

**Resolution # 2025-XXX**

**Preserving the Bird Banding Laboratory to Sustain Migratory Bird Populations**

*WHEREAS, the Bird Banding Lab (BBL) was established in 1920 under the U.S. Bureau of Biological Survey, following the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918, and was relocated to Patuxent Wildlife Research Refuge in 1942 under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), where it operates today; and*

*WHEREAS, despite multiple agency transfers, from the FWS to the National Biological Survey in 1993, then to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in 1996, the BBL has remained a cornerstone of game and nongame migratory bird conservation for 105 years; and*

*WHEREAS, the BBL works in cooperation with the Canadian Wildlife Service to jointly manage banding data from Canada and maintain a shared North American banding database that supports international collaboration on migratory bird management and conservation; and*

*WHEREAS, the BBL maintains tens of millions of banding records and receives reports from hunters and bird watchers, playing a key role in outdoor recreation, citizen science, and habitat conservation; and*

*WHEREAS, data from band recoveries are vital for estimating harvest and survival rates, tracking population sizes, and setting hunting seasons for migratory game bird species (doves, ducks, geese, etc.); and*

*WHEREAS, the BBL authorizes the use of emerging marking technologies, such as GPS tracking devices, promoting scientific advancement and improved data collection; and*

*WHEREAS, bird banding activities provide unique public education opportunities that inspire conservation values and connect people with migratory bird life cycles; and*

*WHEREAS, without the BBL, all banding and tracking of wild game and non-game migratory birds would cease, public reporting of recovered bands would halt, and essential data would no longer be available to inform scientific discovery, management, or assess avian health and migration, with no comparable alternative program in place; and*

*WHEREAS, elimination of the BBL would disrupt critical data flows, modeling techniques, scientific research, and decision-making frameworks that are globally recognized for excellence in migratory bird management; and*

*WHEREAS, loss of banding data would undermine the foundation upon which current migratory bird harvest regulations are based and jeopardize science-based harvest management in the U.S. and Canada; and*

*WHEREAS, the scientific basis of hunting regulations would be weakened, increasing the legal vulnerability of regulated migratory bird hunting to opposition from anti-hunting groups; and*

*WHEREAS, the future of migratory bird hunting, an activity supported by 2.8 million Americans and contributing \$14 billion annually to the U.S. economy; would be at risk; and*

*WHEREAS, the BBL's FY25 budget was \$2.2 million, but an additional \$3.6 million over the next three years is needed to ensure the BBL's effective operation and complete ongoing technology improvements;*

*NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) urges that the USGS's Eastern Ecological Science Center retain the Bird Banding Lab and its critical functions through sufficient staffing and funding; and*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that, if the Bird Banding Lab cannot be retained within USGS, the Association urges that the Bird Banding Lab be transferred to the FWS's Migratory Bird Program, supported by a staff already executing the MBTA's management and permitting functions and an appropriate budget to carry out its functions.*