



# Sustaining and Connecting People to **FISH AND WILDLIFE**

A Looming Crisis Can be Avoided

## A Recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources

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Our nation is facing a conservation crisis. Despite successes like the recovery of bald eagles and arctic graylings, thousands of species of birds, mammals, fish, frogs, turtles and insects have been slipping through the cracks for decades. Unless we start investing in proactive conservation measures, our nation's rich natural heritage and vital natural resource-based economy will face an uncertain future. New dedicated funding is needed now to ensure the long-term health of all fish and wildlife.

In 1937, Congress passed the Pittman-Robertson Act that established a conservation fund financed by hunters and recreational shooters to conserve game species. This funding model was later expanded to include sport fish with passage of the Dingell-Johnson Act. These two Acts enabled states to make long-term investments

in science-based management, resulting in the restoration of once depleted white-tailed deer, elk, wood ducks, striped bass and many other game species. This remarkably successful funding mechanism can be replicated to address the urgent conservation needs of all fish and wildlife and expand the number of citizens who invest in nature.

This conservation crisis also extends to people. More Americans than ever before are becoming disconnected from nature and the outdoors. This change is having profound implications on our citizens' health and well-being and the relevancy of fish and wildlife conservation. **To safeguard the future of our country's fish and wildlife, we must expand access and opportunities to bring the benefits of nature to all Americans.**



# WHAT IS AT STAKE?

Our system of fish and wildlife funding is incomplete. State fish and wildlife agencies have identified thousands of species that are in immediate need of conservation, but only a small fraction are being addressed because of limited financial resources. As species decline and habitats deteriorate, benefits provided by nature such as water purification, pollination, recreation and food and fiber production that are essential to human health and economic prosperity are being compromised.

Without a change in the way we finance fish and wildlife conservation, we can expect the list of federally threatened and endangered species to grow from nearly 1,600 species today to perhaps thousands more in the future. In addition to the tragedy of placing our country's natural heritage at risk, such increases will impact business by raising costs for regulatory compliance, delaying deployment of capital and creating less regulatory certainty.

At the same time as people have become more urban, plugged-in, and over-scheduled, time spent in nature and the outdoors has significantly declined. Today, children spend over 50 hours a week using electronic media, leaving little time to participate in nature-based activities. This lost connection to nature denies significant physical and mental benefits to many Americans and threatens the relevance of state fish and wildlife agencies.

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**The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets, which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired in value.**

**- Theodore Roosevelt**

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# THE BENEFITS TO PEOPLE AND SOCIETY

**Increased** investment in fish and wildlife conservation is vital to sustaining our natural infrastructure. Nature provides a host of indispensable benefits such as pollination, water purification, erosion control, flood control, recreation, food production and cultural amenities. Globally, these ecosystem services are minimally valued at \$18 trillion dollars per year.

**Increased** investment in fish and wildlife conservation makes fiscal sense. Proactive conservation saves tax payer dollars by addressing species' needs early so that costly "emergency room" interventions are avoided. Preventing threatened and endangered species listings helps business by averting project delays and losses from forfeited opportunities due to land use regulations.

**Increased** investment in fish and wildlife conservation is important to the nation's economy. Healthy fish and wildlife populations are critical to supporting the \$646 billion outdoor recreation economy and its 6.1 million jobs. The 90 million people who participate in wildlife-related recreation alone spend \$145 billion per year.

**Increased** investment in fish and wildlife conservation is needed to keep people of all ages and walks of life connected with nature. A growing body of evidence demonstrates that regular contact with nature adds quality to our lives and improves our physical and emotional health. State fish and wildlife agencies are well positioned to be leaders in delivering services that provide quality experiences in nature to people in both rural and urban environments.





# THE SOLUTION

The Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources, comprised of national business and conservation leaders, was convened to evaluate and recommend a more sustainable funding approach to avert a fish and wildlife conservation crisis. The Panel completed its work in December 2015 and recommends:

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**Congress dedicate up to \$1.3 billion annually in existing revenue from the development of energy and mineral resources on federal lands and waters to the Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program (16 U.S.C. 669b(a)).**

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This funding would provide the states, territories and the District of Columbia with new critically needed financial resources to effectively implement State Wildlife Action Plans to conserve 12,000 species in greatest need of conservation. Additionally, this funding would allow states to provide the public with more access to open spaces; giving people more opportunities to have meaningful contact with nature.

Historically, when fish and wildlife have faced a crisis, the nation has responded. We can create a more optimistic future for our nation's rich natural heritage through dedicated and sustained investment. State fish and wildlife agencies have a proven track record of success when given adequate financial resources. We need to act now to build a safety net for all fish and wildlife, create regulatory certainty for business and address the growing disconnect between people and nature. Failure to do so will mean that our generation will leave the nation's rich natural assets impaired, rather than increased in worth.

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# BLUE RIBBON PANEL

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ON SUSTAINING AMERICA'S  
DIVERSE FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES

## ABOUT THE BLUE RIBBON PANEL

The Blue Ribbon Panel includes 26 business and conservation leaders and two ex officio members. The Panel was charged with recommending a new funding mechanism to support state fish and wildlife conservation to ensure the sustainability of all fish and wildlife for current and future generations.

## MEMBERS AND THEIR AFFILIATIONS

### NATIONAL CO-CHAIRS

**John Morris**, Noted Conservationist and Founder, of Bass Pro Shops  
**David Freudenthal**, Former Governor, State of Wyoming; Senior Counsel, Crowell & Moring

### MEMBERS

**Kevin Butt**, Regional Environmental Director, Toyota Motor Engineering & Manufacturing, NA, Inc.  
**Richard Childress**, CEO & Chairman, Richard Childress Racing Enterprises; Board Member NRA  
**Jeff Crane**, President, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
**Bruce Culpepper**, Executive Vice President, Shell Americas  
**John Doerr**, President & CEO, Pure Fishing, Inc.  
**Jim Faulstich**, Vice Chair, Partners for Conservation; Owner Daybreak Ranch  
**John Fitzpatrick**, Director, Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
**Greg Hill**, President & COO, Hess Corporation  
**Becky Humphries**, Executive Vice President, National Wild Turkey Federation  
**Stephen Kellert**, Professor Emeritus, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies  
**Jennifer Mull**, CEO, Backwoods Equipment, Inc.; President Outdoor Industry Association  
**John Newman**, Board Member, Ducks Unlimited, Inc.  
**Mike Nussman**, President & CEO, American Sportfishing Association  
**Margaret O'Gorman**, President, Wildlife Habitat Council  
**Glenn Olson**, Donal O'Brien Chair in Bird Conservation and Public Policy, National Audubon Society  
**Collin O'Mara**, President and CEO, National Wildlife Federation  
**Connie Parker**, CEO, 12 North Capital LLC; Board Member Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
**Charlie Potter**, CEO, Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation  
**Steve Sanetti**, President & CEO, National Shooting Sports Foundation  
**John Tomke**, Chair, Wildlife & Hunting Heritage Conservation Council  
**Jeff Trandahl**, Executive Director & CEO, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation  
**James Walker**, Board Vice Chairman, EDF Renewable Energy; Board Member American Wind Wildlife Institute  
**Steve Williams**, President, Wildlife Management Institute  
**Bob Ziehmer**, Director, Missouri Department of Conservation

### EX OFFICIO MEMBERS

**Michael Bean**, Principal Deputy Asst. Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, US Department Interior  
**Ronald Regan**, Executive Director, Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies



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