



FURTHERING CONSERVATION IN THE PUBLIC TRUST

A National Fish & Wildlife Agenda

Each year, more than 87 million people in the U.S. venture outdoors to hunt, fish and enjoy other wildlife-related recreation contributing over \$120 billion to our economy and supporting close to three million jobs.

America's fish and wildlife belong to all of us as a public trust. For more than a century, state fish and wildlife agencies have upheld the primary responsibility for conserving and preventing the exploitation of natural resources on public and private lands and waters within their borders.

To sustain healthy fish and wildlife populations and provide opportunities for all to connect with nature, state agencies continue to advance what is known as the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, a systematic arrangement of policies and laws to restore and safeguard species and habitats through sound science and active management at the local level via state agency programs. Hunting and angling are the cornerstones of the North American Model with sportsmen and women serving as the foremost funders for conservation efforts through their license and equipment purchases.

However, every state agency today is dealing with rising public demands for resources; the impacts of urban sprawl, habitat loss and other emerging issues like climate change; shrinking hunter and angler constituencies and revenue base; and mounting costs. This shifting environment is a threat to the overall management system, fish and wildlife and the people who value nature.

Increasingly, conservation success requires more effective cooperation between state agencies and federal natural resource and land management agencies. With a new administration, come new opportunities to further support the North American Model through new federal conservation policies that are responsive to today's challenges while bolstering state and federal agency funding to meet those challenges.

Without action, we place our rich fish and wildlife legacy at risk and face leaving the next generation with diminished opportunities to enjoy the benefits of our great outdoors.

KEY PRIORITIES OF A NATIONAL AGENDA FOR STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES:

APPOINTMENTS

Appoint professionals in federal agencies with strong natural resources backgrounds and a demonstrated commitment to or appreciation for the needs and authorities of state fish and wildlife agencies.

CHILDREN AND NATURE

Support existing and create new programs to encourage children and adults to participate in nature-based outdoor recreation as a means to improve physical and mental well-being and enhanced environmental literacy.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Enact and implement comprehensive climate change legislation that regulates greenhouse gas emissions and dedicates assured funding derived from the auction of carbon credits to state and federal natural resource adaptation programs to remediate the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

Advocate statutory and policy improvements to the Endangered Species Act that enhances its conservation successes, ensures a significant role for state agencies and improves its implementation with private landowners.

ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

Amend and refine the process for energy development on federal lands and adequately fund federal land management and state agencies to facilitate both domestic energy development and conservation of fish, wildlife and their habitats.



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Investigate the creation and use of an excise fee on green energy development to offset impacts to fish, wildlife and their habitats.

FARM BILL

Implement fully the conservation provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill; secure appropriations at fully authorized levels and, when possible, link conservation title spending to state and regional conservation planning.

Enhance the role of state agencies on State Technical Committees by demonstrating to USDA-NRCS and FSA agency leaders the merits and utility of state agency contributions to meeting Farm Bill national program objectives.

FEDERAL FUNDING

Restore robust federal appropriated funding (Function 300) for natural resources and the environment for programs in USDA, DOI, Commerce, Army COE, DOT and EPA.

Secure enhanced funding specifically for grants to states that leverage federal dollars with either a state match or partner dollars (e.g., North American Wetlands Conservation Act, State Wildlife Grants and the Neotropical Migratory Bird Act).

Consider the expansion of Pittman-Robertson excise taxes on hunting and shooting items not currently taxed.

HUNTING & FISHING HERITAGE

Perpetuate hunting and angling traditions through enhanced access to public and private lands; recruitment and retention programs; and public education regarding the role of hunters and anglers as conservationists.



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INVASIVE SPECIES

Secure passage of comprehensive ballast water legislation to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.

Secure passage of and adequate funding for a comprehensive invasive species program using existing authorities, such as the Nonindigenous Aquatic Invasive Species law. Support new federal legislation that addresses the importation, possession and management of invasive species on public lands, etc., and maintains state and federal agency roles and authorities.



NATIONAL FISH HABITAT ACTION PLAN

Enact and implement the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP) to protect, enhance and restore fish habitats through voluntary, incentive-based programs.

PRIVATE LANDS CONSERVATION

Improve existing or create new federal tax incentives to encourage greater private landowner participation in voluntary actions to conserve fish and wildlife, particularly declining species, and that provide access opportunities.

SPORT FISH RESTORATION REAUTHORIZATION

Secure reauthorization of the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund in 2009 to perpetuate dedicated funding for fisheries management, public boating access, boating safety and aquatic education programs.

STATE/FEDERAL RELATIONSHIP

Affirm state authority for fish and wildlife conservation and management in federal statutes and regulations.

Ensure that federal agency plans and actions support implementation of landscape-level conservation strategies including State Wildlife Action Plans, North American Waterfowl Management Plan, NFHAP and other range-wide management plans for big game and resident and migratory birds.

Ensure the role of the state agencies as competent authorities for management of fish and wildlife in the U.S. by affirming their presence and function in international agreements through the U.S. State Department, USFWS, U.S. Trade Representative, USDA, etc.

STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLANS

Secure new, dedicated funding for implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans using revenues from new gas, oil and mineral development on federal lands, excise taxes on outdoor equipment, revenue derived from a regulatory climate change program or through other means.

WETLANDS

Restore pre-SWANNC jurisdictional status of the Clean Water Act to intra-state, isolated wetlands and intermittent streams through explicit statutory grounding of Congress' authorities under the Commerce, Treaty and Property clauses of the Constitution.



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Founded in 1902, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies represents North America's fish and wildlife agencies to advance science-based management and conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats in the public interest.