	Inland	\$ 22,302.00
Tennessee	Inland	\$ 900,000.00
Texas	Inland	\$ 847,500.00
Virginia	Coastal	\$ 135,050.00
Washington	Coastal	\$ 1,500,000.00
Wisconsin	Coastal	\$ 13,725.00
Total		\$ 16,066,041.37

*This table includes carryover and sequester returns from prior years.

Table 3

FY 2023 Boating Infrastructure Grant Program – Tier 1 Awards*

State	Federal Share
Alabama	\$ 199,997.00
Arizona	\$ 200,000.00
Arkansas	\$ 200,000.00
Georgia	\$ 13,976.00
Michigan	\$ 200,000.00
Minnesota	\$ 180,000.00
Mississippi	\$ 103,710.00
Missouri	\$ 200,000.00
New Jersey	\$ 200,000.00
New York	\$ 16,727.00
North Carolina	\$ 145,385.00
Ohio	\$ 79,350.55
Oregon	\$ 200,000.00
Rhode Island	\$ 75,038.00
South Carolina	\$ 33,148.00
Texas	\$ 181,125.00
Virgin Islands	\$ 199,004.42
Virginia	\$ 200,000.00
Wisconsin	\$ 200,000.00
Total	\$ 2,827,460.97

*This table includes carryover and sequester returns from prior years.

Table 4

FY 2023 Boating Infrastructure Grant Program – Tier 2 Awards*

State	Project Title	Federal Share
Florida	AA Marina	\$ 1,299,605.00
Florida	Boss Oyster Marina	\$ 1,211,659.00
Florida	SHM Marina	\$ 1,009,740.00
Georgia	Savannah Marina	\$ 709,782.64
Massachusetts	Reed Park	\$ 600,000.00
Michigan	Lexington State Harbor	\$ 1,200,000.00
Michigan	Spring Lake Transient Marinas	\$ 956,152.00
Michigan	Wyandotte Transient Marina	\$ 335,664.00
North Carolina	Safe Harbor Jarrett Bay	\$ 1,477,162.00
North Carolina	TJ's Transient Boat Harbor and Marina	\$ 922,405.00
Ohio	Fairport Harbor Marina	\$ 1,117,640.58
Puerto Rico	Marina Puerto Chico	\$ 1,137,000.00
Rhode Island	Safe Harbor Cowesett	\$ 1,500,000.00
South Carolina	Ripley Light Yacht Club	\$ 1,500,000.00
Virginia	Tappahannock	\$ 1,321,950.00
Wisconsin	South Bay Marina	\$ 1,215,533.00
Total		\$ 17,514,293.22

* This table includes carryover and sequester returns from prior years.

Table 5

FY 2023 National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program Awards*

2023 National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grants				
Project Name	State	Award	Match	Total Project Cost
RMS Wadmacon Tract Acquisition	SC	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 422,000.00	\$ 1,422,000.00
Prairie Creek Floodplain Restoration - Phase 3B	CA	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 421,155.00	\$ 1,421,155.00
Big Canyon Tidal Marsh Restoration - Phase 3	CA	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 793,236.00	\$ 1,793,236.00
Port Susan Bay Tribal Wetland Restoration	WA	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 461,000.00	\$ 1,461,000.00
Samish Bay Coastal Protection	WA	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 500,100.00	\$ 1,500,100.00
Hulē'ia Coastal Wetland Restoration - Phase 2	HI	\$ 627,150.00	\$ 313,575.00	\$ 940,725.00
Jordan River Coastal Conservation	ME	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 569,300.00	\$ 1,569,300.00
Potter Marsh Watershed Conservation - Phase 2	AK	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 548,820.00	\$ 1,548,820.00
Smith Creek Tidal Habitat Restoration	WA	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 698,000.00	\$ 1,698,000.00
Tarboo Wildlife Preserve Addition and Restoration	WA	\$ 689,000.00	\$ 288,000.00	\$ 977,000.00
Ingleside Park Wetland Conservation	SC	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 422,000.00	\$ 1,422,000.00
Wetland Landscape in Moloka'i Kahanui	HI	\$ 401,000.00	\$ 255,000.00	\$ 656,000.00
Corbett Package Partnership	NC	\$ 754,000.00	\$ 909,000.00	\$ 1,663,000.00
Kennedy Creek Natural Area Land Acquisition	WA	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 500,000.00	\$ 1,500,000.00
9th Addition to Coastal Heritage Preserve	TX	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 5,580,000.00	\$ 6,580,000.00
Hudson Cove Habitat Protection	WA	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 423,333.00	\$ 1,423,333.00
Keystone Farm and Forest Acquisition	WA	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 500,000.00	\$ 1,500,000.00
Castroville to the Coast - Phase 1	CA	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 515,294.00	\$ 1,515,294.00
Long Bay Coastal Wetland Conservation	NC	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 5,100,000.00	\$ 6,100,000.00
Galveston Bay Wetland Acquisition	TX	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 732,000.00	\$ 1,732,000.00
Northwestern Moloka'i Coastal Restoration	HI	\$ 460,752.88	\$ 193,085.00	\$ 653,837.88
Mad Horse Creek Wetland Restoration	NJ	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 2,000,000.00
Total			\$ 19,931,902.88	\$ 21,144,898.00

*This table includes carryover and sequester returns from prior years.

Table 6
FY 2023 North American Wetlands Conservation Act
Migratory Bird Conservation Commission Grants

PROJECT TYPE	NUMBER OF PROJECTS	NAWCA GRANT	MATCHING AMOUNT	TOTAL PARTNER AMOUNT
CANADA STD GRANT	8	\$28,936,050	\$28,936,050	\$28,936,050
MEXICO STD GRANT	9	\$3,591,969	\$5,563,372	\$5,563,372
U.S. SMALL GRANT	22	\$2,025,860	\$6,124,892	\$6,124,892
U.S. STD GRANT	35	\$49,509,598	\$99,665,911	\$99,665,911
TOTAL	74	\$84,063,477	\$140,290,225	\$140,290,225
Standard Grants Only	52	\$ 82,037,617	\$ 134,165,333	\$ 134,165,333

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

The 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.

The 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.

The *Target Practice and Marksmanship Training Support Act of 2019* (P.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).

The *Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow's Needs Act of 2019* (P.L. 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* (P.L. 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* (P.L. 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* (P.L. 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

		2023 Actual	2024 Estimate	2025			Change From 2024 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Estimate
Payments to States	(\$000)	1,189,241	979,600	0	0	+16,338	995,938	+16,338
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)	14,425	15,031	0	0	+1,194	16,225	+1,194
Subtotal	(\$000)	1,219,666	1,010,631	0	0	+17,532	1,028,163	+17,532
	<i>FTE</i>	56	56	0	0	+0	56	+0
Interest - NAWCF	(\$000)	42,751	77,935	0	0	+4,932	82,867	+4,932
	<i>FTE</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL, Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration	(\$000)	1,262,417	1,088,566	0	0	+22,464	1,111,030	+22,464
	<i>FTE</i>	56	56	0	0	+0	56	+0

The 2023, 2024, and 2025 amounts include sequestration in accordance with section 251A of the BBDECA, 2 U.S.C. 901a. In addition, the amounts in 2023, 2024, and 2025 include amounts previously sequestered, which are now available in accordance with said Act. 2023, 2024, and 2025 amounts include additional amounts 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

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, sportspeople, 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 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 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 \$15.7 billion in

unadjusted actual dollars (\$25.3 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. Additional data on Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration apportionments to States is available at:

<https://www.fws.gov/program/sport-fish-restoration>

The Service's *2022 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation* estimated 14.4 million people aged 16 years old and older enjoyed hunting. They hunted 241 million days and took 165 million trips. Hunting expenditures totaled \$45.2 billion, which is important to the U.S. economy. Recreational target shooters are estimated to be over 47 million participants, and archery participants 19.2 million. More National Survey data and addendum reports can be viewed here:

<https://www.fws.gov/program/national-survey-fishing-hunting-and-wildlife-associated-recreation-fhwar>

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 MSCGP.”

Here are some recent examples of how the Wildlife Restoration Program funds many important projects across the United States:

In April, white-tailed deer in the northern States have typically experienced prolonged severe winter weather. This is the most taxing time in a whitetail deer’s life, particularly at the edges of their northernmost range. Winter habitat management is critical to ensure pregnant does will survive. The **Vermont** Fish and Wildlife Department (VFWD) use WR funds to maintain deer habitat. Vermont is 75 percent forested, so deer management is closely tied to good forest management, including selective thinning to create gaps and forest regeneration. While the Vermont landscape is largely forested, only nine percent of that area supports deer winter habitat, making it all the more important that Vermont Fish and Wildlife carefully manages and protects those areas. Habitat management



VFWD wildlife biologist Andrea Shortsleeve talks wildlife management standing amid a forest opening designed to create food for whitetails.

Credit: VFWD

projects like this help build resilient ecosystems in the face of climate change.

The **New Mexico** Department of Game and Fish acquired the L-Bar Ranch in FY 2023 with WR funds. The new property expanded the existing Marquez Wildlife Management Area (WMA) to 68,000 acres—106 square miles—of public land now open to hunters, birders, and nature enthusiasts. This newly expanded Marquez WMA is a varied land, that includes habitat for migrating waterfowl, Mearns' quail, Gambels' quail, scaled quail, elk, mule deer, black bear, dusky grouse, and Merriam's turkey among others. Plans are underway to release pronghorn antelope. This land acquisition also connects large swaths of existing public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management to the north and the U.S. Forest Service to the southwest. This is especially important in science-based wildlife management by providing migration corridors for elk and mule deer, where the herds can better fulfill their habitat needs throughout the seasons. Properly managed, the lands in their totality will provide calving and nursery areas, summer range and wintering habitats for deer and elk. A litany of songbirds visit the area on their north-south seasonal routes as stop-overs; others stay and nest and raise their broods. Land acquisition projects like this provide important habitat for at-risk species, and also protects important wildlife habitat in the face of climate change.



*Temple Hills L-Bar Ranch.
Credit: Craig Springer/USFWS.*

The **Florida** Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission used Hunter Education funds to build the Palm Beach Shooting Sports Complex. A demographics study conducted by the State in 2013 revealed that more than 2.3 million people age 18 and older live within a 50-mile radius of the new complex. While the area is heavily developed and populated, it lacked a public target shooting facility. The new complex includes handgun ranges, rifle ranges, American and International trap, skeet fields, an automated 15-station sporting clay course, and a classroom facility for hunter education training. There are also plans for a 3D archery park. This facility is an enviable public target range that serves a large swath of the public, from the casual target-shooter to the competitive athlete at the upper echelon—Olympians. Shooting ranges like this can help bring shooting sports to new and diverse participants, people with disabilities, and underserved communities.

The National Archery Association dba USA Archery received an R3 Multistate Conservation Grant titled, “Archery is for Everyone National Awareness Marketing Campaign with Marvel Entertainment, LLC Partnership.” The archery community has seen noticeable increases in R3 efforts from a combination of the Olympic and Paralympic Games as well as pop culture, including major motion pictures. However, there has never been a coordinated national campaign that encompasses these events along with archery organizations, State and Federal agencies, and the archery and bowhunting industry to meet the newly generated demand in archery. For this project, USA Archery is partnering with Marvel Entertainment, LLC to develop and execute an “Archery is for Everyone” nationwide marketing campaign that harnesses the power of Marvel's social media network, comic book popularity, and digital presence. This campaign began in 2023 with Marvel Entertainment, LLC's digital and social media campaign and archery trial events for the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris, and will continue through 2028 with the LA28 Games and other pop culture events to come. Projects like this can help bring archery to new and diverse participants, people with disabilities, and underserved communities.



Budget Estimate

The FY 2025 budget estimate for the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Program is \$1,111,030,000 and 56 FTE. The estimate is based on current law projections provided by the Department of the Treasury’s Office of Tax Analysis.

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE				
ESTIMATED FINAL APPORTIONMENT OF PITTMAN-ROBERTSON				
WILDLIFE RESTORATION FUNDS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024				
	WILDLIFE	HUNTER EDUCATION		
	FUNDS-5220	SEC 4(c)	ENHANCED	
<u>STATE</u>	<u>CFDA:</u>	<u>CFDA:</u>	<u>CFDA:</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
	15.611	15.611	15.626	
ALABAMA	\$18,383,419	\$4,057,433	\$179,553	\$22,620,405
ALASKA	\$39,940,969	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$41,828,772
AMERICAN SAMOA	\$1,331,366	\$301,301	\$13,333	\$1,646,000
ARIZONA	\$22,505,259	\$5,423,409	\$240,000	\$28,168,668
ARKANSAS	\$14,288,661	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$16,176,464
CALIFORNIA	\$26,396,954	\$5,423,409	\$240,000	\$32,060,363
COLORADO	\$21,768,834	\$4,662,649	\$206,340	\$26,637,823
CONNECTICUT	\$3,994,097	\$2,912,034	\$128,863	\$7,034,994
DELAWARE	\$3,994,097	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$5,881,900
FLORIDA	\$12,459,919	\$5,423,409	\$240,000	\$18,123,328
GEORGIA	\$25,535,003	\$5,423,409	\$240,000	\$31,198,412
GUAM	\$1,331,366	\$301,301	\$13,333	\$1,646,000
HAWAII	\$3,994,097	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$5,881,900
IDAHO	\$17,579,486	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$19,467,289
ILLINOIS	\$13,890,946	\$5,423,409	\$240,000	\$19,554,355
INDIANA	\$10,982,460	\$5,423,409	\$240,000	\$16,645,869
IOWA	\$12,244,394	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$14,132,197
KANSAS	\$16,311,273	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$18,199,076
KENTUCKY	\$12,642,228	\$3,638,755	\$161,023	\$16,442,006
LOUISIANA	\$16,428,318	\$3,761,441	\$166,452	\$20,356,211
MAINE	\$9,054,442	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$10,942,245
MARYLAND	\$4,059,692	\$4,988,509	\$220,759	\$9,268,960
MASSACHUSETTS	\$3,994,097	\$5,423,409	\$240,000	\$9,657,506
MICHIGAN	\$22,931,190	\$5,423,409	\$240,000	\$28,594,599
MINNESOTA	\$23,556,916	\$4,608,364	\$203,928	\$28,369,208
MISSISSIPPI	\$12,647,290	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$14,535,093
MISSOURI	\$20,760,223	\$4,970,491	\$219,956	\$25,950,670
MONTANA	\$23,843,174	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$25,730,977
N. MARIANA ISLANDS	\$1,331,366	\$301,301	\$13,333	\$1,646,000

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE				
ESTIMATED FINAL APPORTIONMENT OF PITTMAN-ROBERTSON				
WILDLIFE RESTORATION FUNDS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024				
	WILDLIFE	HUNTER EDUCATION		
	FUNDS-5220	SEC 4(c)	ENHANCED	
		FUNDS-5210	FUNDS-5230	
STATE	CFDA:	CFDA:	CFDA:	TOTAL
	15.611	15.611	15.626	
NEBRASKA	\$14,038,769	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$15,926,572
NEVADA	\$16,344,426	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$18,232,229
NEW HAMPSHIRE	\$3,994,097	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$5,881,900
NEW JERSEY	\$3,994,097	\$5,423,409	\$240,000	\$9,657,506
NEW MEXICO	\$18,520,604	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$20,408,407
NEW YORK	\$19,376,835	\$5,423,409	\$240,000	\$25,040,244
NORTH CAROLINA	\$22,039,666	\$5,423,409	\$240,000	\$27,703,075
NORTH DAKOTA	\$12,397,044	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$14,284,847
OHIO	\$13,681,214	\$5,423,409	\$240,000	\$19,344,623
OKLAHOMA	\$20,529,518	\$3,197,434	\$141,496	\$23,868,448
OREGON	\$19,961,647	\$3,421,859	\$151,427	\$23,534,933
PENNSYLVANIA	\$28,198,571	\$5,423,409	\$240,000	\$33,861,980
PUERTO RICO	\$3,994,097	\$301,301	\$13,333	\$4,308,731
RHODE ISLAND	\$3,994,097	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$5,881,900
SOUTH CAROLINA	\$9,069,160	\$4,133,462	\$182,919	\$13,385,541
SOUTH DAKOTA	\$14,512,561	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$16,400,364
TENNESSEE	\$22,484,331	\$5,423,409	\$240,000	\$28,147,740
TEXAS	\$39,940,969	\$5,423,409	\$240,000	\$45,604,378
UTAH	\$16,944,128	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$18,831,931
VERMONT	\$3,994,097	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$5,881,900
VIRGIN ISLANDS	\$1,331,366	\$301,301	\$13,333	\$1,646,000
VIRGINIA	\$11,088,378	\$5,423,409	\$240,000	\$16,751,787
WASHINGTON	\$12,894,327	\$5,423,409	\$240,000	\$18,557,736
WEST VIRGINIA	\$9,028,083	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$10,915,886
WISCONSIN	\$22,842,767	\$4,759,559	\$210,619	\$27,812,945
WYOMING	\$15,442,997	\$1,807,803	\$80,000	\$17,330,800
TOTAL	\$798,819,382	\$180,780,311	\$8,000,000	\$987,599,693¹

¹ This table includes reverted funds from prior years.

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE				
ESTIMATED APPORTIONMENT OF PITTMAN-ROBERTSON				
WILDLIFE RESTORATION FUNDS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025				
	WILDLIFE	HUNTER EDUCATION		
	FUNDS-5220	SEC 4(c)	ENHANCED	
		FUNDS-5210	FUNDS-5230	
STATE	CFDA:	CFDA:	CFDA:	TOTAL
	15.611	15.611	15.626	
ALABAMA	\$18,628,233	\$4,185,366	\$179,553	\$22,993,152
ALASKA	\$40,472,870	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$42,417,675
AMERICAN SAMOA	\$1,349,096	\$310,801	\$13,333	\$1,673,230
ARIZONA	\$22,804,965	\$5,594,415	\$240,000	\$28,639,380
ARKANSAS	\$14,478,945	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$16,423,750
CALIFORNIA	\$26,748,487	\$5,594,415	\$240,000	\$32,582,902
COLORADO	\$22,058,733	\$4,809,666	\$206,340	\$27,074,739
CONNECTICUT	\$4,047,287	\$3,003,853	\$128,863	\$7,180,003
DELAWARE	\$4,047,287	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$5,992,092
FLORIDA	\$12,625,850	\$5,594,415	\$240,000	\$18,460,265
GEORGIA	\$25,875,057	\$5,594,415	\$240,000.00	\$31,709,472
GUAM	\$1,349,096	\$310,801	\$13,333	\$1,673,230
HAWAII	\$4,047,287	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$5,992,092
IDAHO	\$17,813,595	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$19,758,400
ILLINOIS	\$14,075,934	\$5,594,415	\$240,000	\$19,910,349
INDIANA	\$11,128,715	\$5,594,415	\$240,000	\$16,963,130
IOWA	\$12,407,454	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$14,352,259
KANSAS	\$16,528,493	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$18,473,298
KENTUCKY	\$12,810,587	\$3,753,488	\$161,023	\$16,725,098
LOUISIANA	\$16,647,097	\$3,880,043	\$166,452	\$20,693,592
MAINE	\$9,175,022	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$11,119,827
MARYLAND	\$4,113,756	\$5,145,802	\$220,759	\$9,480,317
MASSACHUSETTS	\$4,047,287	\$5,594,415	\$240,000	\$9,881,702
MICHIGAN	\$23,236,569	\$5,594,415	\$240,000	\$29,070,984
MINNESOTA	\$23,870,627	\$4,753,670	\$203,928	\$28,828,225
MISSISSIPPI	\$12,815,716	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$14,760,521
MISSOURI	\$21,036,690	\$5,127,216	\$219,956	\$26,383,862
MONTANA	\$24,160,698	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$26,105,503
N. MARIANA ISLANDS	\$1,349,096	\$310,801	\$13,333	\$1,673,230

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE				
ESTIMATED APPORTIONMENT OF PITTMAN-ROBERTSON				
WILDLIFE RESTORATION FUNDS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025				
	WILDLIFE	HUNTER EDUCATION		
	FUNDS-5220	SEC 4(c)	ENHANCED	
STATE	CFDA:	CFDA:	CFDA:	TOTAL
	15.611	15.611	15.626	
NEBRASKA	\$14,225,726	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$16,170,531
NEVADA	\$16,562,088	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$18,506,893
NEW HAMPSHIRE	\$4,047,287	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$5,992,092
NEW JERSEY	\$4,047,287	\$5,594,415	\$240,000	\$9,881,702
NEW MEXICO	\$18,767,245	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$20,712,050
NEW YORK	\$19,634,879	\$5,594,415	\$240,000	\$25,469,294
NORTH CAROLINA	\$22,333,172	\$5,594,415	\$240,000	\$28,167,587
NORTH DAKOTA	\$12,562,138	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$14,506,943
OHIO	\$13,863,409	\$5,594,415	\$240,000	\$19,697,824
OKLAHOMA	\$20,802,914	\$3,298,252	\$141,496	\$24,242,662
OREGON	\$20,227,480	\$3,529,754	\$151,427	\$23,908,661
PENNSYLVANIA	\$28,574,096	\$5,594,415	\$240,000	\$34,408,511
PUERTO RICO	\$4,047,287	\$310,801	\$13,333	\$4,371,421
RHODE ISLAND	\$4,047,287	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$5,992,092
SOUTH CAROLINA	\$9,189,936	\$4,263,792	\$182,919	\$13,636,647
SOUTH DAKOTA	\$14,705,827	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$16,650,632
TENNESSEE	\$22,783,758	\$5,594,415	\$240,000	\$28,618,173
TEXAS	\$40,472,870	\$5,594,415	\$240,000	\$46,307,285
UTAH	\$17,169,775	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$19,114,580
VERMONT	\$4,047,287	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$5,992,092
VIRGIN ISLANDS	\$1,349,096	\$310,801	\$13,333	\$1,673,230
VIRGINIA	\$11,236,044	\$5,594,415	\$240,000	\$17,070,459
WASHINGTON	\$13,066,043	\$5,594,415	\$240,000	\$18,900,458
WEST VIRGINIA	\$9,148,312	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$11,093,117
WISCONSIN	\$23,146,968	\$4,909,631	\$210,619	\$28,267,218
WYOMING	\$15,648,654	\$1,864,805	\$80,000	\$17,593,459
TOTAL	\$809,457,394	\$186,480,498	\$8,000,000	\$1,003,937,892

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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 81st 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

		2023 Actual	2024 Estimate	2025				Change from 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Estimate	
Land Acquisition: Fee, Easements, and Leases	(\$000)	102,903	92,047	0	0	-597	91,450	-597
U.S. Postal Service Duck Stamp Printing and Sales Costs	(\$000)	509	550	0	0	0	550	0
Total, Migratory Bird Conservation Account	(\$000)	103,412	92,597	0	0	-597	92,000	-597
	<i>FTE</i>	86	86	0	0	0	86	0

*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. The Service leverages 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 2023-2024 Duck Stamp features Minnesota artist Joseph Hautman’s painting of three tundra swans flying over a wetland. 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 94-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 approximately 260 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

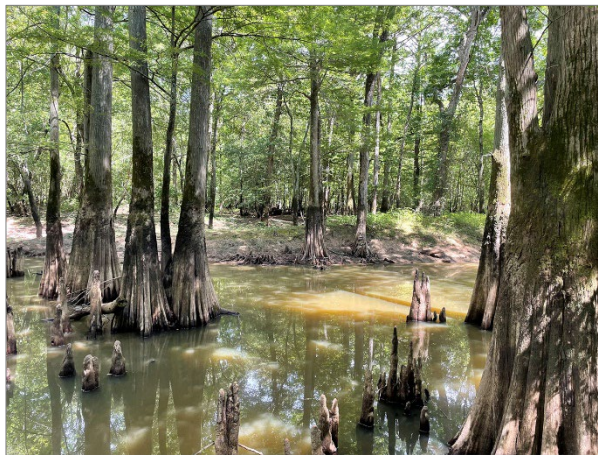
Since its creation, the MBCF has contributed significantly to the successful conservation of wetland-dependent migratory birds and continues to support habitat conservation for waterfowl and other birds, including conservation of coastlines, grasslands, and forests. From 1935 through 2023, the Service expended \$2.0 billion from the MBCF to purchase 3.16 million acres in fee title and 3.15 million acres in conservation easements. Examples of recent MBCC-approved land acquisition projects are below:

- Acquisition of 548 acres at the Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge located 25 miles north of Baton Rouge, in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana. The acquisition protects bottomland hardwood forest with frontage along the Mississippi River, in an area with natural seasonal flooding. The acquisition increases the bottomland hardwood component of the Refuge and connects wetland and riverine habitats along the Mississippi River corridor to provide a larger block of contiguous wetland habitat managed for waterfowl and other migratory birds. The Service is managing the property for compatible, wildlife-dependent recreational activities, including public hunting and fishing, wildlife observation, and environmental education.



Seasonally flooded bottomland hardwood forest habitat acquired at Cat Island NWR. Credit: Ken Clough/USFWS.

- Acquisition of 1,335 acres at the Green River National Wildlife Refuge located 10 miles northeast of Henderson, in western Kentucky. The acquisition is situated in a bend in the Green River that forms the Refuge's north boundary. The acquisition protects habitat for waterfowl, wading birds, and other wildlife; and provides hunting and sport fishing opportunities and environmental education and interpretation for the public. The acquisition augments the State of Kentucky's conservation efforts, as the site is adjacent to the Green River State Forest, the John James Audubon State Park, and a Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources Management Area.
- Acquisition of 1,516 acres at the Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge located eight miles south of Paducah, in western Kentucky. The acquisition protects bottomland hardwood forest along an approximately 15-mile stretch of the Clarks River. In addition to protecting bottomland hardwood forest habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife, the acquisition reduces fragmented habitats, contributes to water quality in the Clarks River watershed, and provides a habitat buffer to frequently flooded Refuge lands during flood events. The increased habitat connectivity provided by the acquisition simplified Service management and facilitated improved public access and expansion of public recreational access.
- Acquisition of 88 acres at the Lower Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge located three miles southwest of Heming, in Tipton County, Tennessee. The acquisition protects bottomland hardwood forest along the Hatchie River and connects wetland and riverine habitats to provide a larger block of contiguous forested wetland habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds. The acquisition includes access easements that improve public recreational access to adjoining Refuge lands as well as aid Refuge management and law enforcement.
- Acquisition of 1,804 acres at the Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge in Oxford County, Maine, along the northern New Hampshire/Maine border. The acquisition protects riparian wetlands, emergent wetlands, and surrounding forest and cutover timberland in various stages of regrowth, that provide nesting habitat for American black ducks, wood ducks, common goldeneyes, and common mergansers. The acquisition provides habitat connectivity with existing Refuge lands and secures permanent public access to the tract and an additional 5,000 acres of adjoining refuge lands, as the primary public road access to all refuge lands in the Town of Upton is through



Bottomland hardwood forest habitat acquired at Lower Hatchie NWR. Credit: Ken Clough/USFWS.



Riparian wetlands acquired at Umbagog NWR. Credit: USFWS.

this tract. The Service is managing the habitat for waterfowl and wildlife-dependent public recreational uses including hunting.

Budget Estimate

The 2025 budget estimate for the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund is \$92,000,000 and 86 FTE.

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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, 2025. The Act is set to expire on October 1, 2024.

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, 2024.

Appropriation: Federal Lands Recreation Fee Program

Program Element	2023 Actual	2024 Estimate	2025			Change from 2024 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)*	Budget Estimate	
Federal Lands Recreation Fee Program						
(\$000)	6,781	7,000	0	0	7,000	0
FTE	25	25	0	0	25	0

*The amounts presented in 2023, 2024, and 2025 includes the sequestration in accordance with Sec. 251A of the BBDECA, 2 U.S.C 901a. In addition, the amounts in 2023, 2024, and 2025 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 2025 is:

January 20, 2025	Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday
June 19, 2025	Juneteenth
September 30, 2025	National Public Lands Day
October 12, 2025	First Sunday of National Wildlife Refuge Week
November 11, 2025	Veterans' 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

The 2025 budget estimate for the Federal Lands Recreation Fee Program is \$7,000,000 and 25 FTE.

National Wildlife Refuge Fund

National Wildlife Refuge Fund

Appropriations Language

The Refuge Revenue Sharing Act (16 U.S.C. 715s) authorizes the Service to make payments to counties in which Fish and Wildlife Service fee lands are located from the revenues resulting from the sale of products from Service lands, less expenses for producing the revenue and activities related to revenue sharing. The 2025 Budget does not propose to supplement revenues with discretionary funding.

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

	2023 Actual	2024 Estimate	2025				Change from 2024 (+/-)
			Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Estimate	
Appropriations (\$000)	13,228	13,228	0	0	-13,228	0	-13,228
Receipts* (\$000)	8,014	7,998	0	0	+2	8,000	+2
Total, National Wildlife Refuge Fund	21,242	21,226	0	0	-13,226	8,000	-13,226
<i>FTE</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	<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., haying 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.



*A cowboy moves cattle to a grazing lease area at Charles M. Russell NWR in Montana. Proceeds from grazing rights are deposited into the National Wildlife Refuge Fund to be distributed to counties and other forms of local government.
Credit: USFWS*

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 2025 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 2025 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	2023 Actual	2024 Estimate	2025 Estimate	Program Change (+/-)
Receipts and Expenses				
Receipts Collected	7,957	8,000	8,000	0
Sequestration	-454	-456	-456	0
Recoveries	33	50	50	0
Expenses for Sales	-2,365	-2,589	-2,624	0
ANILCA Expenses	-28	-30	-30	0
Estimated User-Pay Cost Share	-39	-50	-56	0
Net Receipts -- Available during the following year	5,104	4,925	4,884	0
Payments to Counties				
Receipts Available - collected previous year		5,104	4,925	-179
Sequestration Restored		454	456	+2
Appropriations		13,228		-13,228
Total Available for Payments to Counties		18,786	5,381	-13,405

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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

		2023 Actual	2024 Estimate	2025				Change from 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)	Budget Estimate	
Contributed Funds	(\$000)	3,856	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.

2025 Program Performance

The Service uses contributed funds to address its highest priority needs in concert with other types of funding. The funds in 2025 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 FY 2023:

Fish and Aquatic Conservation

Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery: The Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery received contributed fund from several different sources to help advance mussel recovery and restoration efforts. The Virginia Department of Wildlife provided \$37,192 for restoration of freshwater mussels in Virginia and thousands of mussels of multiple species have been released through this focused effort. The James River Association provided \$35,755 to conduct feasibility assessments of mussel releases in James River tributaries and to support releases. To date, over 4,000 mussels of three species have been released into the James River. Finally, Partnership for the Delaware Estuary (PDE) provided \$71,671 to produce over 50,000 juveniles of all ages for PDE for release, research, and feasibility studies.

Appalachian Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office: The Appalachian Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office received \$400,000 in contributed funds from Southwestern Energy to be used for mussel and fish restoration and recovery in the West Fork River, West Virginia. The contributed funds will help support planning/design/permitting of the removal of the Hartland Dam, the most downstream dam in the watershed. The Dam’s removal will restore access to the 167.5 miles of river to diadromous fish and supporting the recovering of endemic mussel populations. The West Fork River is among our last strongholds for mussels in the Ohio River Basin and the watershed supports three federally listed species: Snuffbox, Clubshell (only population left in Monongahela Basin), and Round Hickorynut.

Cronin Aquatic Resource Center: The Cronin Aquatic Resource Center received \$150,000 in contributed funds from multiple sources as a donation to offset impacts to freshwater mussels from commercial projects in the Connecticut River. The funding is being used for conservation of federally

and state-listed mussels, supporting actions identified as priorities by state partners and the 2016 National Conservation Strategy for Freshwater Mussels.

Mid-Atlantic Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office: The Mid-Atlantic Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office has \$16,196.70 in remaining contributed funds provided by Maryland and Pennsylvania to support a tank spawning program for American shad. While the program ended in 2019, the remaining funds are available to support needs identified by the Susquehanna River Anadromous Fish Restoration Cooperative.

Lower Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office: The Lower Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office received \$6,909 in contributed funds from their Friends group in early FY 2024. The funding is to support the Students, Nature, and Photography program and general community outreach and education. Planning is currently in progress about how best to use these dedicated funds. The Service is developing a spend plan to outline the intended use of these funds.

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

Minnesota Valley NWR (MN): Minnesota Valley Wildlife Refuge used contributed funds to enhance visitor experiences on the refuge, provide safe and welcoming facilities and trails, support internship programs, and support educational and community engagement programs.



Staff and interns from Minnesota Valley NWR standing in front of Bloomington Education and Visitor Center. Credit: USFWS



Minnesota Valley NWR park ranger guides students through the fall prairie. Credit:USFWS

Budget Estimate

The 2025 budget estimate for Contributed Funds is \$5,000,000 and 15 FTE.

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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

		2023 Actual	2024 Estimate	2025			Budget Estimate	Change from 2024 (+/-)
				Fixed Costs (+/-)	Internal Transfers (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		
Operations and Maintenance of Quarters	(\$000)	4,045	3,500	0	0	0	3,500	0
	FTE	2	2	0	0	0	2	0
Proceeds from Sales	(\$000)	227	275	0	0	0	275	0
	FTE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lahontan Valley & Pyramid Lake Fish and Wildlife Fund	(\$000)	85	1,000	0	0	-950	50	-950
	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
Film and Photography Fee Program	(\$000)	0	75	0	0	0	75	0
	FTE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total, Miscellaneous Permanent Appropriations	(\$000)	4,357	4,950	0	0	-950	4,000	-950
	FTE	2	2	0	0	0	2	0

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.

Film and Photography Fee Program

Congress provided authority for the Service to require permits and establish reasonable fees for commercial filming activities and certain still photography activities under Service jurisdiction. The Service manages commercial filming and still photography in the National Wildlife Refuge System according to laws and regulations in 50 C.F.R. 27.71 (and 43 C.F.R. Part 5). This enables a national wildlife refuge manager to require a special use permit for commercial filming, and to collect and retain cost recovery charges associated with processing permit requests and administering the permit. Visit <https://www.fws.gov/story/filming-activities-national-wildlife-refuge-system> for more information.

2025 Budget Estimate

The 2025 budget estimate for Miscellaneous Permanent Appropriations is \$4,000,000 and 2 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.

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 nonliving 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.

Justification of Language Change

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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2025 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. 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 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 2024 and 2025:

	Fiscal Year 2024
External Administrative Costs	
WCF Centralized Billings	\$29,349,800
WCF Direct Billings/Fee for Service	\$25,812,900
Program Assessments	
Holdbacks, Reserves, and Deductions	\$7,778,420
Bureau Administrative Costs	
National Common Program Services	\$36,407,294
Non-Resource Management User-Pay Cost Share	\$8,918,422
Workers' Compensation	\$4,385,000
Enterprise-Wide Services	\$34,237,890

	Fiscal Year 2025
External Administrative Costs	
WCF Centralized Billings	\$31,412,600
WCF Direct Billings/Fee for Service	\$26,119,300
Program Assessments	
Holdbacks, Reserves, and Deductions	\$8,532,860
Bureau Administrative Costs/Central and Regional Operations	
National Common Program Services	\$36,500,000
Non-Resource Management User-Pay Cost Share	\$11,918,422
Workers' Compensation	\$4,128,000
Enterprise-Wide Services	\$35,000,000

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

**Employee Count by Grade
(Total Employment)**

	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Estimate	FY 2025 Estimate
Executive Level V.....	1	1	1
SES.....	18	18	18
Subtotal.....	19	19	19
SL - 00	0	0	0
ST - 00	0	0	0
Subtotal.....	0	0	0
GS/GM -15	146	148	155
GS/GM -14	586	594	622
GS/GM -13	1,544	1565	1639
GS -12	1,935	1961	2054
GS -11	1,602	1624	1701
GS -10	7	7	7
GS - 9	876	888	930
GS - 8	113	115	120
GS - 7	685	694	727
GS - 6	181	183	192
GS - 5	403	408	427
GS - 4	124	126	132
GS - 3	26	26	27
GS - 2	2	2	2
GS - 1	0	0	0
Subtotal	8,230	8,341	8,735
Other Pay Schedule Systems	741	751	786
Total employment (actuals & estimates)	8,990	9,111	9,540

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE Allocations Received from Other Accounts						
Department Program	FY 2023 Actual		FY 2024 Annualized CR		FY 2025 Estimate	
	Budget Authority	Outlays	Budget Authority	Outlays	Budget Authority	Outlays
Department of Agriculture:						
Forest Pest Management - 1105	178,240	151,892	178,000	178,072	178,000	178,000
Department of the Interior:						
<i>Office of Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration</i>						
Damage Assessment 8300 - 1618	3,265,313	1,840,071	3,000,000	3,079,594	3,000,000	3,000,000
Restoration 9800 - 5198	32,882,781	30,034,348	30,000,000	30,864,834	30,000,000	30,000,000
<i>Office of Wildland Fire Coordination</i>						
Wildland Fire Management - 1125	130,086,726	114,448,624	130,000,000	130,026,018	130,000,000	130,000,000
<i>Office of the Secretary, DOI</i>						
Bipartisan Infrastructure ERWG - 0102	132,275,320	193,982,827	60,000,000	81,682,596	60,000,000	-143,390,103
National Parks & Public Lands Mgmt (GAOA) - 5715	95,191,093	45,242,728	95,000,000	95,057,328	95,000,000	95,000,000
Mgmt. of Land & Resources - Renewable Energy Coordination - 1109	3,000,000	2,000,149	2,000,000	2,300,000	2,000,000	2,000,000
Energy Community Revitalization Program - 2641 (Orphaned Wells Program)	14,251,100	574,016	0	4,275,330	0	0
<i>Bureau of Land Management</i>						
Central Hazardous Materials Fund - 1121	3,885,532	2,611,456	4,800,000	4,525,660	4,800,000	4,800,000
So. Nevada Public Lands Management - 5232	1,392,415	1,467,227	3,000,000	2,517,725	3,000,000	3,000,000
Energy Act - Permit Improvement - 5573	1,200,000	1,731,306	1,200,000	1,200,000	1,200,000	1,200,000
Department of Transportation:						
Federal Highway Administration-Discretionary - 0500	650,000	2,047,132	600,000	615,000	600,000	600,000
Federal Highway Administration-Mandatory - 8083	15,157,027	15,401,821	15,000,000	15,047,108	15,000,000	15,000,000
TOTAL	433,415,547	411,533,597	344,778,000	371,369,264	344,778,000	141,387,897

FWS BIL Spend Plan

Department of the Interior

Fish and Wildlife Service

Implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

2025 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.

(\$ in 000s)		FWS Total Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funding					Total
		FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	
Account Name							
22XF1611BL/FFRK40000	Klamath Basin	30,780	30,780	30,780	30,780	30,780	153,900
22XF1611BL/FGOK90000	Klamath Basin	1,620	1,620	1,620	1,620	1,620	8,100
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
Account Name							
22XF1611BL/FFRT40000	Lake Tahoe	3,230	3,230	3,230	3,230	3,230	16,150
22XF1611BL/FGOT90000	Lake Tahoe	170	170	170	170	170	850
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
Account Name							
22XF1611BL/FSCS10000	Sage-Steppe	9,500	9,500	9,500	9,500	9,500	47,500
22XF1611BL/FGOS90000	Sage-Steppe	500	500	500	500	500	2,500
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
Account Name							
22XF1611BL/FFRD40000	Delaware Basin	4,940	4,940	4,940	4,940	4,940	24,700
22XF1611BL/FGOD90000	Delaware Basin	260	260	260	260	260	1,300
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
Account Name							
22XF1611BL/FFRF40000	Fish Passage	38,000	38,000	38,000	38,000	38,000	190,000
22XF1611BL/FGOF90000	Fish Passage	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	10,000
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
FWS, Total		91,000	91,000	91,000	91,000	91,000	455,000

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 is 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 is provided by the Division of Budget and Performance. The Communications lead is the Assistant Chief, Public Affairs.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Executive team meets 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 are provided to the Executive Team by the Division of Budget and Performance.

Administration

The Service tracks 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.

Ecosystem - Klamath Basin

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 FY 2024 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 2023 Activities and Accomplishments

For fiscal year 2023 allocated funds, \$10 million has been allocated to continue work towards the expansion of the Klamath Falls National Fish Hatchery. \$4 million has been allocated to purchase water for Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge and Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Water purchases are to ensure adequate water availability and restoration for wetland and waterfowl needs and are to be purchased from willing sellers in the Upper Klamath Basin.

- Project selections for FY 2023 followed an extensive period of Tribal and stakeholder engagement undertaken throughout the fiscal year. For Tribes, the Service held multiple Government-to-Government 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 governments, 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 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).
- The remaining \$16 million in FY 2023 BIL funding for restoration projects will be used to fund 11 restoration projects.

FY 2024 Planned Activities and Milestones

- FY 2023 Project announcements/award - January 2024
- FY 2024 Award/Project announcement for expansion of Klamath Falls National Fish Hatchery, Refuge water purchase, and one restoration project
- NOFO/guidance release: NOFO for \$13 million for co-development of projects - Anticipated Second quarter 2024
- Stakeholder engagements - Third quarter 2024
- FY 2024 Project solicitation/Project refinement process for \$3 million co-developed projects - Third quarter 2024
- Award/Project announcements for \$13 million co-developed projects - Fourth quarter 2024

FY 2025 Planned Activities

- NOFO/guidance release - Second quarter 2025
- Stakeholder engagements - Third quarter 2025
- FY 2025 Project solicitation/Project refinement process - Third quarter 2025
- Award/Project announcements - Fourth quarter 2025

Ecosystem - Lake Tahoe

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 is 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 2023 Activities and Accomplishments

For fiscal year 2023 allocated funds, cooperative agreements were awarded to the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) for continued investment into high priority aquatic invasive species projects. Three FY 2022 funded projects received FY 2023 funding for follow on project phases. One new project was funded in FY 2023 utilizing additional tactics in aquatic invasive species work in Lake Tahoe.

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 2023 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 2024 Planned Activities and Milestones

- Stakeholder meetings – Second quarter 2024
- Project selection – Third quarter 2024
- Project awards – Fourth quarter 2024

FY 2025 Planned Activities

- Stakeholder meetings – Second quarter 2025
- Project selection – Third quarter 2025
- Project awards – Fourth quarter 2025

Ecosystem - Sagebrush-Steppe

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, including the Sagebrush Conservation Design, 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 Department of the Interior’s Sagebrush Keystone Initiative and related efforts.

- 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

Also 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, using the Sagebrush Conservation Design, we have identified priority species (three sagebrush-obligate migratory bird species and greater sage-grouse), set population objectives for these species, integrated their habitat requirements with our partners’ priority species (e.g., big game) to develop a larger “sagebrush ecological integrity” metric, 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 2022-2023 Activities and Accomplishments

Allocated \$18.5 million* in strategic investments in on-the-ground conservation delivery projects, actionable science, and critical capacity, including:

- Nearly 100 priority, partner-driven sagebrush conservation projects across nine States to leverage nearly \$41 million in total conservation impact and promote climate resilience for rural communities, including Tribes.
- More than 15 leading-edge, collaborative scientific research projects to co-produce technical tools and other resources to advance sagebrush conservation and support larger efforts, including the Department of the Interior’s Sagebrush Keystone Initiative.
- 12 mission-critical positions and other resources (e.g., project tracking systems) to support efficient and accountable delivery of sagebrush-steppe BIL funds; and communicate the benefits of BIL investment in sagebrush country.

**Note: we allocated both FY 2022 and FY 2023 sage/BIL funds in FY 2022, effectively completing two sage/BIL funding cycles in one fiscal year.*

FY 2024 Planned Activities and Milestones

- In September 2023, announced completion of our FY 2024 project slate, which allocated \$10.5 million in strategic investments in on-the-ground conservation delivery projects, actionable science, and critical capacity, including:
 - 59 on-the-ground habitat conservation projects focused on combating invasive species and wildfire; managing conifer encroachment; and restoring wetland and riparian habitat.
 - More than \$1 million in dedicated funding for direct delivery of projects with Tribal partners.
- Also in FY 2024, FWS and our partners will continue to implement projects funded through FY 2022 and FY 2023 sage/BIL investments.

FY 2025 Planned Activities

- For FY 2025, we will:
 - Continue to implement, track and report projects funded in FY 2022-2024
 - Implement lessons learned from our FY 2022-2024 after action reviews to inform necessary funding process revisions for FY 2025
 - Continue to emphasize:
 - strategic prioritization for funding investments using the Sagebrush Conservation Design.
 - close engagement with Tribes and other partners to ensure project development and delivery is aligned with partner priorities.
 - use of existing NOFOs linked to our primary projects/activities to promote efficiencies in our process.
 - internal and external communications to highlight the ecological, economic and cultural benefits of our sage/BIL investments.
- We anticipate FY 2025 project selection by the end of FY 2024.

Ecosystem - Delaware River Basin Conservation Act

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 \$55.1 million to 195 projects, which generated \$79.2 million in match, for a total conservation impact of \$134.3 million. The Delaware River Basin Conservation Act (DRBCA).

With \$5.2 million in Federal funding made available in FY 2025 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 are 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 – pounds 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 2023 Activities and Accomplishments

- In FY 2023, the [Delaware River Basin Restoration program](#) allocated BIL funds to six projects based on these projects' technical merit, cost efficiencies, and alignment with BIL funding priorities.
- BIL funds support 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 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.
- Projected accomplishments for FY23 DWCF-BIL investments: Six projects were funded using DWCF-BIL funds. These projects will restore 8.36 acres of wetlands, improve 0.7 miles of instream habitat, improve management of 91.25 acres (16.25 acres of parks with planned instream, wetland, and riparian buffer restoration and 75 acres under improved forest management), and prevent 22,000 pounds of sediment from entering the tributaries of the Delaware River. All while engaging 370 volunteers in conservation programming and having 27.25 acres open to public access. 100 percent of projects will have a positive impact to an underserved community.

FY 2024 Planned Activities and Milestones

- Grantees will be making progress on FY 2022 and FY 2023 DWCF-BIL awards.
- 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 - Third Quarter 2024
- FY 2024 Grant Slate finalized - Third Quarter 2024
- Award notifications, press release, and announcement event - Fourth Quarter 2024

FY 2025 Planned Activities

- Request for Proposal released, technical assistance “proposal labs,” applicant support webinars, and one-on-one meetings - Second Quarter 2025
- Proposals due - Second Quarter 2025
- Technical and programmatic reviews- Third Quarter 2025
- FY 2025 Grant Slate finalized - Third Quarter 2025
- Award notifications, press release, and announcement event - Fourth Quarter 2025

Ecosystem - Fish Passage

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, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), partnership groups (e.g., Fish Habitat Partnerships), community organizations, and other willing partners to restore fish passage and aquatic connectivity by removing or bypassing barriers. Projects range in size from large-scale dam removals to the reconnection of floodplain, wetlands and tidal areas, 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. Under the BIL, NFPP has adapted project selection processes to maximize transparency and to clearly demonstrate program alignment with climate resilience and environmental justice priorities. NFPP also improved the way the program prioritizes projects that leverage watershed-scale restoration with coordinated investments from other agencies.

The NFPP continues to be 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

eliminates 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.” Starting in FY 2023, a portion of the funding provided was used to provide technical assistance (e.g., project management, biological expertise, engineering support, environmental compliance, and monitoring). The intent is to provide a similar level of support for project management in subsequent years to ensure effective development and delivery of BIL fish passage projects. Funding to external partners is typically distributed via cooperative agreements, grants, and interagency agreements.

Each Service region works collaboratively throughout the year with a range of Federal and non-Federal partners to identify and develop fish passage projects. These collaborative efforts at the local and regional scale result in building a strong project pipeline. Regions focus staff time to directly support partner efforts to develop proposals for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding as needed, further reducing the burden on applicants. For FY 2024 and FY 2025, the Service will continue to utilize these existing collaborative efforts while also expanding project solicitation to new potential partners through a variety of efforts. These efforts include, but are not limited to, Tribal-specific outreach and communications, increased outreach to new partners including disadvantaged communities via regional and field staff, and efforts to increase collaboration on shared prioritization, cross-agency project review, and funding opportunity development with other Federal agencies. Project proposals developed in collaboration with Service staff will be scored by an interagency technical review panel based on criteria including benefits to priority species and habitats, benefits for climate resiliency, Tribal involvement, and benefits to disadvantaged communities. Additional information on the program’s project selection process is described in the most recent Notice of Funding Opportunity (F24AS00062).

Interagency Coordination on Fish Passage

The Service continues to facilitate interagency coordination on fish passage opportunities presented by BIL and other recent federal legislation. The Federal Interagency Fish Passage Task Force (Task Force) was established in December 2022 by collective agreement of leadership of its thirteen member Federal agencies. Service and Task Force staff will continue developing and implementing a robust forum for coordination on large scale aquatic ecosystem restoration in FY 2025. The Service and our Federal partners also have created an Interagency Fish Passage Portal which provides a one-stop clearinghouse for information on BIL funding opportunities with 17 funding opportunities from 10 agencies represented. The portal also hosts other resources to promote aquatic connectivity, such as inventory and prioritization tools, and an interactive GIS-based project platform to highlight funded projects.

The Service continues regular coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), on the National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program (Culvert Program) funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Close coordination on the development of the Culvert Program Notice of

Funding Opportunity, identification and development of projects, and delivery of funds will continue through FY 2026. Service staff are supporting the Culvert Program in a variety of ways at the headquarters and regional level including direct program support (e.g., NOFO development, proposal review) and providing technical assistance (e.g., working with applicants on proposal development). Of note, Service staff are working to advance policies and procedures implemented by FHWA and their partners (i.e., State DOTs) that would increase the resilience of infrastructure investments made under the Culvert Program or other DOT programs.

The Service is providing additional interagency support to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Dam Safety Program (NDSP) focused on providing expertise, guidance, and other support as FEMA expands dam removal components of the NDSP. Specifically, a Service employee is supporting the development of NDSP's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law-funded High Hazard Potential Dam program (HHPD) in a one-year temporary assignment. The Service staff member is assisting FEMA in the development of their NOFO, project evaluation, cross-programmatic and interagency coordination, as well as FEMA's efforts to update flood maps where dam removals have occurred. Coordination across the Federal family and with non-federal partners (such as the Association of State Dam Safety Officials) intends to expand awareness of dam removal benefits and opportunities amongst the dam safety community and provide the expertise, approaches, and best practices necessary for streamlining and scaling dam removal activities under FEMA's purview. Coordination with NDSP will continue and include coordination across the Federal family and with non-federal partners (such as the Association of State Dam Safety Officials) on fish passage and barrier removal funding.

The Task Force continues to coordinate across the Federal family and with non-federal partners on implementing a variety of objectives and priorities. For example, the Task Force's communications working group is developing a toolkit that can be used across all Federal agencies when presenting on or communicating about fish passage and interagency coordination, and consistent messaging that can be deployed using the toolkit. The Task Force is also leading a work group focused on developing a framework for monitoring and evaluation of fish passage projects that can be deployed by all agencies and project proponents.

Finally, Service staff, in coordination with the Task Force, is conducting a comprehensive analysis of existing programs and policies across the Federal government. The primary objective is to identify areas where the significance of aquatic connectivity can be emphasized within the Federal government. This involves recognizing aspects of Federal policies and programs that directly or indirectly impact aquatic ecosystems and the connectivity of habitats. The second objective is to pinpoint existing Federal policies that inadvertently contribute to the creation of new barriers, whether they are environmental, socioeconomic, or a combination of both. The goal of this assessment is to align the initiatives of the Task Force with the missions and authorities of the respective agencies, thus ensuring that the principles are consistently integrated across government. Additionally, this phase will identify opportunities for improved coordination. This effort is aligned with the recent guidance on connectivity and corridors set forth by CEQ and is critical to the long-term wellbeing of ecosystems and communities.

Performance

NFPP reports annually on the following metrics for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law:

- 1.) Total number of fish passage barriers removed and bypassed to achieve landscape scale connectivity for high priority species.
- 2.) Number of river/stream miles opened to fish passage.

FY 2023 Activities and Accomplishments

- In FY 2023, NFPP provided \$35 million in funds to 39 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 39 projects selected will remove a total of 107 barriers and reopen over 2,500 miles of river and streams once complete. The 39 projects encompass nearly 80 culvert removals or retrofits, more than 25 dam removals, and other important projects ranging from restoration of headwater springs, to restoring connectivity to floodplains and tidal and freshwater wetlands.
- In FY 2023, NFPP removed 18 barriers to fish passage and opened 271 stream miles through BIL funding.
- As an example of meeting our program's Environmental Justice (Justice 40) obligations, over 60 percent of our FY 2022 and FY 2023 BIL funds were spent within communities labeled as disadvantaged according to the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool. NFPP is also working hard to meet Tribal co-stewardship responsibilities, awarding over 50 percent of FY 2022 and FY 2023 BIL funding to 33 Tribal involved projects in 13 States, representing over 32 individual Tribes. When complete, this subset of projects will remove 79 barriers opening 1,700 miles of stream.

FY 2024 Planned Activities and Milestones

- Conduct Partner and Tribal Outreach and Coordination - First Quarter 2024
- Publish Year 3 NOFO focused on project selection for FY 2024 funding (note that the NOFO also provides flexibility to select projects utilizing all or a portion of FY 2025 funding) - First Quarter 2024
- Regions receive Letters of Interest from applicants for Year 3 NOFO - First Quarter 2024
- Host 2nd Annual Partner Workshop on Fish Passage and Aquatic Connectivity - First Quarter 2024
- Regions develop full proposals for projects selected for national submission for Year 3 NOFO - Second Quarter 2024
- Develop national list of ranked and prioritized fish passage projects - Second Quarter 2024
- Year 3 project list finalized - Third Quarter 2024
- Service Regions initiate funding obligations for FY 2024 funded fish passage projects - Third Quarter 2024

FY 2025 Planned Activities

- Partner and Tribal Outreach and Coordination - First Quarter 2025

- Publish NOFO if needed (dependent on funding availability due to project selections via Year 3 NOFO) - First Quarter 2025
- Host 3rd Annual Partner Workshop on Fish Passage and Aquatic Connectivity - Second Quarter 2025
- Initiate funding obligations for selected FY 2025 funded fish passage projects - Third Quarter 2025

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