

# Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish & Wildlife Resources



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Question 1: What is the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources and why was it formed?**

*Answer-* The [Blue Ribbon Panel](#) is comprised of 26 national business and conservation leaders from outdoor recreation retail and manufacturing, energy and automotive industries, private landowners, educational institutions, conservation organizations, sportsmen's groups, and state fish and wildlife agencies. Their charge was to examine the current system of conservation funding and recommend a new mechanism that will conserve all fish and wildlife. The Panel was chaired by John Morris, Founder of Bass Pro Shops and David Freudenthal, former Governor of Wyoming.



### **Question 2: What did the Blue Ribbon Panel recommend?**

*Answer-* The Blue Ribbon Panel agreed on two recommendations that will help set a new course for fish and wildlife conservation in this country.

**Recommendation 1:** That Congress dedicate up to \$1.3 billion annually in existing revenue from the development of energy and mineral resources on federal lands and waters to the Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program. These funds would provide states with the resources needed to implement State Wildlife Action Plans which are designed to conserve over 12,000 species of greatest conservation need.

**Recommendation 2:** To convene a working group to examine the impact of societal changes on the relevancy of fish and wildlife conservation and make recommendations on how programs and agencies can evolve to engage and serve broader constituencies.

### **Question 3: Why did the Blue Ribbon Panel select federal royalties on energy and mineral development as the source of funding and how are these royalties currently used?**

*Answer-* The Blue Ribbon Panel recommended that \$1.3 billion (approximately ten percent of existing federal royalties on energy and mineral development) be redirected to fish and wildlife conservation. This would fund a critical conservation need without requiring Congress to levy a new tax. The funding mechanism would provide a means whereby nearly every citizen contributes a small amount to support conservation since industry-paid fees and royalties are ultimately passed on to consumers. This would ensure some of the proceeds from energy and mineral extraction on public lands are invested in conservation. Currently most of these funds are used to fund general government services.

### **Question 4: Did the Blue Ribbon Panel consider other funding options?**

*Answer-* YES. The Blue Ribbon Panel considered nearly two dozen potential funding options. These ranged from mandatory excise taxes on outdoor-related equipment and supplies to voluntary contributions by business and corporations such as annual donations based on a percentage of net income. The Blue Ribbon Panel ultimately decided that use of existing federal royalties on energy and mineral development was currently the most equitable and viable option.

### **Question 5: Why did the Panel recommend \$1.3 billion for fish and wildlife conservation?**

*Answer-* A national survey determined that each state needs an average of \$26 million in new funding annually (\$1.3 billion collectively) to effectively implement State Wildlife Action Plans to prevent species from becoming threatened or endangered.

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*A 21st Century  
Vision for Investing  
in and Connecting  
People to Nature*

“I strongly believe that the future of our industry, the outdoor sports that we serve, and the outdoor sports we personally enjoy, is absolutely more dependent upon how we manage our natural resources than anything else.”

~ John L. Morris, Bass Pro Shops Founder Blue Ribbon Panel Co-Chair

## How can I learn more about the Blue Ribbon Panel?

You can learn more about the Blue Ribbon Panel by visiting [www.fishwildlife.org](http://www.fishwildlife.org) or contacting the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

1100 First Street NE,  
Suite 825  
Washington, DC 20001  
[info@fishwildlife.org](mailto:info@fishwildlife.org)  
202-838-3473



## Question 6: Will this funding request compete with the Land and Water Conservation Fund?

*Answer-* NO. Members of the Blue Ribbon Panel were explicit that funding for fish and wildlife conservation not compete with or take funds away from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Although the source of funding is the same, the amount of royalties that are currently collected would be sufficient to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Blue Ribbon Panel’s recommendation

## Question 7: What is the Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program?

*Answer-* The Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program is a permanently authorized but unfunded account under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. This program has an established infrastructure and grant management process. The program was created to support development and implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans to conserve species of greatest conservation need, particularly those without other funding sources. This program is broader in scope than the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program which is not permanently authorized. Eligible activities under the Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program include research, monitoring, habitat restoration and enhancement, land protection, planning, wildlife conservation education and wildlife-associated recreation (recreation is capped at ten percent). The program uses an existing formula for apportionments based two-thirds on population and one-third on land area with caps so that no more than 5% or no less than 1% of the total in any year is apportioned to a single state. The states, territories, and the District of Columbia are eligible for funding if they have an approved State Wildlife Action Plan.

## Question 8: Will federal funds be matched with state or private funds?

*Answer-* As with existing Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration programs, states would be required to provide at least 25% in nonfederal matching funds. The source of match can be monetary or in-kind contributions originating from state or local governments or private entities such as conservation organizations, universities, businesses, private landowners, or volunteers. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the states are examining options to assist states who could face challenges securing sufficient match.

## Question 9: Why is the funding directed at state-based conservation?

*Answer-* Most of the legal responsibility to manage wildlife resides with state fish and wildlife agencies. These agencies understand the needs of their constituents, have a rich tradition of managing fish and wildlife resources, and can tap into a local experts and community support to overcome complex natural resource challenges. Each state created a collaborative State Wildlife Action Plan which serves as the blueprint for restoring the most sensitive and imperiled species within their borders. Implementation of these plans is limited because of inadequate funding. Investing in these plans would help ensure that future generations can enjoy our rich wildlife heritage.

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### **Question 10: What are State Wildlife Action Plans and why were they created?**

*Answer-* These proactive plans assess the health of each state's wildlife and habitats, identify key threats, and outline the actions needed to conserve fish and wildlife over the long term. Each plan identifies those species that are of greatest conservation need and the steps needed to conserve these species and their habitats before they become even more rare and costly to restore. The plans are developed in collaboration with federal, state and private partners and with participation from the public and layout a vision for sustaining fish and wildlife for future generations. Congress required each state, territory and the District of Columbia to develop a plan and address [eight elements](#) in order to receive funds through the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration and State and Tribal Wildlife Grants programs

### **Question 11: What species and habitats will benefit from using this funding?**

*Answer-* The purpose of the funding is to conserve the full array of fish and wildlife and their associated habitats, particularly those that are declining and have little or no other source of conservation funding. Each state identified Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in their State Wildlife Action Plan which include federal and state endangered or threatened species, other rare and declining fish and wildlife species, and more abundant species that face emerging threats or whose status are unknown. The SGCN lists were developed in each state by scientists and conservation partners with input from the public. Nearly 12,000 SGCN fish and wildlife species were identified nationwide including many well-known species such as Golden-winged Warblers, Monarch Butterflies, Atlantic Sturgeon, Bog Turtle, Northern Leopard Frog, Louisiana Black Bear and Gunnison's Sage Grouse. The SGCN list may change over time as the status and conservation needs of species change. Associated habitats such as forests, prairies, fresh and salt water marshes, sage brush and deserts will also be conserved through this funding.

### **Question 12: How will the current contributions of hunters and anglers be affected?**

*Answer-* For nearly 80 years, hunters and anglers have provided critical funding for state-based fish and wildlife conservation and increased funding will complement and augment their contributions. Existing hunter and angler-sourced funding and the programs they support will not be affected. Much-needed new funding will allow states to proactively conserve the full array of fish and wildlife and allow all citizens to share in the responsibility of conserving natural resources for future generations.



### **Question 13: Can game and sportfish species be funded through the Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program?**

*Answer-* YES. Any species identified by a state as a species of greatest conservation need can receive funding through the Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program. The intent of Congress is to use funds under this program to address the unmet needs for a diverse array of wildlife and associated habitats.

**#Funding4Wildlife #BlueRibbonPanel**

# Frequently Asked Questions

*WE BELIEVE  
A Solution is in  
Sight*

## SUCCESS STORIES

Bald Eagle  
Arctic Grayling  
New England Cottontail

“The building blocks of our nation are healthy forests, abundant fish and wildlife, rich soils and productive waters.”  
~Bob Ziehmer, Director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and Blue Ribbon Panel Member

*WE BELIEVE  
Everyone Benefits  
from Healthy fish  
and Wildlife*

**For more information  
please contact:**

1100 First Street NE,  
Suite 825  
Washington, DC 20001  
[info@fishwildlife.org](mailto:info@fishwildlife.org)  
202-838-3473



### **Question 14: What is at stake if we don't increase investment in proactive fish and wildlife conservation?**

*Answer-* The states have identified over 12,000 species in greatest conservation need. Some of these species are already on the federal threatened and endangered species list and hundreds of others could be listed in the future unless there is increased investment in proactive conservation. As more species become threatened or endangered, all Americans will be saddled with the high cost of recovery, businesses will face greater regulatory uncertainty and important benefits like pollination, water filtration and recreation will be reduced.

### **Question 15: What are the next steps for the Blue Ribbon Panel and how can I help?**

*Answer-* The Blue Ribbon Panel has created four working groups (Legislative, Communications, Business Relationships, Agency Relevancy) to advance their recommendations. Blue Ribbon Panel members are working with congressional champions to introduce legislation, develop a communications strategy, reaching out to business leaders for support and developing recommendations on how to ensure fish and wildlife agencies remain relevant in the future.



*Photo of Blue Ribbon Panel members at Big Cedar Lodge in Missouri in September 2015*



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## Frequently Asked Questions

### How would this funding benefit me as a...

**Hunter or Angler?** For decades hunters and anglers have provided critical support and funding to state fish and wildlife agencies. This new funding would be used to manage and conserve habitats that are important to sustaining harvestable fish and wildlife. More diverse funding means that hunters and anglers will shoulder less of the burden of conserving our shared natural resources and benefit from improved access for their pursuits.

**Wildlife Viewers?** Birders, nature photographers, and other wildlife enthusiasts depend on sustainable wildlife for quality viewing experiences. This new funding would provide states with resources to implement State Wildlife Action Plans that are designed to conserve all species of fish and wildlife. With nearly 72 million wildlife viewers, the demands for facilities and programs is large and growing. Increased funding will provide wildlife viewers with improved access to quality wildlife-viewing experiences.

**Outdoor Recreationists?** Hikers, campers, paddlers and other outdoor enthusiasts participate in outdoor recreation to connect with nature and the environment. The quality of their experience depends on healthy fish and wildlife and habitats. This new funding would help communities conserve and provide access to quality lands and waters that outdoor recreationists desire and fish and wildlife need to thrive.

**Industry or Business Owner?** Preventing species from becoming endangered is a goal shared by the business and fish and wildlife communities. Increased regulation is a concern to many businesses and industries and this new funding will lead to proactive conservation that will address threats to fish and wildlife well before they become threatened or endangered. Reduced regulations for business and lower recovery costs for fish and wildlife will help safeguard the economy and ensure a sustainable future for fish and wildlife.



# Frequently Asked Questions

## How would this funding benefit me as a... (continued)

**Farmer, Rancher, Forester or Private Landowner?** Since most fish and wildlife are found on private lands, landowners are critical partners in sustaining fish and wildlife. New funding would provide landowners with voluntary, incentive-based technical and financial assistance to help them manage fish and wildlife but also ensure our nation has the food, fiber, energy and other services needed to prosper. Proactive fish and wildlife conservation will help reduce the regulatory burden to farmers, ranchers and homeowners by reducing the need to list many species under the Endangered Species Act.

**Non-governmental Conservation Organization?** Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play an important role in conserving declining fish and wildlife species. Since funding is often the critical bottleneck, NGOs will be able to leverage their work with investments from the states for greater impact on fish and wildlife and their habitats. This new funding will support the work of private organizations in raising public awareness about the threats to fish and wildlife and help them connect more people to nature by improving access to the outdoors.

**Tribal Member?** This new funding will support implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans. Tribes are important conservation partners and many helped develop the plans. New funding will provide new opportunities for tribes to collaborate with the states to restore and manage declining fish and wildlife and improve access for wildlife recreation.

**Taxpayer?** Proactive fish and wildlife conservation saves taxpayer dollars by addressing threats before expensive “emergency-room” actions are needed. This new funding will allow all Americans to become investors in fish and wildlife conservation and avoid saddling the next generation with the high cost of recovering hundreds or even thousands of additional threatened and endangered species.

**Researcher?** State fish and wildlife agencies have identified many knowledge gaps for fish and wildlife and their habitats. Many agencies lack sufficient staff to address these deficiencies on their own so researchers and academics play an important role in improving our understanding of the status of fish and wildlife and best management practices. This new funding would spur new research and monitoring that would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of conservation.

