



**2012 Multistate Conservation Grant Program  
Selected National Conservation Needs**



The following six National Conservation Needs (NCNs) were selected by the Association’s National Grants Committee on March 17, 2011 and represent the state fish and wildlife agencies highest priorities. All Multistate Conservation Grant Program proposals are required to address one (or more) of the following NCNs when applying for 2012 cycle funding.

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## Submitted by the Agricultural Conservation Committee

**Subject:** Improve benefits for fish, wildlife, and their habitats as provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill are implemented.

**Statement of Need:** The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) is the single most important legislation for providing fish and wildlife habitat on millions of acres of privately owned and managed lands. Continued examination and refinement of conservation programs, delivery systems, and implementation processes will assure that program efficacy and benefits are optimized and accrue to the states, producers and fish and wildlife resources. Additionally, the robust advancement of bioenergy initiatives will increasingly affect fish, wildlife, and their habitats across all of the nation's agricultural landscapes and forests. Creative approaches are needed to advance these bioenergy initiatives without jeopardizing fish and wildlife conservation efforts.

**Proposals submitted under this NCN should:**

- Provide recommendations on how fish, wildlife, and their habitat needs can best be integrated into farm bill programs, rules, policies, practices, and guidelines used to implement farm bill provisions. Also proposals that increase the capacity to effectively deliver fish and wildlife expertise/technical assistance while providing outreach to educate current and potential program participants.
- Develop scientifically sound recommendations for increasing the availability and improving the establishment techniques of native plant materials used across the country in conservation practices to improve the quality of fish and wildlife habitat.
- Assess the economic and/or fish and wildlife benefits associated with implementation of the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program.
- Provide training opportunities for fish and wildlife professionals working with private landowners to increase effectiveness of conservation program delivery.
- Develop and coordinate scientifically sound methods for research, monitoring, assessment, and reporting outcomes of fish and wildlife initiatives. Facilitate information and data sharing, evaluation of conservation strategies, and identification of information needs and success stories in support of strategic delivery of Farm Bill programs.
- Examine the affects, benefits, risks, threats, and successful approaches to wildlife, soil, and water conservation associated with the advancement of bioenergies in Farm Bill provisions.
- At the national level, work with State fish and wildlife agencies, NGOs, producers, USDA, FWS, the forestry community and others to optimize fish and wildlife benefits from 2008 Farm Bill implementation and improve communication of societal benefits to these groups.
- Identify/evaluate approaches to maintaining conservation benefits on expiring CRP acres and improve efforts to apply the best CRP mid-contract management practices.
- Examine and implement ways to expand farm bill programs/practices to regions of the nation where they are not available or are under-utilized.
- Develop materials on fish, wildlife and habitat conservation benefits and other values derived from Farm Bill provisions to appropriately inform development of the next Farm Bill.

**Desired Outcomes:** Successful proposals will improve Farm Bill benefits for fish, wildlife, and their habitats and improve State fish and wildlife agencies' ability to manage these resources in the public interest.

## **Jointly Submitted by the Hunting & Shooting Sports Participation and Angling & Boating Participation Committee's**

**Subject: Outdoor Heritage** - participation, recruitment, and retention in hunting, fishing, boating, and conservation related recreational activities.

**Statement of Need:** Participation in outdoor and conservation related recreational activities is key to strengthening the ability of state fish and wildlife agencies to protect the nation's natural resources and preserve opportunities for future generations. Generally, participation rates in traditional outdoor recreational activities are on the decline, and this trend is expected to continue into the immediate future. The reasons for declining participation are varied and complex; however, all states recognize a need for action to stabilize or reverse this trend. Ramifications of declining participation include 1) a citizenry further disassociated from our conservation heritage, nature, and all related benefits, 2) a direct loss of funding to fish and wildlife conservation programs, and 3) detrimental effects on critical industries that support and are supported by hunting, recreational fishing, boating, and the shooting sports. Successful recruitment and retention efforts rely on maximizing crossover opportunities in outdoor recreation; developing partnerships to implement state, regional, and national programs; and sharing best practices and necessary resources to create needed innovations.

**Desired Proposals:** Proposals submitted under this NCN should address needs related to participation, recruitment, and retention of people in hunting, recreational fishing, boating, and the shooting sports. This NCN also takes into consideration outdoor activities with valuable crossover applications. For example, approximately 73 million Americans participated in boating activities in 2006, and more than half of all anglers in 2006 fished from a boat. Proposals submitted under this NCN should address one or more of the following: a) innovative tools and actions that foster initiation, recruitment, and retention, including efforts to increase opportunities for target markets; b) partnerships and cooperation between or among successful recruitment/retention programs and related industries; c) new approaches to marketing that document and promote the social and economic benefits of hunting, fishing, boating, and related recreational activities; d) tools to assist hunting, fishing, and boating education instructors in communicating the history and role of hunters, anglers, and boaters in the conservation of North America's fish and wildlife; e) methods to assist state fish and wildlife agencies in assessing and meeting the demands for public shooting facilities, access to public waters for recreational fishing and boating, and public access to land for hunting; f) actions that help related recreational industries understand and enhance the important role they play in fish and wildlife conservation and promoting these benefits to the public at large; and g) efforts to evaluate the efficacy of recruitment and retention programs and strategies.

**Desired Results/Expected Benefits:** Desired results and expected benefits of proposals would be: 1) successfully implemented strategies that increase participation and retention rates in hunting, recreational fishing, boating, and shooting sports; 2) a steady and reliable source of revenue to state fish and wildlife agencies from license sales, registration fees, taxes, and associated federal aid; 3) national policies and programs to help recruit and retain participants; 4) continued long-term social and economic benefits through participation and increased recruitment of new hunters, anglers, boaters, and recreational shooters; 5) strategic guidance to state wildlife agencies to assist them in meeting demands in their state for public shooting facilities, boating and fishing access to public waters, and public access to land and public waters for hunting; 6) enhanced networking and understanding among agencies, related industries, and other committed partners; and 7) an improved conservation ethic among outdoor recreational participants, and a more understanding and supportive public – all of which will help ensure a bright and sustainable future for our North American hunting, fishing, and boating heritage.

## Submitted by the Energy & Wildlife Policy Committee

**Subject:** Incorporating Fish & Wildlife Considerations into Energy Development Decisions

**Statement of Need:** Energy development has been one of the dominant adverse influences on our nation's fish and wildlife resources over the past decade, and will continue to cause major landscape disturbances over the next decade. Our ability to direct the development of energy facilities and sources—whether for fossil, renewable or nuclear fuels and generation, pipelines or transmission lines—while maintaining fish and wildlife populations and habitats is limited by: 1) inadequate fish and wildlife resource information and tools to effectively use it in informing decisions concerning energy development; 2) planning, leasing, siting, and mitigation processes that do not provide a means for wildlife considerations to be addressed before irreversible development decisions are made; and 3) a shortage of personnel and financial resources to administer and influence energy development programs without diverting resources from other fish and wildlife conservation programs. Energy development decisions affect every regional association and virtually every state and province; hence, this NCN is intended to directly address the Critical Issues and Program/Project Coordination Goals in the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA's) Strategic Plan.

**Desired proposals:** This NCN seeks proposals in the following four areas: 1) research on the relationships between energy development practices and impacts on fish and wildlife populations and habitat (e.g., influences of wind turbine design and placement on sage grouse, other birds, bats and big game, effects of well-pad spacing on sage grouse and prairie chicken occupancy, etc.); 2) evaluation and refinement of current BMPs and guidelines for energy development practices; 3) joint efforts to incorporate fish and wildlife data into decision support systems designed to inform landscape conservation planning efforts, and 4) increased coordination with organizations and processes affecting energy facilities development and regulation.

**Desired Outcomes and Benefits:** Over the past two years, AFWA has been involved in several initiatives undertaken to improve interstate and interagency coordination, and processes to integrate fish and wildlife resources conservation into energy development (e.g., Energy and Wildlife Policy Committee recommendations, Western Governors Association's Wildlife Corridors Initiative, Sportsmen for Responsible Energy Development symposium, Executive Order 13443, and formation and participation in the American Wind Wildlife Institute). These have produced recommendations to improve the conservation of fish and wildlife resources during energy development. To realize those objectives, states and provinces must continue to support research into the impacts of energy development on fish and wildlife that will inform mitigation recommendations, and improve their participation in the planning, leasing, siting, and mitigation of energy development, with the desired outcome of no net loss to fish and wildlife resources during energy development.

## Submitted by the Executive Committee

**Subject:** State Fish and Wildlife Agency Coordination and Administration

**Statement of Need:** State fish and wildlife agencies are facing a host of issues that are impacting their ability to manage trust resources, most notably the massive budget reductions in most states due to the current economic downturn. State agencies need to collectively address these and other emerging issues to ensure they can continue to meet their management responsibilities and sustain the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.

**Desired Proposals:** Proposals will be considered that demonstrate how MSCGP funds would be used to assist state agencies with the coordination and administration of programs and efforts that address important issues facing fish and wildlife conservation. Applicants must demonstrate they have a history of collaboration and the ability to coordinate work with all fifty state fish and wildlife agencies.

**Desired Outcomes:** A proposal funded under this NCN would provide states with valuable technical, administrative and professional expertise and services. Detailed coordination and administrative objectives should be included along with an explanation of how these efforts will assist state agencies.

## Submitted by the Fisheries and Water Resources Policy Committee

**Subject:** Coordination and Operation of Fish Habitat Partnerships to Facilitate Implementation of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

**Statement of Need:** The *National Fish Habitat Action Plan* (NFHAP) was adopted by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) and Departments of Interior and Commerce on April 24, 2006 to arrest and reverse declines to the quality and quantity of our nation's fish habitat in freshwater, estuarine and marine waters. The Action Plan brings together diverse partners under state fish and wildlife agency leadership to form Fish Habitat Partnerships (Partnerships) with the capacity to develop and implement landscape scale approaches to conserve (protect, restore and enhance) priority fish habitats (natural and manmade) across the nation. Action Plan implementation is administered and coordinated by the National Fish Habitat Board (Board) which includes AFWA and Regional Association representation. Additional funding is required to supplement other temporary federal, state and private resources until federal legislation is passed or other funding secured to provide long-term and stable funding similar to that provided through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act.

Grant resources will aid state, federal, tribal, private and other local partners to coordinate and operate Partnerships that compile scientific information on fish habitats, establish strategic goals and objectives for fish species and habitats, and prioritize habitat conservation activities across jurisdictional boundaries and species ranges. Partnerships also contribute to implementation of national habitat-based conservation strategies and actions established by the Board (in addition to those contained in many State Wildlife Action Plans) and complement local regional, and other national priorities. Seventeen Partnerships have been formally recognized by the Board to date, and all 50 States are engaged in one or more of the Partnerships.

**Desired Proposals:** Grant recipients would compete for these resources to: 1) coordinate and compile scientific assessment information on fish habitats consistent with the Board's *Science and Data Framework*, 2) establish strategic goals and objectives that define desired outcomes for fish species and habitats, 3) identify priority places, issues, and projects to focus conservation action to meet goals and objectives, 4) compile outcomes of conservation action for reporting to the Board and stakeholders, or 5) monitor the performance and needs of FHPs nationwide. Proposals that engender collaboration across large landscapes among Partnerships and with Joint Ventures and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives are especially encouraged.

**Desired Outcomes:** Desired outcomes of successful proposals will include: 1) production of scientific information that fills gaps identified through the national fish habitat assessment reported in *Through a Fish's Eye: Status of Fish Habitats in the United States 2010*, 2) coordinated implementation of interim *NFHAP Conservation Strategies and Targets* adopted by the Board for rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and other aquatic habitats, 3) coordinated *Action Plan* implementation by Partnerships with other aquatic habitat strategies and actions identified in State Wildlife Action Plans and other complementary plans; 4) engagement of additional organizations and individuals with interest in the conservation of target aquatic habitats within a Partnership and with other Partnerships and the Board; 5) support for and development of Partnership capacity to achieve goals and objectives for 2015 that will be outlined in the first revision of the *Action Plan*, expected to be completed in 2011.

## Submitted by the National Grants Committee

**Subject:** Multistate Conservation Grant Program Coordination

**Statement of Need:** The Multistate Conservation Grant Program was established in 2000 by the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs Improvement Act of 2000 (Improvement Act), which amended the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act. The Improvement Act authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to make up to \$6,000,000 available each calendar year under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Federal Assistance Program to fund Multistate Conservation Grants (CFDA Number 15-628). These grants may be awarded by the Secretary of the Interior only for projects identified on a priority list of wildlife or sport fish restoration projects submitted by the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies by the mandated October 1st deadline. To ensure MSCGP funds are used to address important concerns of state fish and wildlife agencies, the Association has developed detailed requirements for the grant program applicants. The Act that established the MSCGP did not provide administrative funds for the Association to use for administration and implementation of its responsibilities. In 2009, the Association was awarded a three-year Multistate Conservation Grant that currently supports the Multistate Conservation Grant Program Coordinator responsible for implementing the grant program, which expires December 31, 2011.

**Desired Proposals:** The Multistate Conservation Grant Program Coordinator will continue to coordinate with Association Committees and interested NGOs regarding the solicitation of NCNs and proposals, review of proposals, and selection of priority projects. The Coordinator is responsible for disseminating information and responding to inquiries about the grant program. The Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the Association's responsibilities for executing the grant program are met; and for managing the resultant Multistate Conservation Grants administered by the Association. The Coordinator is responsible for continuous improvement of program processes; and evaluation and communication of the accomplishments of the MSCGP.

**Desired Outcomes:** This project will enable the Association to meet its responsibilities under the Act, and ensure grant funds are used for projects that provide maximum benefits to state fish and wildlife agencies and the wildlife resources they manage. It will provide necessary resources to the Association for the administration and coordination of the Multi-State Conservation Grant program, which is jointly managed with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.