



Nez Perce

TRIBAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

P.O. BOX 305 • LAPWAI, IDAHO 83540 • (208) 843-2253

August 1, 2019

The Honorable Mike Simpson
2084 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington D.C. 20515

Re: *Support for the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, H.R. 3742*

Dear Representative Simpson:

On behalf of the Nez Perce Tribe (Tribe), I want to thank you for your sponsorship of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) which helps recover fish and wildlife species and prevents them from becoming endangered by dedicating approximately \$1.3 billion annually using existing revenue from the development of energy and mineral resources on federal lands and waters. \$97.5 million of these funds would be directed to tribal-led wildlife conservation efforts. The Tribe supports this recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources, comprised of national business and conservation leaders.

This nation, and tribal nations, are blessed with the existence of a diverse array of fish and wildlife. While some of these species are thriving, many are facing increasing challenges and are in steep decline—escalating their possibility of becoming endangered. Nationwide, 12,000 species have been identified as needing proactive conservation action. It would cost an estimated \$1.3 billion annually to implement 75% of the conservation actions that have been identified for those 12,000 species. The magnitude of the solution must match the magnitude of the challenge.


Current funding for both tribes and states provides only a fraction of what is needed to conserve these species. There is a long, sad history of tribes being excluded from wildlife conservation funding or only being provided a nominal amount of support. For instance, tribes are not eligible for Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration and Sport Fish Restoration funding despite the fact that tribal members pay the taxes that fund these programs and many non-tribal recreationists visit tribal lands and communities to hunt and fish. Regardless of the history of underfunding and tribal exclusion, tribes have some of the most accomplished natural resource programs in the nation and protect vast amounts of wildlife species and their habitat. It is important that this bill is inclusive of tribes and dedicates resources to assist tribes with their wildlife conservation efforts.

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Tribal lands and waters are essential for wildlife conservation. Conservation opportunities on tribal lands overshadow any other non-public land conservation opportunity. Tribes own and influence the management of a natural resource base consisting of nearly 140 million acres, which includes more than 730,000 acres of lakes and reservoirs, over 10,000 miles of streams and rivers, and over 18 million acres of forested lands. Tribal lands provide vital habitat for more than 525 federally-listed threatened and endangered plants and animals, many of which are both ecologically and culturally significant to tribes. Providing a model and lessons for other natural resource managers, tribes are proven leaders in the protection of these landscapes and their wildlife.

Proactive conservation is good for wildlife, good for taxpayers, and good for business. The Nez Perce Tribe supports the protection of our nation's precious fish and wildlife heritage by supporting efforts to direct dedicated funding through RAWA, or similar legislation, for tribes and their tribal lands as well as non-tribal lands. Thank you again.

Sincerely,


For Shannon F. Wheeler
Chairman