

WILDLIFE

FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: II

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH



AMERICAN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PARTNERS

WILDLIFE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

American Wildlife Conservation Partners

ESTABLISHED IN 2000

May 17, 2005

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

On behalf of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners (AWCP), we would like to congratulate you on your successful re-election and look forward to your continued leadership to address the conservation challenges of the 21st century. There are more than 40 million licensed hunters and anglers that contribute more than \$70 billion annually towards the American economy and we, like you, care deeply about the conservation of our natural resources.

At the beginning of your presidency, the AWCP presented you a document entitled, *Wildlife for the 21st Century*, which highlighted some of the major areas of concern regarding the conservation of our wildlife and natural resources. It also made recommendations as to ways that these challenges might be addressed and offered assistance in this regard.

Your Administration has made great strides in tackling some of these issues, including the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, opening federal public lands to sportsmen, the conservation titles of the 2002 Farm Bill, the announcement on "no net loss" of wetlands and the early enrollment of acreage under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), among others. We are grateful for these efforts and commend you for moving this important agenda forward. However there are still important tasks ahead in order to ensure the conservation of our fish and wildlife resources and the perpetuation of our outdoor heritage.

Today, we are proud to present this updated set of recommendations to coincide with your second term as President, and offer our continued assistance to help secure the future of wildlife in America well into the new century. We appreciate the fine working relationship that the AWCP has with your Administration and look forward to continued cooperative efforts to help move this new platform of issues forward during the next four years.

As an avid outdoorsman, you know that hunters are America's true wildlife conservationists. On behalf of America's sportsmen and women, thank you again for your leadership on these issues of national importance.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey S. Crane, Chair
American Wildlife Conservation Partners

ARCHERY TRADE ASSOCIATION
BEAR TRUST INTERNATIONAL
BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB
BUCKMASTERS AMERICAN
DEER FOUNDATION
CAMP FIRE CLUB OF AMERICA
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TEXAS WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION
THEODORE ROOSEVELT
CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP
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ALLIANCE
WHITETAILS UNLIMITED
WILDLIFE FOREVER
WILDLIFE HABITAT COUNCIL
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT
INSTITUTE
THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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MAY 2005

PHOTO COURTESY OF NORTH AMERICAN GROUSE PARTNERSHIP

WILDLIFE FOR THE

AMERICAN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PARTNERS VISION FOR THE FUTURE

We Envision:

A future in which all wildlife and private and public habitats are abundant, maintained, and enhanced;

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

A future in which natural resource policies encourage, empower, and reward stewardship and responsible use;

And a future in which 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.



PHOTO BY HENRY ZEMAN/NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION

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WILDLIFE FOR THE

Man in the Arena

It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat.

Theodore Roosevelt
"Citizenship in a Republic"
Paris - 1910



PHOTO COURTESY OF BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB ARCHIVES

THE 21ST CENTURY: II

FOREWORD

In August 2000, America's leading wildlife conservation organizations gathered as guests of the Boone and Crockett Club in Missoula, Montana. These dedicated hunter/conservationists met for one purpose: To identify how best to work collectively to help chart the course for the future of wildlife conservation in the United States.

The American Wildlife Conservation Partners (AWCP) evolved from this initial gathering. AWCP is not an organization per se; rather, it is a consortium of 40 organizations, representing over 6 million individual members. AWCP is designed to facilitate communication within the wildlife conservation community and between our community and elected and appointed officials and policy makers at the federal level.

We are encouraged by the many successes made possible through the cooperation of dedicated conservationists within the private and public sectors. Still, the future of wildlife conservation and our hunting heritage faces many challenges.

The recommendations offered here in *Wildlife for the 21st Century: II* represent a general agreement of the partners and are, in our judgment, necessary to help ensure the continued success of wildlife and wildlife management in America. While unity is a goal of the partners, each reserves the right to establish independent positions on any issue. In addition, not all partners necessarily support each and every position or recommendation. Together, we stand ready to help secure the future for wildlife into the 21st Century.

STEERING COMMITTEE

ARCHERY TRADE ASSOCIATION

Jay McAninch

CAMP FIRE CLUB OF AMERICA

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CONGRESSIONAL SPORTSMEN'S FOUNDATION

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DUCKS UNLIMITED

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Howard Vincent

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Merle Shepherd

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Kirby Brown

THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Tom Franklin

PHOTO COURTESY OF RUFFED GROUSE SOCIETY

ENSURE EFFECTIVE NATURAL RESOURCE LEADERSHIP

Exceptional leadership was a common element of the most significant natural resource conservation achievements of the past century. The Nation now faces many complex conservation issues as resource professionals must work to balance the sustainable use of

natural resources, societal and economic needs, and environmental protections. At the same time, as the “baby boomers” move through America’s workforce, it is estimated that federal and state natural resource agencies and private conservation organizations will lose over 75 percent of top- and mid-level management in the next decade. This unprecedented loss of experienced leaders will complicate efforts to meet future resource management challenges.

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration should endorse and support a National Conservation Leadership Institute to help fill the demand for exceptional leaders in natural resource conservation for the 21st Century. This support could include the establishment of Presidential Conservation Fellowships to identify some of the participants for Institute training programs. The Administration should support full funding for the US Geological Survey Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit program.

Addressing this loss of well-rounded, trained professionals is exacerbated by changing societal demographics leading to a population that is becoming increasingly urban and, therefore, less connected to natural systems. University curricula in wildlife management and related disciplines will need to adapt to these demographic changes. Institutions such as the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units will become increasingly important as vehicles to provide undergraduate and graduate students with a thorough understanding of, and appreciation for the roles of hunting and active resource management in wildlife conservation prior to their entry into the profession. In addition, current resource professionals with demonstrated leadership potential should receive training to enhance their skills in communication, personnel management and conflict resolution, as well as their understanding of natural resource conditions, the North American model of conservation and America’s outdoor heritage. ■



PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

The uncoordinated and sometimes conflicting web of federal land laws, regulations, and policies can confound efforts to protect wildlife and restore degraded habitats. In addition, volumes of case law have evolved, further complicating decision-making processes intended to address pressing conservation needs.

Recent legislative and administrative directives, including the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003, have identified the importance of weighing short-term risks against the long-term benefits of proposed resource management projects and of determining the long-term effects of agency inaction when the need for action is indicated. These directives are a result of a growing understanding that precluding management actions, in an effort to eliminate short-term risk to imperiled resources, can in some cases increase the long-term risk to these same resources and others as well.

Regardless of these directives, there is little evidence that federal management or regulatory agencies routinely complete rigorous comparative ecological risk assessments comparing the short- and long-term risks and benefits of proposed actions, with the short- and long-term risks and benefits of their absence, especially as part of the Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation process. In the absence of such assessments, decisions commonly are made to avoid any effects that may be harmful in the short-term. A common result is that many projects with substantial long-term benefit are abandoned, placing important wildlife habitats and associated wildlife at increased risk in the long-term. The apparent increasing reliance of federal agencies on the “precautionary principle” as guidance for decision making is often cited as the main reason for this unfortunate situation.

The utilization of comparative ecological risk assessments would enable federal agencies to more effectively integrate multiple conservation priorities into resource management decisions. These comparative assessments would ensure that wildlife, their habitats and other ecological conditions are appropriately considered in the contexts of both space and time. ■

UTILIZE COMPARATIVE ECOLOGICAL RISK ASSESSMENTS IN LAND MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration should complete an assessment of analysis tools and processes best suited for conducting comparative ecological risk assessments. These tools and processes should be fully incorporated into federal land management decisions, especially those related to ESA Section 7 consultations.

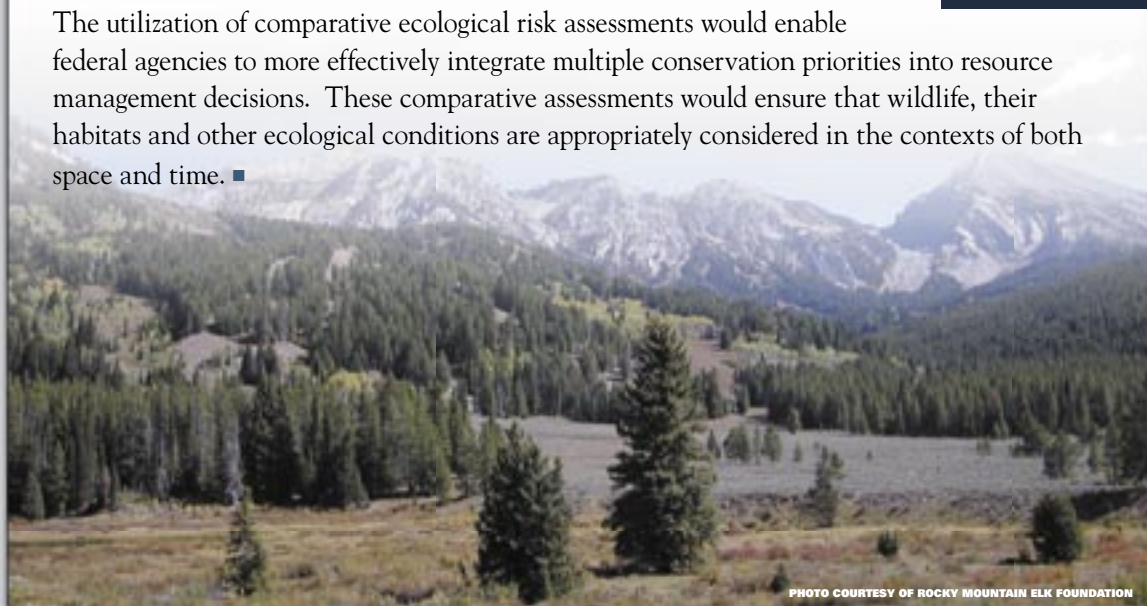


PHOTO COURTESY OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION

FULLY INCORPORATE THE CONSERVATION OF WILDLIFE AND OTHER NATURAL RESOURCES INTO ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

The extensive and intensive development of energy resources including oil and gas, wind power, and coal production can affect both wildlife habitats and populations. The degree and longevity of these effects vary by project type, location, and the phase thereof (installation vs. operation). While laws and policies require a balance between wildlife conservation and energy development, the scope and pace of actual development in many areas has begun to threaten this balance. Landscape-level evaluation is needed to assess the implications of this pace and scale of development.

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration should reaffirm that federal agencies are legally obligated to balance natural resource stewardship with energy development in each project-level decision. Wildlife conservation strategies and the necessary funding to implement these strategies should be incorporated into legislation that articulates America's National Energy Policy. On public lands in the West, landscape-level assessments of wildlife resources and potential cumulative effects of current and projected development should be done as part of Resource Management Plan and Forest Plan processes. Substantive public involvement should be a foundation of energy development projects on public lands. Project implementation and reclamation procedures should be guided by adaptive environmental management processes that include monitoring protocols and potential measures to mitigate or modify procedures to sustain important wildlife habitats as project effects become more evident through time.

Federal agency management plans that are to provide new strategies in areas where development already has exceeded projections are delayed, yet new decisions and leasing continue. Subsequent to the decision to not list the sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act, additional intensive gas development has been proposed for important sage grouse habitats. Long term implications of inadequate assessments in the West include the potential for additional Endangered Species Act listings and reductions in important herds of mule deer and pronghorn antelope, which would in turn reduce opportunities for hunting and other forms of outdoor recreation.

In the coal fields of the eastern United States, which occur primarily on private lands, problems on many sites reclaimed in the past include extreme soil compaction, acidic drainage and invasive plant species. Wind power projects are becoming more common across the nation and additional projects are being proposed that could significantly affect already imperiled species such as prairie chickens, as well as other resident and migratory wildlife.

Significant revenues will be realized from energy development on public lands, yet there is no assurance that a significant proportion of these revenues will be reinvested in the conservation of these lands. State resource agencies have inadequate staff or funds to thoroughly review energy development project proposals or monitor the effects of ongoing projects. ■



PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

RECOMMENDATIONS

SUPPORT WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PROVISIONS IN THE 2007 FARM BILL

In 1985, Congress created the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) as a part of the federal Farm Bill. CRP offers farmers and ranchers annual payments on 10 – 15 year contracts. Participants must establish appropriate grass, shrub, and/or tree cover on environmentally sensitive lands enrolled.

CRP projects strengthen rural economies, help prevent soil erosion and enhance water quality, and establish important habitats for fish and wildlife. Today, there are nearly 40 million acres enrolled in CRP and this program is widely viewed as one of the nation's most successful natural resource conservation initiatives.

The 1990, 1996 and 2002 Farm Bills have subsequently recognized wildlife habitat as a co-equal objective with the other benefits of conservation programs. The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) offers landowners options to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands and associated uplands. WRP has thus far improved wildlife habitat on more than 400,000 acres of marginal farmland, while at the same time improving water quality and reducing the risk of flooding. In addition, the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, (WHIP), Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP), Conservation Security Program (CSP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) have been added to the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill to compliment the proven benefits of CRP and WRP.

Combined, these voluntary conservation programs have become very successful in promoting wildlife conservation on private lands and enjoy broad public support. They provide income support for the landowner and public benefits in the form of wildlife habitat, reduced soil erosion, improved water and air quality, and additional public open space. These conservation programs offer tremendous potential to create lands open to public access for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation

The current Farm Bill conservation programs expire in 2007. The reauthorization scheduled for 2007 provides substantial opportunities to expand conservation provisions to further increase the resource benefits that have accrued to date. ■

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration should enhance existing conservation provisions in the 2007 Farm Bill; restore the CRP acreage cap to 45 million acres, establish a 5 million acre cap for WRP and GRP and prioritize lands that support native grassland and shrubland habitats, increase WHIP and FLEP funding from 2002 Farm Bill levels, and ensure that EQIP and CSP provide annual financial incentive payments, cost share assistance, and technical assistance for working lands that maintain and enhance wildlife habitats. In addition, the Administration should support federal funding for state- and tribal-sponsored access programs to enhance public access to private lands for hunting and fishing.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROGER HILL/PHEASANTS FOREVER

REAFFIRM STATE AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY AND SECURE ASSURED STATE FUNDING FOR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Efforts by conservationists at the turn of the 19th century paved the way for state laws vesting authority in state agencies to manage fish and resident wildlife on all lands within state boundaries. State fish and wildlife agencies perform a variety of critical tasks, including the establishment and enforcement of hunting and fishing regulations, inventory and monitoring of fish and wildlife populations, public education and information, management of designated wildlife habitat areas, and biological research. State fish and wildlife agencies have been

exceptionally effective in fulfilling their wide-ranging responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration should adopt a policy that would require all federal agencies to defer, as a general rule, to the authority of the states in fish and resident wildlife matters. The Administration should direct agency heads to review discretionary National Environmental Policy Act processes and eliminate those that unnecessarily limit state wildlife management programs. The Administration should affirm its commitment to the clear Congressional intent of the Endangered Species Act by ensuring full state-federal cooperation in its implementation. The Administration should support Congressional efforts to secure dedicated and assured funding for state fish and wildlife conservation programs.

Congress has consistently deferred to state authority in the regulation of fish and resident wildlife, preempting sole state authority and establishing concurrent state-federal jurisdiction only when necessary to satisfy the purpose of the Endangered Species Act or other federal legislation. Unfortunately, the authority of states to protect and manage fish and resident wildlife within their respective borders is being eroded by federal agency decisions expanding National Environmental Policy Act requirements regarding the use of Pittman-Robertson wildlife restoration funds.

In recent years there has been increasing pressure for state agencies to take on a greater role in conserving all wildlife species, particularly those that are imperiled or at risk of becoming so. Since most states provide little or no general fund support for wildlife, there is a growing need for increased state government financial support for these programs.

Recent Congressional efforts to secure assured funding dedicated to state-based fish and wildlife conservation, education and recreation programs made progress but failed to pass. While these efforts raised the profile of the demonstrated financial need and resulted in annual appropriations through State Wildlife Grants, only assured funding can provide the certainty, consistency and longevity to carry out successful programs to allow state fish and wildlife agencies to conserve imperiled wildlife and to keep common species common. ■

CREATE INCENTIVES AND REMOVE DISINCENTIVES FOR WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ON PRIVATE LAND

Current long-term investment strategies and tax laws are not conducive to stable ownership of wild lands through time and across generations. Current tax laws, particularly the Federal Estate Tax, are a primary cause of ownership fragmentation, which commonly leads to habitat fragmentation and loss – serious threats to wildlife in America today. Debt is the primary reason given by private property owners, particularly those in agriculture, for selling parcels of their land. A significant contributing factor to debt load, the one that often breaks the proverbial camel’s back, is the estate tax at both the federal and state levels. In order to maintain ownership of any land at all, many families are forced to sell portions of their holdings, sacrificing and/or fragmenting wildlife habitats, to meet their financial obligations.

Recent federal emphasis on cooperative public-private partnerships has proven effective in promoting wildlife conservation on private lands. Effective on-the-ground delivery of these cooperative programs requires adequate funding.

Additional incentives to protect and enhance habitats for wildlife include the ability to secure conservation easements and development rights for properties with exceptional value to wildlife, tax policies that reflect the value to society of lands dedicated to habitat conservation, and mitigation credits, among others. Such incentives are most helpful when protecting wild lands from residential or commercial development while encouraging continued habitat management on the tract in question. ■

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration should support the repeal of the Federal Estate Tax and institute tax policies to encourage wildlife habitat conservation on private lands. The Administration should promote full funding for existing federal programs that promote resource stewardship through public-private partnerships. The Administration should work cooperatively with state and local officials and the private sector to identify additional incentive programs that have proven effective in protecting wildlife habitats and encouraging the science-based management thereof.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION

PROMOTE HUNTING AND RECREATIONAL SHOOTING ON FEDERAL LANDS

Hunting and the recreational shooting of firearms and archery equipment are important elements of America's outdoor heritage. Throughout much of the nation, opportunities to engage in these activities are dependent upon access to federal public lands - opportunities that are increasingly important as access to private lands for these activities are increasingly constrained. These opportunities include access to both lands

with a reasonable expectation of encountering abundant game wildlife and sites available for recreational shooting.

The hunting and shooting sports community has established Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with federal land management agencies to resolve access and other issues related to hunting and recreational shooting opportunities (Sportsmen's Access

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration should provide clear direction to federal land management agencies, as outlined in existing Memoranda of Understanding, that reinforces the priority of enhancing access and opportunity for hunting and recreational shooting on federal lands. The Administration should establish a framework to coordinate communication and cooperation with the hunting and shooting community.

to Federal Public Lands MOU, Public Lands Shooting Sports MOU). To date, accomplishments under these existing protocols have been limited. A more formal framework would help to coordinate communication and cooperation with the hunting and shooting community and it would substantiate for agencies the priority of resolving issues related to access and opportunity for hunters and shooters. ■

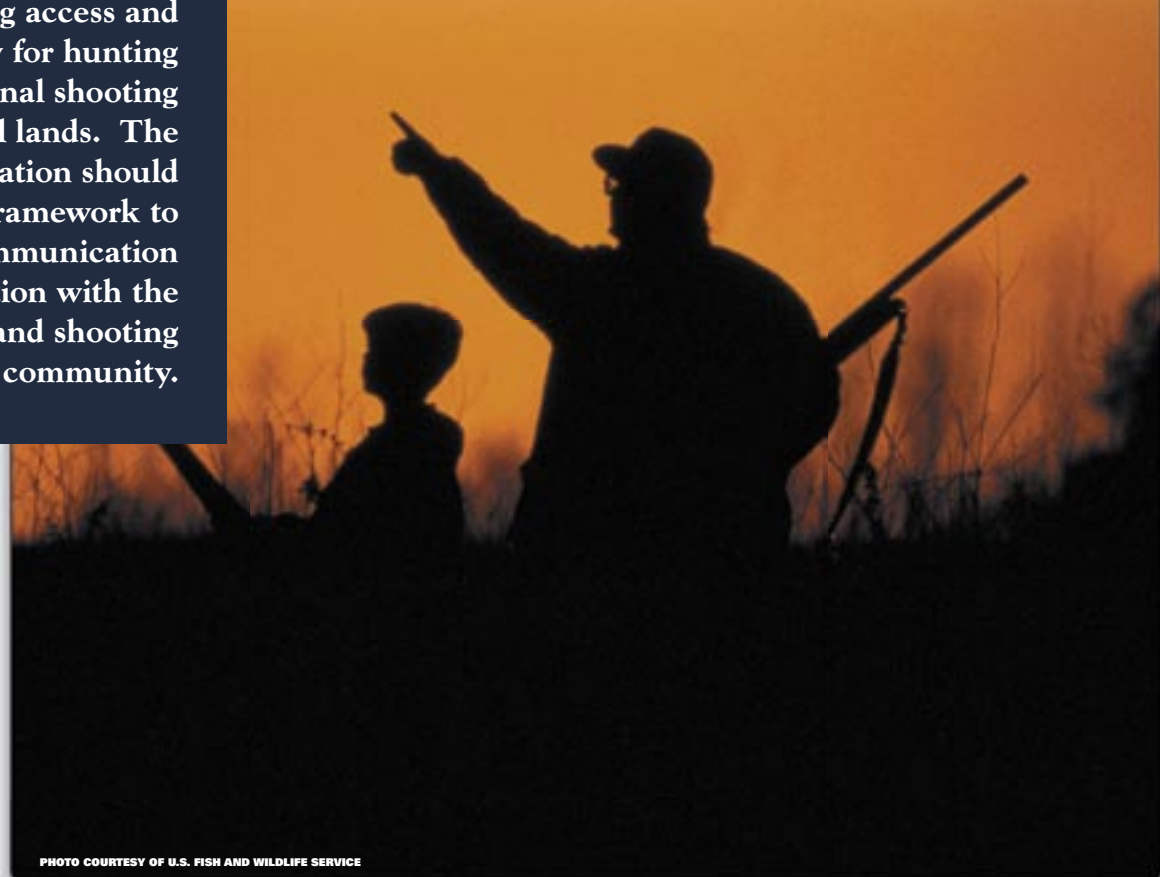


PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Forest health is vital to all values associated with forests, especially wildlife. Control of wildfire in the West has resulted in many aging and stagnated forests that are becoming more susceptible to large, uncharacteristic wildfire, insects, and diseases.

Despite progress in its restoration, much rangeland (especially old-age shrubland) remains at risk of uncharacteristic wildfire and deteriorating ecological condition. Excessive livestock grazing and drought, coupled with decreased use of herbicides and increased risk of large and intense shrubland wildfire, can impede range improvement. Expansion of annual exotic grasses such as cheat grass, and weeds such as spotted knapweed on both summer and winter ranges is a particularly great challenge. Growth and development projects that do not adequately consider wildlife can also encroach on important rangeland habitats.

Eastern deciduous forests are largely middle aged; few very young or very old forests exist in the region. This lack of diversity negatively affects wildlife and renders these forests susceptible to insects and diseases. On national forests throughout much of the South and the East, habitat management practices such as timber harvest to diversify wildlife habitats and the maintenance of openings have substantially decreased over the past 10-15 years. Unfortunately, the US Forest Service at times has failed to aggressively respond to legal challenges to broadly supported management activities that enhance wildlife habitat by removing mature trees to establish young forests.

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 and the December 2004 improvements to regulations guiding land and resource management planning on national forests provide opportunities to help ensure the timely implementation of management projects designed to enhance forest and rangeland health and wildlife habitat diversity. Federal land management agencies should capitalize on these opportunities and those provided by other changes to administrative procedures. ■

MAINTAIN AND RESTORE FOREST AND RANGELAND HABITATS THROUGH PROACTIVE PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration should continue to place a high priority on the restoration of at-risk forest and rangeland ecosystems on federal public lands. Wildlife habitat enhancement objectives should be incorporated into restoration efforts and other projects and agency funding recommendations should support those objectives. The Department of Justice and the Forest Service should be directed to aggressively defend project proposals that are consistent with management plan objectives against legal challenges.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RUFFED GROUSE SOCIETY

ESTABLISH FEDERAL BUDGET PRIORITIES THAT WILL RESTORE WILDLIFE FUNDING TO THE 1980 LEVEL

After a decade or more of increased funding for natural resources and environmental programs that followed passage of the 1972 Clean Water Act, Function 300 (Natural Resources and Environment) of the federal budget took a nose-dive. Funding has not recovered from the drop that occurred primarily between 1980 and 1984. Federal funding for natural resources and environment, as a proportion of total federal funding, is now well below the 1980

level. Ongoing efforts such as the Public Lands Funding Initiative and the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement have had some success during recent budget cycles at increasing authorizations and appropriations for public lands and wildlife accounts, but have not reversed the broader downward trend.

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration should establish a budget plan that would return Function 300 allocations to the 1980 level of 2.6% of total federal funding.

Agency budgets for natural resource stewardship should reflect the \$70 billion annual economic contribution made by hunters and anglers. This investment in our wildlife resources will continue to pay dividends to the American economy and to the quality of life of the American public. ■



PHOTO BY GLENN D. CHAMBERS © DUCKS UNLIMITED, INC.

Noxious weeds, foreign insects, contagious plant diseases, and predators from other countries are continually being introduced into the United States. These invaders recognize neither public nor private land borders. Presently, invasive species cause nearly \$150 billion annually in economic damage. These invaders cover nearly 150 million acres, in all 50 states, and are spreading at the rate of 1.7 million acres per year. Natural ecosystems have little defense against this invasion. Native plant life can be reduced or eliminated, wildlife habitat lost, and wildlife displaced as a result of invasive species.

While a number of federal programs have been established in an attempt to address the issue of invasive species, a more cooperative approach is needed. A nationwide early detection and rapid response system for invasive species must be developed.

Currently, the federal interagency National Invasive Species Council (NISC) is charged with the development of a national invasive species management plan. However, effective coordination between the Council and federal, state, private, and tribal partners is often lacking as indicated by two recent General Accounting Office (GAO) reports. ■

COORDINATE EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE THREATS FROM INVASIVE SPECIES

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration could issue an Executive Order directing the NISC to implement the recommendations of the recent GAO reports to more effectively coordinate invasive species eradication and control efforts with federal, state and tribal resource management agencies and private groups.



PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICES

EMPHASIZE COOPERATIVE NATIONAL FOREST DECISION MAKING

Though controversies over resource management on public lands continue, a new kind of debate is emerging. In recent years, a growing number of conservation-minded citizens have engaged voluntarily in face-to-face negotiations. These cooperative efforts enable interested parties to better understand the complexity of problems on public lands and the opportunities to solve them. These efforts have resulted in comprehensive proposals that enjoy

substantial public support. Unfortunately, interests largely unwilling to compromise and bureaucratic hurdles can complicate attempts to implement these proposals.

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration should encourage volunteer efforts of interested publics to propose science-based, targeted solutions to public land management issues. The current Department of Interior policy of affording state agencies “cooperating agency status” in decision-making processes should be expanded to other federal agencies.

In states with a considerable federal land base, the ability of state wildlife agencies to meet their statutory obligations to conserve resident wildlife is greatly influenced by management decisions on these federal lands. Input from state wildlife agencies into resource management decisions on federal lands is often given little more consideration than that from interested publics or is solicited relatively late in project planning processes. ■



PHOTO COURTESY OF HAAS OUTDOORS, INC.

ESTABLISH A NATIONWIDE STRATEGY TO SUSTAIN WILDLIFE HEALTH

Healthy wildlife is important to all Americans and disease issues in wildlife are of growing significance and concern. West Nile virus, chronic wasting disease in deer and elk, brucellosis in elk and bison in the Greater Yellowstone Area, and tuberculosis in white-tailed deer and elk in Michigan are current examples of high profile diseases. Some diseases found in wildlife can threaten wildlife populations, hunting traditions, and local economies, as well as public health, agriculture, and international trade. Additionally, they often transcend administrative and political boundaries and can place significant financial burdens on state wildlife management agencies.

A proactive strategy for managing significant diseases in wildlife is required to address these threats. This strategy should prioritize and coordinate disease risk assessments, diagnostic capabilities, surveillance and research in order to enhance disease prevention, detection and response capabilities. ■

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration should develop and implement a coordinated science-based national wildlife health strategy. Partners in this strategy should include appropriate federal agencies, state wildlife management and animal health agencies, universities, wildlife conservation organizations and the animal agricultural industry.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PRESIDENT

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