



Species Restoration

The near extinction of the buffalo and the extinction of the passenger pigeon at the end of the 19th century brought an end to the American myth of endless abundance. As President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt created five national parks, four big game refuges, 51 national bird reservations, and the Forest Service in order to preserve natural resources which were, in his view, an essential part of the American landscape and culture.

At the end of the 20th century, the importance of protecting and restoring ecosystems and individual species components of ecosystems is widely accepted. The Congress enacted landmark legislation including the Bald Eagle Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Rhino-Tiger Conservation Act, the African and Asian Elephant Conservation Act in recognition of the importance of protecting and recovering individual species as components of healthy, viable ecosystems.

Birds should be saved because of utilitarian reasons; and moreover, they should be saved because of reasons unconnected with any return in dollars and cents...The extermination of the passenger pigeon meant that mankind was just so much poorer.

*President Theodore Roosevelt
1908*

Partnering for ESA Conservation

We have made a major effort in the last five years to breathe life into the Endangered Species Act, to show that it can work, and to deal with landscapes through habitat conservation plans, safe harbor agreements, conservation agreements, all kinds of mechanisms.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt

The Department continues to implement a more effective Endangered Species Act by strengthen-

ing partnerships with States, local communities, and non-profit groups, and by expanding the involvement of private landowners in habitat restoration and species recovery. Candidate conservation agreements to keep species off the Federal threatened and endangered list, Habitat Conservation Plans to allow economic development to proceed while protecting species on private lands, the no-surprises policy to assure private landowners that agreements jointly negotiated will be honored, streamlined section 7 consultations, and Safe Harbor Agreements all ensure that community and species goals are met.



The budget proposes an increase of \$24.1 million for FWS endangered species operations. As part of the Administration's Lands Legacy Initiative, the budget proposes an increase of \$66.0 million for additional grants to States to promote smart growth through Habitat Conservation Plan land acquisition grants and grants to States for land acquisition and easements in support of candidate conservation and recovery efforts. The Lands Legacy chapter of the *Highlights Book* addresses the funding increases in more detail.

Operations increases will support the development of 100 additional Safe Harbor agreements, 100 additional Habitat Conservation Plans, and candidate conservation agreements to keep ten species from ESA listing. The ultimate goal of threatened and endangered species conservation is to recover listed species to levels where protection under the Endangered Species Act is no longer required. On May 6, 1998, the Secretary of the Interior proposed that 29 species (or segments of species) be either proposed for removal from the list or reclassified from endangered status over the next two years. The delisting/reclassification proposal includes the American peregrine falcon, bald eagle, Columbia white-tailed deer, Hawaiian hawk, brown pelican, and gray wolf. Additional

operations funding will ensure that FWS can continue to prepare and implement recovery plans and eventually evaluate species for potential removal from Federal protection.

FWS 2000 Goal: By September 30, 2000, 37 percent, or 197 of endangered and threatened species populations listed a decade or more are stabilized or improved and 15 species in decline are precluded from the need for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Amphibians

In 1915, the Sierra Nevada in California was filled with the sound of croaking frogs and toads. Biologists who surveyed the amphibians recorded one species, the western toad, as "exceedingly abundant." However, when researchers revisited the study sites in 1995, they recorded only one adult western toad and a small group of tadpoles. What caused the decline of the western toad and other native species? Why is this happening to other amphibian populations around the world? Since amphibians are good indicators of ecosystem health, what does this portend for other species?

For many years scientists have observed the decline and extinction of amphibian species, but in 1989, the concern grew dramatically when numerous scientists at the First World Congress of Herpetology presented evidence of declines worldwide in amphibian populations. In 1990, at a workshop sponsored by the National Research Council Board, participants agreed that amphibian declines were real, though the documentation was largely anecdotal, and much work was needed to uncover the causes behind declines. Amphibians are considered good indicators of ecosystem health due to their sensitivity to many kinds of environmental stress. Concern is growing over what the amphibian phenomenon may portend for other species.

In 2000 Interior proposes to mobilize increased resources to more vigorously investigate this troubling development. Increased pesticide use, climate change, disease, and increased ultraviolet radiation due to the thinning ozone layer have all been suggested as causes of the declines in frog,

toad, and salamander populations. Although unsure of the true cause, scientists suspect a combination of stressors may be at fault.



Increases totaling \$8.1 million in USGS and the land management agencies are proposed for inventory and monitoring activities to discern the actual scope and severity of the problem. Contaminant surveys will be conducted and a research component will seek to isolate the factors causing the declines and identify actions to arrest or reverse declines. While the work will be concentrated primarily on Interior's lands, efforts will be made to distribute broadly the results to maximize the utility and application of information.

Coral Reef Protection

In recognition of the serious state of the world's coral reefs, President Clinton signed Executive Order 13089 establishing the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force. Coral reefs have been called the "rainforests of the sea" to denote the criticality of these ecosystems to the overall health of the seas and oceans. Coral reefs are one of the most biologically complex and diverse ecosystems on earth. In addition to providing habitat for one-third of all marine fish species, coral reefs also provide a valuable protective barrier for shorelines and are crucial to the tourism industries of many States and territories.

In establishing America's national parks and wild-

life refuges, Congress explicitly identified the Nation's most valuable natural and cultural treasures as worthy of protection in perpetuity. Less well known is that Congress also entrusted the Department of the Interior with the protection of many of the Nation's underwater wonders--its coral reefs. Interior's mandate extends beyond those reefs in or adjacent to refuge and park units to the abundant coral reefs of the U.S. Territories. The Office of Insular Affairs assists local territorial governments in economic development and improving government capabilities, such as environmental protection.

President Clinton has invited the governors of the U.S. Territories to participate as full members of the Coral Reef Task Force. The Executive Order calls for the protection of coral reefs through a comprehensive program of inventory and mapping, monitoring, and research into the causes of their decline.

The 2000 budget request proposes to devote funding of \$7.2 million for coral reef activities. The funding will be used to post "reefkeepers" on 17 national wildlife refuges, provide technical assistance to U.S. Territories so that these local governments can begin to implement effective coral reef management, protection, and restoration programs, and for the USGS to conduct surveys, investigations, and research into the causes of reef degradation.



Ensuring Fish Passage to Historic Spawning Grounds

A century ago, we refused to let the buffalo slip into oblivion; two generations ago, we said no to the wanton destruction of waterfowl. Today, the plight of salmon and trout is stirring a similar resoluteness in you and me. We simply cannot let them vanish.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt

The 2000 budget includes additional funding of \$7.6 million to restore native fish populations and restore fish passage to historic spawning grounds. Fisheries management efforts in the 20th century focused on setting aside protected habitat to preserve species and massive “put and take” stocking programs to provide short-term recreational angling opportunities. Efforts in the 21st century will center on restoring native fisheries. Watersheds, river systems, and native fish require non-segmented habitat to survive. Central to this restoration effort will be revisiting the sites of some of the 75,000 dams built in the country since colonial times.

The Department requests additional funding of \$3.7 million for FWS, BLM, NPS, and BIA to accelerate Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing actions on hydropower projects. This funding will support additional biologists and civil engineers to evaluate the 550 private hydropower dams that will be relicensed for 30 to 50 year periods over the next few years. Non-power dams will also be evaluated. The goal is to work

collaboratively with dam operators and other stakeholders to solve fisheries needs and balance those needs with the needs for power, agriculture, and recreation. This requisite balance may be attained with as simple a solution as installing a fish ladder or ensuring additional flow over the top of a dam during key periods. On-the-ground restoration projects will be directed at naturally reproducing populations of native fishes. Restored native fish populations provide outstanding recreational opportunities for the Nation’s 50 million licensed anglers. The FWS requests \$3.9 million for on-the-ground fish passage and restoration projects, including \$1.0 million for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation “rivers and dams” initiative to use as seed money to attract non-federal matches from organizations such as Trout Unlimited. Projects could be implemented to restore Lahontan cutthroat trout to the Truckee River in Nevada, Apache trout in Arizona, west slope cutthroat trout in Montana and Wyoming, shad and striped bass in North Carolina, Atlantic salmon in Maine, and all five species of Pacific salmon and steelhead in the Pacific northwest.

FWS 2000 Goal: By September 30, 2000, 100 percent of stable interjurisdictional fish populations remain at or above current levels, and one percent of depressed populations are restored to self-sustaining, or where appropriate, harvestable levels.

Tundra to Tropics

The geographic and ecological areas that encompass Alaska and Hawaii are unique and rich in natural resources. Alaska has more than 33,000 miles of coastline, 133,000 miles of streams and is home to 54 species of mammals, over 230 bird species, and 42 species of fish. The Alaskan economy depends on these resources to support a growing tourism trade, commercial and recreational fishing, and the Alaskan natives depend on these natural resources for subsistence purposes. The Pacific basin is home to a diversity of habitats and a high proportion of native species that occur nowhere else on earth. These unique islands contain a significant number of plant and animal species that are in decline or on the brink of extinction. Currently 28 percent of the U.S. species listed as endangered or threatened are located on Hawaii or other Pacific Islands. As these areas were developed and subjected to the pressures of population and competition for resources and the introduction of numerous invasive alien species, land managers and local communities found it hard to protect fragile ecosystems and species because of a paucity of information about these indigenous species and habitats. The Department will address these information needs and assist local communities, States, and territories in the management of resources and will improve the stewardship of Federal lands.

These areas share other common qualities in that they are remote, located far from the country's industrial and commercial centers, and home to culturally rich peoples. The Department has a significant role in the stewardship of these lands and resources. Thus, the Department is seeking partnerships with the States of Alaska and Hawaii to increase an understanding of these complex environments to conduct natural resource protection and restoration activities, and expand public use and educational opportunities. The budget includes \$4.4 million to address these needs and assist in the wise stewardship of lands and resources that they are responsible for managing. Included within this request is an increase of \$1.0 million for BLM, \$1.5 million for FWS, \$1.2 million for NPS, and \$700,000 for USGS.

In Alaska, BLM will determine habitat requirements by species; monitor wildland fire and develop techniques for the use of wild and prescribed fire to achieve watershed and habitat protection and restoration objectives; expand efforts to collaborate with partners to provide information about salmon production habitats and stocks using those habitats; and enhance the GIS processing data identifying surface water sources and river systems.

In 2000, FWS will promote conservation of the fragile and rare ecosystems in Alaska and Hawaii, such as installing structures to allow for water management to provide nesting habitat and food for endangered Hawaiian waterbirds; conduct population and habitat surveys of sea ducks, diving ducks, and emperor geese in Alaska to determine causes of drastic declines; and conduct habitat mapping projects.

Based on park priorities in Alaska, NPS will conduct integrated vertebrate inventories including mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians at Yukon Charlie, Gates of the Arctic, and Glacier Bay. Although not a part of the Tundra to Tropics Initiative, NPS also proposes to partner with private landowners in Hawaii to protect the outstanding features of Haleakala Crater on the island of Maui, the unique and fragile ecosystems of Kipahulu Valley, the scenic pools along 'Ohe'o Gulch, and many rare and endangered species.

USGS will expand research efforts in the Pacific Basin and assess the effects of habitat loss and invasive species on native species and island ecosystems and develop management strategies to improve the status of rare, threatened, and endangered species.