

MISSISSIPPI FLYWAY COUNCIL

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September 27, 2019

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
The Honorable Rob Bishop
U.S. House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Grijalva and Representative Bishop:

The Mississippi Flyway Council expresses its strong support for the Recovering America's Wildlife Act of 2019 (H.R. 3742), a bill that seeks to provide critical funding for the conservation of a diverse array of fish and wildlife species.

The MFC is a coalition of 14 states and three Canadian provinces that works in conjunction with the respective federal governments to manage migratory birds and their habitats in the heartland of North America. Mississippi Flyway Council states, cooperating with various federal agencies and non-governmental partners, deliver many of the conservation programs for migratory birds in a significant portion of the eastern United States.

The Federal government and the States have a long history of collaborative wildlife conservation, mostly notably the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program funded by excise tax receipts through the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act (1937). For decades, this revenue has been the primary source of wildlife management funding available to States. Similarly, the Dingell-Johnson Sportfish Restoration Act (1950) has provided funding for fish and aquatic habitat conservation and management. These funds will continue to be a primary revenue source used by States to manage wildlife. This user-pay, public benefit model has benefited hunters, anglers and all Americans while conserving game and nongame wildlife alike. Indeed, more than 90 million U.S. citizens participate in wildlife-dependent recreation (e.g. hunting, birding), providing direct benefit to those citizens and additional benefits to local communities and economies.

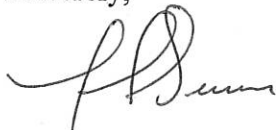
State fish and wildlife agencies are responsible for the conservation and management of all wildlife, but have relatively little funding available to manage nongame wildlife, including species-at-risk. Funding is needed to recover species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and to help prevent populations of species of greatest conservation need from declining to

the point of requiring protection under the ESA. Conservation efforts focused on species of greatest conservation need are guided by a State Wildlife Action Plan in each state, and funding to implement these plans has been provided primarily through the State Wildlife Grants program. Unfortunately, funding for this program has been limited and unpredictable, leading to many goals of State Wildlife Action Plans remaining unmet. The passage of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act would provide state and tribal agencies with the funding needed to promote voluntary and cost-effective on-the-ground conservation work. Providing states, tribes and partner biologists funds to conserve these species today will help to avoid future Endangered Species Act listings.

This bill seeks to provide increased and secure funding to implement the comprehensive fish and wildlife conservation strategies developed by States to benefit species of greatest conservation need and follows the March 2016 recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources convened by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The legislation calls for annually dedicating \$1.3 billion in existing revenue to state fish and wildlife agencies for proactive conservation and implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans. If passed into law, this would be the largest infusion of funding for state-based fish and wildlife conservation in over a generation.

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act offers one of the most substantial increases in wildlife conservation funding in decades. Funding provided through this act, and matching nonfederal dollars, would provide many important benefits for wildlife, people and the economy. Thus, the Mississippi Flyway Council respectfully asks for your strong support of H.R. 3742.

Sincerely,



Jason Sumners, Chair
Mississippi Flyway Council
Missouri Department of Conservation
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c: Chairs of the Atlantic, Central, and Pacific Flyway Councils
Congressional delegation of the Mississippi Flyway states
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation