



Testimony by Mr. Tim Schaeffer, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat
Commission, on Behalf of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
FY2021 House Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
January 29, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to submit recommendations for Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) Congressional appropriations. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' (AFWA) mission, since our founding in 1902, is to protect state fish and wildlife agency (states) authority to conserve and manage the fish and wildlife within their borders, and all 50 states are members. We strive to facilitate cooperation between state and federal agencies, conservation NGOs, and private landowners to conserve our nation's fish, wildlife, and their habitats.

We express our deep appreciation for the increased FY20 funding levels for many of the programs that benefit fish, wildlife, and their habitats and for providing resources for our federal agency partners. We look forward to working with you as we enter another challenging budget cycle and fiscal environment to enact funding levels consistent with FY20, and in some cases higher. Fish and wildlife conservation programs need funding today to preclude more costly federal endeavors tomorrow. We will not succeed by balancing the federal budget on the backs of conservation. A continuation of this policy will prove only to be costlier in the long-term.

Further, we support and endorse appropriations recommendations that are submitted by regional associations of fish and wildlife agencies, and we respectfully request Congress also refer to AFWA's testimony on Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) provided on October 17, 2019.

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (FWS)

Fish and Aquatic Conservation (FAC) -- We support no less than FY20 funding levels and recommend increasing funding for FAC to ensure sufficient capacity and expertise is readily available across the nation to work in partnership with the states. Additionally, of priority is the National Fish Hatchery Operations that supports the Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Partnership (AADAP), Fish Health Centers, Fish Technology Centers, Fish Hatcheries, Fish Passage, the National Fish Habitat Partnership, Wild Fish Health Survey, and Mass Marking program all of which meet needs of states, tribes, and the federal government. The need for FDA-approved drugs for use in aquaculture and fisheries management continues to be a national challenge, and AADAP provides the "cornerstone" of partnership efforts. AFWA recommends at least maintaining FY2020 funding levels for these FAC programs including National Fish Hatchery Operations and functions, the Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Partnership, Pacific Salmon Treaty, and we request no less than FY20 funds for the mass marking initiative in the Pacific Northwest and the Great Lakes region, of which \$4.5 million is for the Great Lakes region.

AFWA is concerned that the FWS is not fully utilizing its AADAP line item appropriations and in a timely manner. Current spending is not sufficient to meet the intent of the program or the needs of state and private partners. Also, failure of equipment or structure at one of the National Fish Hatchery System (NFHS) facilities could result in the loss of species that provide for

recreational opportunities, unique genetic strains of imperiled species, and multiple year classes of species used for restoration efforts, and there are about \$180 million in deferred maintenance needs for the NFHS. We appreciate Congress's previous efforts to address deferred maintenance needs for the NFHS), but more funds are needed to ensure NFHS operations and prevent infrastructure failures. We support continuation of the FY20 report language on NFHS and encourage Congress to incorporate NFHS needs in any infrastructure package considered.

Aquatic Habitat, Assessments, Restoration, and Species Conservation -- We support continued funding at FY20 levels, including for the National Fish Habitat Action Plan at \$7.2 million to provide funding for coordination and restoration projects to the 20 approved fish habitat partnerships across the country. Fish Passage needs far outweigh the resources for species management and replacement of unsafe transportation infrastructure which also serve as an aquatic connectivity barrier. We support funding Fish Passage at no less than FY20 levels and strongly support incorporating additional fish passage funding into federal infrastructure plans. Further, we support funding at no less than FY20 levels for conservation and restoration activities in the Delaware River Basin, Klamath Basin, Chesapeake Bay, and Great Lakes.

Aquatic Invasive Species -- We request Congress restore funding for implementation of state Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) management plans to \$4.4 million, without compromising other ANS programs. We support continuation of \$25 million to implement the national Asian carp management and control plan in the Mississippi River and tributaries as well as continuation of the provisions in the FY20 report language. The spread and associated costs of controlling AIS are exploding, and we recommend increased attention on a comprehensive approach across all relevant federal agencies and assistance to the states to prevent and control the spread of AIS.

National Wildlife Refuge System —We support funding NWRs Operations and Maintenance at no less than \$510 million. We continue to support the use of trapping on refuges as a management tool to provide much needed research on species of interest as well as to protect federally endangered and threatened species, imperiled species, and their habitats.

Habitat Conservation – AFWA recommends maintaining funding at FY20 levels, including for the Partners in Fish and Wildlife Program for voluntary conservation of wildlife migration corridors and habitats to support implementation of Secretarial Order (SO) 3362.

State and Tribal Wildlife Grants --The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program is the only federal program available to states to leverage non-federal funds to conserve over 12,000 state Species of Greatest Conservation Need identified in State Wildlife Action Plans to prevent them from becoming threatened or endangered. This investment in voluntary, proactive, and state-led conservation is needed now to address the list of declining species and to preclude an increase in federal expenditures in the future under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). AFWA recommends \$90 million for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program in FY21, same as the FY2010 enacted level. To truly address these growing challenges, we ask Congress to enact the *Recovering America's Wildlife Act* (H.R. 3742), which would provide states and their conservation partners with the dependable resources to do proactive, non-regulatory fish and wildlife conservation -- a modern enhancement in how we finance the full array of diverse fish and wildlife conservation for current and future generations.

Partnership Grants – For FY21, AFWA recommends no less than \$46 million for the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund; \$5 million for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund; and \$15 million for the Multinational Species Conservation Fund.

Ecological Services (ES) & Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF) -

The FWS needs additional resources in ES to address a growing workload and to increase FWS recovery efforts for federally listed species. Insufficient funds to meet growing demands has resulted in ongoing policy riders stemming from ESA tensions, some of which can be alleviated with increased funding. We support no less than FY20 funding for ES, the Recovery Challenge matching grants, and recommend further deployment across the country of the Southeast's cooperative conservation model for implementing the ESA in partnership with the states. We also recommend Congress provide robust funding for the CESCF, which includes a larger proportion of funding that is not tied to the Land and Water Conservation Fund and much needed flexibility for restoration activities.

Science Support (SS) – SS provides critical science coordination functions such as Species Status Assessments, regional science initiatives to address threats to wildlife and habitats across broad landscapes, integrated scientific efforts for species like wolverine, and support for work on White-nose Syndrome, wildlife migration corridors, and more. We recommend increasing funding for SS activities by at least \$8 million to provide much needed resources for the FWS to help address CWD and other emerging fish and wildlife diseases in cooperation with the states, integrated science efforts for pollinators and monarch butterflies, and other shared species and science priorities with the states.

Cooperative Landscape Conservation (CLC) – We support at least maintaining FY20 funding levels for CLC to facilitate implementation of SO3362, fund important regional state-federal partnerships, and continue cooperative conservation efforts supported by the states such as monarch butterflies and the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy.

Migratory Bird Conservation Program (MBCP) – The FWS and states share management jurisdiction for migratory birds, and migratory bird conservation represents one of the most successful state-federal cooperative partnerships for over 80 years, but the program suffers from chronic under-funding of traditional functions and activities, making it particularly vulnerable to unanticipated problems and single points of failure. The FWS has gone to great lengths to protect the core functions, but more funding is needed to retain sufficient staff, fill key vacancies to work in cooperation with the states on traditional co-management issues, and support science to inform FWS decision-making. AFWA supports robust funding for the MBCP at FY2010 levels with a total budget of \$55 million, including full funding of the Migratory Bird Joint Ventures at \$19.9 million, allowing us to accomplish shared state and federal responsibilities and priorities.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) -- AFWA recommends \$450 million for the LWCF in FY21, and we support robust funding for the state-side programs of the LWCF because numerous state agencies depend on the LWCF to support their state parks system. Many rural communities rely on the state-side programs for playgrounds, sports courts, and other amenities. We recommend no less than FY20 funding levels for the Forest Legacy Program in FY21.

UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY (USGS)

Ecosystems – Thank you for providing much-needed funding for the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Program (CRU) in FY20. We strongly support this increase of \$5.6 million for the CRU and respectfully request no less than this amount for FY21. The CRU provides critically important scientific and technical support for state and federal fish and wildlife managers through collaborative scientific projects that address the nation’s most critical fish and wildlife management needs and inform policy decisions. An additional \$1 million would enable USGS to fill all of the staff vacancies nationwide and establish new research units in IN, KY, MI, and NV. AFWA supports the National Cooperators Coalition’s testimony on CRUs. Further, we support additional funding for the Science Centers and the National Wildlife Health Center, which provide critical scientific support and coordination on CWD and financial support to the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study at the University of Georgia, which provides essential diagnostic and veterinary support services to at least 42 states. We support no less than FY20 funding levels for the Fisheries Program and the other programs and BLIs within the USGS such as the Integrated Taxonomic Information System, Biodiversity Information Serving Our Nation, and the USGS database of Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

It is imperative that Congress provide additional resources to Ecosystems and other federal agencies to coordinate with the states on research, management, surveillance, monitoring, testing, disposal, best management practices, and other challenges related to CWD.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM) -- AFWA supports additional resources to BLM to manage wild horses and burros to reduce herd impacts on native fish and wildlife. We also support increased funding for ongoing sage-grouse, sagebrush, wildfire, wildlife migration corridors, threatened and endangered species conservation, and invasive species activities. AFWA supports funding BLM BLIs at no less than FY20 levels with a \$5 million increase for Rangeland Improvement and Bighorn sheep disease prevention and an additional \$10 million for Wildlife Habitat Management (1170) to combat invasive species. We also recommend Congress reinstate BLM’s Cost-Share Challenge Grant Program under Wildlife Habitat Management at \$10 million to leverage current momentum and partnerships to accomplish more wildlife habitat goals and mission objectives. Further, we do not support the redirection of funds from fish, wildlife, and habitat accounts to pay for the management of wild horses and burros.

UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE (USFS) – Thank you for upholding commitments to fund wildlife suppression costs and end wildfire-borrowing and for increasing funding to the USFS in FY20. We look forward to working with you to shape future BLIs that provide for increased efficiencies while maintaining transparency and accountability for important BLIs such as Wildlife and Fisheries Management. We support funding the USFS BLIs at no less than FY20 levels. However, the USFS Research and Development Program has vast scientific expertise from which the states and other federal agencies greatly benefit, such as with wildlife disease issues, for which we respectfully request an additional \$3 million.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA) -- Finally, we recommend maintaining FY20 funding for all Geographic Programs, and we recommend that the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding be eligible for use on tributaries of the Great Lakes Region which serve as a major conduit of invasive species introductions. AFWA recommends maintaining FY20 funding levels for the National Estuaries Program and the Beach/Fish Safety Program.