

SECURE PERMANENT AND DEDICATED
FUNDING
 FOR WILDLIFE AND
 HABITAT CONSERVATION,
 EXPAND USER PAYS - PUBLIC
 BENEFITS POLICIES,
 AND PROMOTE
 PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

ACTIONS:

1. Increase the federal investment in conservation as a percentage of the annual federal discretionary budget.
2. Create parity between hunting and angling, and other forms of outdoor recreation in the funding of conservation by expanding the categories of outdoor-related products that are subject to a federal excise tax.
3. Affirm that the Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Funds are a mandatory spending account and not subject to sequestration.
4. Encourage the use of market mechanisms to better leverage private capital for conservation.

A HISTORY OF FEDERAL CONSERVATION FUNDING. SINCE THE TIME OF Theodore Roosevelt, natural resources conservation has been accepted as one of the core purposes of the federal government along with securing the national defense, administering justice, protecting property rights, and building infrastructure to enable interstate commerce. Federal funding for conservation has declined by 50 percent between fiscal year 1977 and fiscal year 2014. Federal land and state wildlife managers are less able to address the threats of human population growth, land conversion, climate change, and invasive species with fewer fiscal and staff resources.

Unless policy makers increase their commitment to existing conservation funding sources and adopt new policy approaches to better fund wildlife conservation, the traditions of American sportsmen and sportswomen will continue to suffer, as will the health of our nation's landscapes and wildlife. As such, policy makers should commit to stabilizing and increasing conservation funding as a percentage of the federal budget. Policy makers should also end the 2 percent sequestration cut imposed on the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson/Wallop-Breaux funds.

The Role of Hunters and Anglers. According to the Outdoor Recreation Foundation (ORF), 46 million Americans participate in hunting and angling. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), they directly contribute almost \$3 billion annually to fish and wildlife conservation through the purchase of state hunting and fishing license, stamp and permit fees and federal excise taxes on sporting firearms, ammunition, bows and arrows, and fishing tackle. According to the ORF, hunting and fishing's share of outdoor recreation spending (\$3 billion plus travel, clothing and other products that are not subject to a federal excise tax) totals \$58 billion annually (\$35 billion for fishing and \$23 billion for hunting). This means that the support for fish and wildlife conservation relies on less than 9 percent of the \$730 billion spent by all outdoor recreationists. Hunters and anglers shoulder the majority of fish and wildlife conservation funding through this user pays – public benefits concept. We need to increase the dialogue among all recreational outdoor users to expand the concept and bring funding parity between hunting and angling and other forms of outdoor recreation, while keeping the contributions and voices of hunters and anglers alive in fish and wildlife conservation.

Market Investment in Conservation. Finally, policy makers should examine ways to employ market mechanisms to better leverage federal and state dollars with private money. The federal government should work with state agencies and non-profit conservation organizations to develop policies that enable the greater use of market mechanisms such as mitigation banks that replace both the quantity and functional quality of lost habitat, water banking, and green bonds.

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