

WILDLIFE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY VOLUME IV

RECOMMENDATIONS TO
PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

PRESENTED BY THE
**AMERICAN
WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION
PARTNERS**



American Wildlife Conservation Partners

ESTABLISHED IN 2000

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

January 21, 2013

Dear President Obama:

Congratulations on your reelection as the 44th President of the United States from our consortium of 49 wildlife conservation groups – the American Wildlife Conservation Partners.

We are grateful to have worked with your administration over the last four years and hope to continue together safeguarding our nation's wildlife resources and the interests of America's sportsmen and women. To that end, please accept the recommendations in *Wildlife for the 21st Century*, Vol. 4.

These recommendations build on the primary accomplishments of your first term. The Department of Interior began the America's Great Outdoors initiative and has acted on key recommendations on access to Federal lands. The Department of Agriculture established the Working Lands for Wildlife program and expanded the use of stewardship contracting on National Forests. These two departments continued the jointly-chartered Federal Advisory Committee by which we stay in direct official contact.

Continuing forward benefits all Americans, not just sportsmen and women. As consumers, nearly 20 million hunters contribute over \$3 billion of state and federal revenue annually through excise taxes, hunting and fishing licenses and fees. These dollars fund programs and projects that, along with contributions from our members, enhance ecosystems and beautify scenery for all. Our expenditures on gear, supplies, and travel generate more than \$30 billion annually toward the American economy.

We hope this work is also a balm for difficult politics. We are committed to the bipartisan spirit in which your administration endorsed the unified agenda for hunting heritage produced by the inclusive and deliberative process of President Bush's White House Conference on North American Wildlife Policy in 2008. That broad unity carries over from previous White House conferences held by Presidents Johnson, Kennedy, and Theodore Roosevelt – and it is necessary for progress. Thank you for considering these recommendations.

Sincerely,

Miles Moretti, Chair (2013)
American Wildlife Conservation Partners

ARCHERY TRADE ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION OF FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES
BEAR TRUST INTERNATIONAL
BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB
BOWHUNTING PRESERVATION ALLIANCE
BUCKMASTERS AMERICAN DEER FOUNDATION
CAMP FIRE CLUB OF AMERICA
CATCH A DREAM FOUNDATION
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INTERNATIONAL HUNTER EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
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WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE
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COVER IMAGE COURTESY OF TREAD LIGHTLY!

Foreword

Wildlife for the 21st Century: Vol. IV, is the fourth in a series of recommendations from the American Wildlife Conservation Partners (AWCP) to Presidents Bush and Obama since 2001. AWCP is a consortium of 49 organizations that represents the interests of America's 20 million hunters, their families and the economies of many rural communities.

We began issuing these recommendations at the turn of the 21st Century to apply to today's issues the fundamental ideas on which the American conservation movement began over the prior 100+ years: the ideas of public access to wildlife, personal responsibility, and active scientific management.

Public access to wildlife has been the heritage of all Americans since this country rejected royalty and the reservation of wildlife for royalty so that all may seek and enjoy.

The legacy of personal commitments by conservationists also fills this heritage with the valuable achievements in restoring and sustaining wildlife, discovering and teaching its science, and mentoring generations of hunters, trappers, and target shooters in safe and ethical recreation.

Active, scientific management, as put succinctly by Aldo Leopold, our founding scientist and philosopher, means "a positive exercise of skill and insight, not merely a negative exercise of abstinence and caution".

The continuity of accomplishment under these principles runs from the first hunting clubs proposing game laws in the mid-1800s, to the creation of Federal agencies and public lands at the turn of the last century, and to passage of a self-imposed tax on arms and ammunition that has funded massive restoration of deer, elk, and other wildlife. That program is now called Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration and reached its 75th anniversary in 2012. We are now equipped to add to the legacy through the work of state, Federal, and tribal wildlife agencies, the largest caucus in the Congress (the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus), a Federal Advisory Committee with a unified 10-year agenda (the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council), and our network of private groups in AWCP.

It is from this perspective of history, service in government and private enterprise, and basis in principle that we submit the following recommendations. These recommendations represent a general agreement of the partners. Each reserves the right to establish independent positions on any issue as we research, debate, and act on these ideas for the next 4 years of the 21st century.

STEERING COMMITTEE 2013

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Miles Moretti, Chair

SAFARI CLUB INTERNATIONAL
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CAMPFIRE CLUB OF AMERICA
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TREAD LIGHTLY!
Lori McCullough

WILD SHEEP FOUNDATION
Gray Thornton

SECRETARY
Nelson Freeman
Safari Club International

WILDLIFE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

VISION AND CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Vision

We envision a future in which...

... all wildlife and private and public habitats are abundant, maintained, and enhanced;

... hunting, trapping, and other outdoor interests are supported by the public to maintain America's great wildlife conservation heritage and cultural traditions;

... natural resources policies encourage, empower, and reward stewardship and responsible use;

... all people are committed to principles of scientific wildlife management, where wildlife is held in public trust, and where the use of resources is shared equitably and sustained for present and future generations.

“Conservation... is a positive exercise of skill and insight, not merely a negative exercise of abstinence and caution...”

Aldo Leopold



Aldo Leopold during a hunting trip to Mexico's Rio Gavilan in 1938.

Current Recommendations

- **Sustain and Promote our Nation’s Hunting Heritage with a Sportsmen’s Act and a Permanent Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council.**

See page 6 for more details.

- **Enhance Habitat on Federal Lands with Risk Assessment and Stewardship End Result Contracting Projects.**

See page 8 for more details.

- **Promote Access to Federal Lands for Hunting and Recreational Shooting.**

See page 10 for more details.

- **Help Achieve State Wildlife Population Goals through Federal Land Management and Coordinate with Other Governments on Large-Scale Plans.**

See page 11 for more details.

- **Enhance Private Land Hunting and Habitat Conservation by Reauthorizing the Farm Bill and Improving Tax and Water Policy.**

See page 12 for more details.

- **Fund Wildlife Conservation by Limiting Proportionate Reductions, Expanding User Pays-Public Benefits Policies, and Promoting Partnerships with the Private Sector.**

See page 14 for more details.

- **Improve Energy Development by Meeting State Wildlife Population Goals and Developing Guidelines for Siting projects.**

See page 16 for more details.

- **Address Climate Change with Strategies to Aid Wildlife in Adapting.**

See page 17 for more details.

- **Address Wildlife Diseases and Invasive Species by Separating Wildlife and Domestic Animals on Federal Lands and Collaborating with States, Landowners, and Businesses.**

See page 18 for more details.

- **Update the Endangered Species Act by Enhancing the Science Basis in the Listing/Delisting Program.**

See page 19 for more details.

Sustain and Promote our Nation's Hunting Heritage with a Sportsmen's Act and a Permanent Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council

Hunters were America's original conservationists and have built, led, and supported the institutions that carry on conservation today.

Several of the reauthorizations for this work are due or overdue. Improvements have also been identified that require enactment by agencies and Congress. To act on these, we have drafted and supported sporting conservation bills that package opportunities and safeguards for hunting and recreational shooting on public lands, access

to public lands for these activities, and reauthorization for several programs vital to the conservation of wildlife and their habitats, such as the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. We also recently welcomed the Administration's extension of our Federal Advisory Committee – the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council, which has now proven itself indispensable.



MICHIGAN DNR | DAVID KENYON

Passing a Sportsmen's Act and making WHHCC permanent would add naturally to the history of sportsmen and women in the building of American Wildlife Conservation:

2010s – The Obama administration, working with AWCP and the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, extends the charter of the WHHCC. Conservationists promote a Sportsmen's Act. Congress affirms the decision to delist the gray wolf under the Endangered Species Act.

2000s – National sporting conservation groups form the American Wildlife Conservation Partners network; President Bush issues E.O. 13443 for a 10-year agenda on hunting heritage and a White House conference on conservation; the Departments of Interior and Agriculture charter a joint Federal Advisory Committee, forerunner to the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council.

1960s – 1990s – New authorities for Land and Water Conservation, Wilderness, wildlife refuges, multiple use federal lands, Farm Bill conservation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Endangered Species, and Clean Air and Water. Development and implementation of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and the passage of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. Beginning of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus.

1900 – 1950s – The Lacey Act, supporting the enforcement of state game laws. Beginnings of the Sportfish and Wildlife Restoration Program, the Duck Stamp Act, and species recovery (bison). The first White House conference on conservation, Establishment of the Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Bureau of Land Management. Publication of first textbook in wildlife science. Beginnings of private land conservation and hunting access.

Pre-1900 – Beginnings of federal wildlife refuges, national forests, and national parks. Theodore Roosevelt founds the first national conservation group, the Boone and Crockett Club. Sportsmen promote a model game law for State game agencies.

ACTIONS

Promote a Sportsmen's Act that packages opportunities and safeguards for hunting and recreational shooting on public lands, access to public lands for these activities, and reauthorizations for conservation programs.

Permanently reauthorize the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council federal advisory committee.

Enhance Habitat on Federal Lands with Risk Assessment and Stewardship End Result Contracting Projects

The historic practice of extinguishing all wildfires on federal lands in the West has, ironically, increased the severity of wildfires by allowing forests and rangelands to accumulate unnaturally large loads of dead and dying trees and brush highly susceptible to insects and diseases. Each year, this vicious cycle degrades ecological integrity on millions of acres. The fires and their effects run

beyond federal lands to degrade neighboring state, tribal, and private lands as well.

Careful silviculture – the science of forestry – carried out through logging and thinning projects and controlled prescribed fires, can restore these lands to more natural conditions with lower risk of uncharacteristic fires, infestations, and diseases.



MIKE SCHROEDER

Therefore, forest and rangeland policy must – while addressing public attitudes and misconceptions of habitat management – consolidate conflicting laws, regulations, and guidance across several agencies to enable necessary restoration and management of these important wildlife habitats. Congress began an excellent start toward this with Stewardship End Result Contracting Projects, most recently authorized through FY 2013. This authority has proven over more than 10 years to be an effective means of active forest management and restoration. In addition to this, agencies in all their decisions should consider the trade-off between the short-term risks of active management and the long-term risks of failing to manage.

Without resolving these complications, restoration and management cannot proceed and this confounds efforts to conserve the wildlife that rely on forests, rangelands and grasslands. Some of these species cannot live without significant areas that have been burned at low intensities, or harvested for timber, or otherwise returned to openings where sunlight can reach the ground and stimulate new growth.

Many species of wildlife that require young forest or other open land habitats are declining precipitously across the nation. The loss of open range habitats in the West has caused reductions in populations of elk and deer. Breeding birds that use young forest habitats in the East are twice as likely to decline as are bird species that breed in mature forest habitats.

The acreage of young habitat types and age classes has and continues to decline on federal lands. Very old habitats are also uncommon. We know the very old habitats will increase on federal lands set aside from active management and fire control. But regaining young habitats requires the active management of silviculture using mechanical equipment, controlled fire, and herbicides. We know young forest and open range habitats can be established relatively quickly this way, and also that because they grow quickly, they must be sustained through repeated active management.

ACTIONS

Develop administrative directives requiring land management plan processes and decisions to compare and balance the potential short-term risks of proposed habitat enhancement projects against the potential long-term benefits of these projects to important game and nongame wildlife.

Permanently authorize Stewardship End Result Contracting Projects. Provide in the authorization a 25% payment to counties from contracting revenues and minimize the financial liability risk for private partners associated with the projects.

Simplify and expand the use of stewardship authorities and similar collaborative programs, and increase the use of vegetation management projects, to restore and diversify wildlife habitats and improve forest and rangeland health on federal lands.

Require a minimum performance level in land management plans that specify timber harvest and wildlife population goals, e.g., require achievement of a minimum percentage of the goal within two years of approval.

Promote Access to Federal Lands for Hunting and Recreational Shooting

Federal public lands throughout much of the nation provide most of the opportunities for most sportsmen and women to hunt and shoot targets. These opportunities are now more precious as access to private lands is progressively curtailed by urban and suburban sprawl.

Loss of access to these opportunities is the leading impediment to public participation in hunting and recreational shooting.

ACTIONS

Expressly provide in federal land policy a requirement to assess opportunities for hunting and recreational shooting for every alternative considered in planning and decision-making.

Support legislation to enhance opportunities for hunting and recreational shooting on federal lands.

Support legislation that advances the concept of "Making Public Lands Public" which dedicates a small portion of Land and Water Conservation Funds to projects that secure public access from willing sellers – by conservation easement, land exchange, or fee title sale – to otherwise inaccessible federal lands for hunting and recreational shooting.

Expand web-based communications to:

- promote hunting and recreational shooting on federal lands, including by providing maps consistent across agencies that identify hunting, fishing, and shooting opportunities, and relevant boundaries, trails, gates, and other features.
- provide information on structured hunting and shooting programs, education, equipment, license requirements, regulations, safety and ethics, responsible motorized vehicle use, and other information useful to new and existing hunters.

Therefore the 703 million acres held and managed by the United States – 31% of the land area of the nation – must clearly provide in policy and promote through notice to the public where hunting and shooting is permitted, especially for units where hunting is a primary form of dispersed recreation.

Also, federal lands that are surrounded by private lands inaccessible to the public should be made accessible by securing conservation easements, other rights of way, or fee-title purchases of private lands from willing sellers.

Loss of public access that discourages participation in turn drives declines in the purchase of hunting licenses, reducing revenue used by state fish and wildlife agencies for conservation. This hinders state agencies ability to use hunting to maintain wildlife populations at desired levels and withholds from economies of rural communities the valuable expenditures of hunters on food and lodging, supplies, and gear.



Help Achieve State Wildlife Population Goals through Federal Land Management and Coordinate with other Governments on Large-Scale Plans

Federal and state responsibilities overlap. Federal agencies that manage land and state agencies that manage the wildlife on those lands, must closely coordinate their efforts. Projects conducted by federal agencies on federal lands can help or hinder states in attaining or sustaining wildlife population goals. This is particularly the case in the western United States where federal lands account for a significant proportion of the land base.

Congress, federal land management agencies, and the courts have long recognized the primacy of state fish and wildlife agencies in managing fish and resident wildlife species within state borders where they set wildlife population goals and objectives through science-based public process. Although state and federal agencies can and regularly do work together to seek compatibility between their decisions, the degree of cooperation varies according to differing mandates, interests, demands, and priorities between the agencies.

Therefore, to ensure compatibility, federal policy should require that federal plans and programs be developed in coordination with state plans and programs on wildlife population goals. Ideally, federal agency action should assist in meeting population goals, but must at least provide federal action does not preclude meeting those goals. Federal agencies will retain many options for meeting their own mandates and reconciling competing demands.

This is an obvious corollary to policies requiring states to comport with federal population goals for migratory and other federal trust species. For example, states were compelled to adjust programs for deer and elk during the recovery of the gray wolf. With that priority now achieved, as states now set population goals for wolves, deer, and elk together, federal land habitat programs must comport.

ACTIONS

Cooperate with state fish and wildlife agencies through formal agreements to meet population goals set by the state for wildlife on federal lands.

Review and, where necessary, modify federal land management planning and decision-making to ensure these agencies will work with the states to attain or sustain population goals. Federal land management agencies should regularly meet with natural resource management agencies from other nations and from state, tribal and local governments to assess progress and issues included in international, national and regional plans and strategies.



US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE | TRACY BROOKS

Enhance Private Land Hunting and Habitat Conservation by Reauthorizing the Farm Bill and Improving Tax and Water Policy.

Private lands support wildlife in many undeveloped areas as well as the croplands, pastures, ranches, and forests that compose approximately 50% of the United States. In the East, private lands comprise most of the wetland, grassland and forest habitats.

Across the country, landowners rightfully decide how to use their land either willingly or out of economic necessity. That is why the core of private land conservation policy focuses on incentives. Policies that promote robust markets for sustainably managed wood, wood products, and livestock also

enhance opportunities to sustain these important habitats.

The Farm Bill provides the bulk of conservation incentives. Most of these programs pay, share costs, or provide advice to landowners to promote habitat management for game and nongame wildlife. The Conservation Reserve Program and the Wetlands Reserve Program benefit the environment, farmers and other landowners, and sportsmen and women by providing wildlife habitat, land-based income, and opportunities for access by hunters. Working lands programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program,



PHEASANTS FOREVER AND QUAIL FOREVER

Grasslands Reserve Program, and others enable integrated soil, water, and wildlife conservation with agricultural production. Easement programs promote long-term stewardship. The Working Lands for Wildlife program is helping restore dwindling species including sage grouse, lesser prairie chicken, bobwhite quail and others while assuring landowners on possible regulatory liabilities with the Fish and Wildlife Service. Policies encouraging farmers to plan conservation and protect wetlands, native prairies and other habitats complement the incentive programs. These policies – including swampbuster, sodsaver, sodbuster, and conservation compliance – should be applied to all forms of federal agricultural support including crop insurance. Access programs such as the Voluntary Public Access - Habitat Incentives Program are important to hunters as well as landowners: since 2008, this has increased the amount of private land open to public hunting by 3 million acres and improved wildlife habitat quality on lands already enrolled in similar state or tribal hunter access programs.

The Clean Water Act is also important to private land habitat conservation because it limits and mitigates losses of wetlands. Recent judicial decisions and competing administrative regulatory actions have complicated efforts to protect many of the nation's remaining wetlands and streams.

A century-old inheritance tax continues to deter ranch and timberland owners from keeping large properties – and the inherent habitat values – intact. The large tax bills levied on these property owners too often forces them to subdivide their properties for sale in order to raise funds, which creates unmanageably small tracts often converted to low-quality habitat.

Wind power and other renewable energy, while plainly necessary, has exposed gaps in current policy that fail to account for the risks to wildlife habitat of turbines and power lines. Turbines kill significant numbers of birds and power lines are unnatural advantages to predatory birds able to perch and prey on ground-dwelling wildlife.

Therefore we strongly support reauthorizing the Farm Bill, clarifying wetlands policy, reforming the inheritance tax, and updating land and energy policies.

Continued funding and improvements in Farm Bill programs will maintain conservation as an option for landowners. Clear wetlands policy is necessary for steady progress toward the objectives of No Net Loss and Net Gain of wetlands, and, also, to help address growing water resource challenges. Tax and energy policy reforms that guard the habitat values of large tracts of land will particularly assist the stewardship of grassland habitats. These are among North America's most endangered ecosystems already pressured by irregular fire frequency and type and conversion to crop and livestock grazing.

ACTIONS

Reauthorize the Farm Bill, sustaining Conservation Title incentive-based programs and policies for all working lands and with particular attention to the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program.

Modify the federal estate tax to decrease the likelihood of the conversion of wildlife habitats on private lands to other uses.

Clarify regulations of the Clean Water Act in consultation with states to establish consistent, robust, and ecologically-based identification and strong protection of isolated wetlands, streams and other waters under federal jurisdiction.

Permanently authorize current tax deductions and carry-forwards for conservation-related donations of land that will protect wildlife habitats and enhance public access for hunting and other forms of outdoor recreation.

Promote private-land forestry with incentives for active management that diversifies the habitat within the surrounding landscape.

Expand and streamline mitigation banking and water quality trading programs to significantly expand habitat conservation, improve water quality, and increase hunting and fishing access.

Fund Wildlife Conservation by Limiting Proportionate Reductions, Expanding User Pays-Public Benefits Policies, and Promoting Partnerships with the Private Sector.

Federal funding is a mainstay of wildlife conservation; it is also provided in large part from taxes and fees paid by sportsmen and women. Other revenues come from fees on access, use, and development of land and waters with habitat values. Much of the expenditures leverage state, local and private contributions. The system has achieved significant results for many popular game species, such as the wood duck, pronghorn, and wild turkey. It also adds value to the overall economy by supporting the manufacturing, retail, and service

jobs that supply hunters and target shooters with guns, ammunition, other gear and supplies, and food and lodging where they go to pursue their sport.



NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION

As our nation addresses a daunting fiscal challenge, programs across government have and will be scrutinized and economized – and wildlife conservation programs are no exception. Like all discretionary spending, conservation is being crowded out of the budget by the growth in mandatory spending for entitlement programs. Cuts during the 112th Congress reduced conservation spending roughly to the levels prior to the “stimulus bill” – the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. At that point, revenue to the Land and Water Conservation Act was already routinely diverted to other purposes and growing demands on state agencies was already demonstrating that our core conservation funding system – the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program – was insufficient. That system was first established in 1937 by the Pittman-Robertson Act, which earmarked an existing 11% excise tax on long guns, ammunition and hunting equipment to be used exclusively by state fish and wildlife agencies to professionally manage fish and wildlife populations and provide access for sportsmen and women and the general public. This tax was extended to handguns and archery equipment in the 1970s.

Therefore, federal funding decisions must acknowledge the user pays-public benefits arrangement in conservation in limiting proportionate cuts in these accounts. The user pays-public benefits system should be expanded beyond the hunters and anglers who already support it to increase revenue appropriately.

To be credible, any proportionate reduction in conservation must acknowledge that hunting is a \$30 billion engine that each year drives a substantial portion of the economy of many rural communities and provides more than half a million jobs for Americans across the nation. The analysis must also acknowledge that much of the revenue supporting these expenditures comes from and is matched by sportsmen and women themselves and yet provides benefits broadly to everyone who enjoys wildlife. Furthermore, healthy and resilient ecosystems annually provide untold billions of dollars more in crucial resource benefits and services such as clean water, clean air and carbon sequestration.

Opportunities exist to raise more nonfederal dollars for conservation provided the federal component continues at an effective level. Our hope for success on both fronts is buoyed by the recent increase in participation in hunting by Americans to an estimated 20 million hunters. We will continue doing our part and working with Administration and Congressional leaders to sustain an effective federal role.

ACTIONS

Limit proportionate reductions in federal wildlife program expenditures to keep the non-federal matching funds they attract, and to sustain their support for rural economies.

Affirm that the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Fund is a mandatory spending account and not subject to sequestration.

Extend the user pays-public benefits funding concept for state fish and wildlife agencies through legislation directing a share of revenue from energy development, climate-change policy, and other accounts collecting revenues from uses of natural resources on which wildlife depend.

Secure a long-term source of dedicated funding for wildlife conservation and recreation through stand-alone legislation, modeled after but entirely separate from Pittman-Robertson, that would establish an excise tax on items used for outdoor recreation that are not currently subject to such a tax.

Work with state fish and wildlife agencies, industry representatives and nongovernmental organizations to develop and implement a marketing program to enhance public understanding of the fundamental role played by hunters and recreational shooters in funding wildlife conservation in America and recruit additional financial support for wildlife conservation through partnerships with the private sector.

Reduce agency redundancy and red-tape for private-sector partners collaborating on conservation and sustainable outdoor recreation.

Improve Energy Development by Meeting State Wildlife Population Goals and Developing Guidelines for Siting Projects

Enhancing energy independence is plainly necessary, and we must equally plainly keep and enhance wildlife habitats and populations where we develop oil, coal, gas, wind, and solar resources. This challenge has grown as innovations have enabled energy development in nearly any state, encountering nearly any type of wildlife or habitat.

The challenge differs somewhat by region. The West holds the largest onshore natural gas reserves in the nation, much of which is under federal public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, which also hosts some of the best game and nongame wildlife habitats. These values must be balanced under the long-established federal doctrine of multiple use. This means confronting the long-established fact that the complex, cumbersome, and contentious decision making process makes striking a balance very difficult and makes prospects uncertain both for wildlife and energy development.

ACTIONS

Cooperate with state fish and wildlife agencies through formal agreements to meet population goals set by the state for wildlife on federal lands.

Review and, where necessary, modify federal land management planning and decision-making to ensure these agencies will work with the states to attain or sustain population goals.

Federal agencies, state fish and wildlife agencies and representatives from the energy industry should review the existing science to develop and implement more specific and useful guidelines for the location of renewable energy projects that minimize the potential negative impacts on wildlife.

In the East, recently-combined techniques of hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling have substantially increased natural gas extraction on both public and private lands. Some of the same public-land process obstacles apply here and, on private lands, the overall footprint of development is hard to coordinate across the many generally smaller landholdings on which companies and landowners are making individual decisions. As a result, there is no single means of managing the risks at extraction sites and sand mines with their associated infrastructures which can degrade wildlife habitats across broad landscapes.

Great Plains grassland and other regions with high potential for wind energy also provide valuable habitats – some for species of concern, such as the lesser prairie chicken that thrive in large blocks of unfragmented habitat. Wind turbines or large solar arrays placed here can seriously impair the value of these habitats.

Therefore, federal guidance on siting and designing developments should be made more specific and useful. The Fish and Wildlife Service has started in this direction by issuing guidance concerning wind power and, mainly, birds and bats. This guidance and new guidance to follow should require compatibility with wildlife population goals of state fish and wildlife agencies as a principle of federal policy, which would require addressing game and non-game species. This will guide federally-governed developments away from areas where energy development precludes these goals and guide the design of projects. This coordination will require identifying population goals for resident and migratory species prior to development and monitoring them during and after. Another useful step is to identify any cross-purposes between conservation and financial incentives that influence developers' choices among types of energy, siting options, and timing.

Address Climate Change with Strategies to Aid Wildlife in Adapting

Climate change is affecting wildlife and wildlife habitats. Data show that plants are emerging from winter dormancy earlier than in the past and migratory bird species are arriving in northern breeding grounds earlier in the spring than ever recorded. Millions of acres of forestland have been affected by insects with uncharacteristic severity resulting from warmer than normal winter temperatures. Hot and dry conditions associated with the drought of 2012 led to numerous outbreaks of epizootic hemorrhagic disease in white-tailed deer.

Scientists now generally agree that the concentration of heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere is causing and will continue to adversely change the environment. The severity of effects on particular wildlife and wildlife habitats will vary and be difficult to predict amidst the web of interrelationships between plant and animal species, the myriad ecological conditions that support these species, and variability in climate. The complexity of the issue is daunting and the ramifications are uncertain.

Federal land management agencies and state fish and wildlife agencies currently have limited capabilities to assess the current or likely effects of climate change on wildlife and their ecosystems.

Therefore, federal agencies should engage with state and private partners to plan for contingencies at spatial scales relevant to federal, state and local land managers. Significant support is available through the United States Global Change Research Program (formerly Climate Change Science Program), which is charged with integrating federal research on climate change. Global, national and regional information on climate change and its effects is also useful.

ACTION

Work with state fish and wildlife

agencies to develop and implement national-, regional- and state-level strategies to enhance the resilience of wildlife habitats and populations and aid in their adaptation to the ongoing and anticipated impacts of climate variability and change.



WHITETAILS UNLIMITED | TOMMY KIRKLAND

Address Wildlife Diseases and Invasive Species by Separating Wildlife and Domestic Animals on Federal Lands and Collaborating with States, Landowners, and Businesses

Wildlife sickened by disease and habitats invaded by exotic plants and animals have become significant problems. Throughout the United States, invasive exotics are destroying or displacing native plants and diminishing habitat quality on approximately 150 million acres. Disease is killing – or necessitating the slaughter – of thousands of deer and elk.

Rangelands in the West are significantly altered by the spread of spotted knapweed, cheatgrass and other noxious weeds that displace native plants and seriously degrade habitat. Wetlands throughout the country are compromised by purple loosestrife and

tamarisk, which can drastically alter wetland structure and function. Forests are plagued by the emerald ash borer, which has killed 30-40 million ash trees in southern Michigan alone.

Wildlife diseases, such as West Nile virus, can devastate local populations and also be transmitted to humans with serious implications. Diseases of game species, such as chronic wasting disease in deer and elk, and pneumonia in wild sheep threaten susceptible populations, hunting traditions, and local economies. Among non-game species, white-nose syndrome is notorious for its unprecedentedly rapid spread to bats in 21 states, estimated to have reduced bat populations in the northeast by 80%.

ACTIONS

Federal natural resource management agencies should collaborate with state fish and wildlife agencies, research institutions, AWCP groups and private landowners to:

- **minimize the human-assisted** spread of diseases and invasive species.
- **develop protocols to** assess and reduce the impacts from existing populations of nonnative plants and animals and the risks from the introduction of additional exotic species into the United States.
- **identify landscapes and** time periods where domestic animals and native wildlife should be separated to avoid disease transmission.

For some of these problems, federal agencies have authorities to implement known solutions such as separating domestic livestock and native wildlife on public lands to preclude contagion. In many other cases, however, the federal role in disease control is limited by current science or proper limitations on federal jurisdiction.

Therefore, federal agencies should find a role in the growing network of state and private institutions responding to, monitoring, and studying wildlife diseases. Some challenges are new and some longstanding issues such as brucellosis and bovine tuberculosis are suffering from their own success as great progress in their control has diminished interest in completing the work for the relatively small populations of people and wildlife still affected.

Update the Endangered Species Act by enhancing the science basis in the listing/delisting program

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) provides strong protection for any wildlife or plant believed at risk of extinction. It reflects broad understanding that all species are presumed to play an irreplaceable role in the environment.

After 40 years implementing ESA, and nearly 30 years since it was last improved by Congress, there is broad bipartisan agreement that the ESA should be updated to better meet its original intent, and that real and imagined fears of “gutting” the Act are preventing action. Interior officials in successive administrations, representing both major political parties, have publicly expressed support for efforts to update and modernize ESA to enable the US Fish & Wildlife Service to more efficiently identify species needing protection, to promote recovery of species already listed, and promptly return species to state jurisdiction upon meeting recovery goals. Only twice in the last 20 years has an ESA bill reached the floor of the House or Senate. The most notable and widely accepted problem today is the vulnerability of listing and delisting decisions to lawsuits that elevate points of process above the science-based conclusions of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Therefore, federal agencies – all are affected – should support a proposal focused on scientifically-based, publicly-reviewed schedules and deadlines for listing and delisting.

With the ability to schedule and execute listing and delisting decisions through science-based public decision-making, the Service could regain control of allocating staff and funds required to maintain meaningful lists of threatened and endangered species. This efficiency will free up resources to promote recovery for listed species.

ACTIONS

The Administration and Congress should convene a panel of legal scholars, wildlife professionals and others with expertise in the Endangered Species Act and its implementation. This panel should identify statutory and regulatory changes that authorize the US Fish & Wildlife Service to:

- **use science-based priorities** to set a schedule for listing and delisting decisions.
- **directly relate the 5-factor analysis** for delisting decisions to information and experience gained from recovery plans and results.
- **give force and effect** to the existing ESA provision accounting for efforts being made by any State, foreign nation, or political subdivision to protect species before a listing is decided, and provide reliable force and effect for formal agreements reached before a listing is decided.



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Wildlife for the 21st Century: Volume IV was published by the American Wildlife Conservation Partners

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www.wildlifepartners.org | c/o Boone and Crockett Club | 250 Station Drive | Missoula, MT 59801