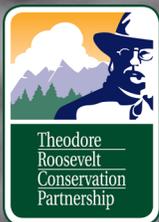
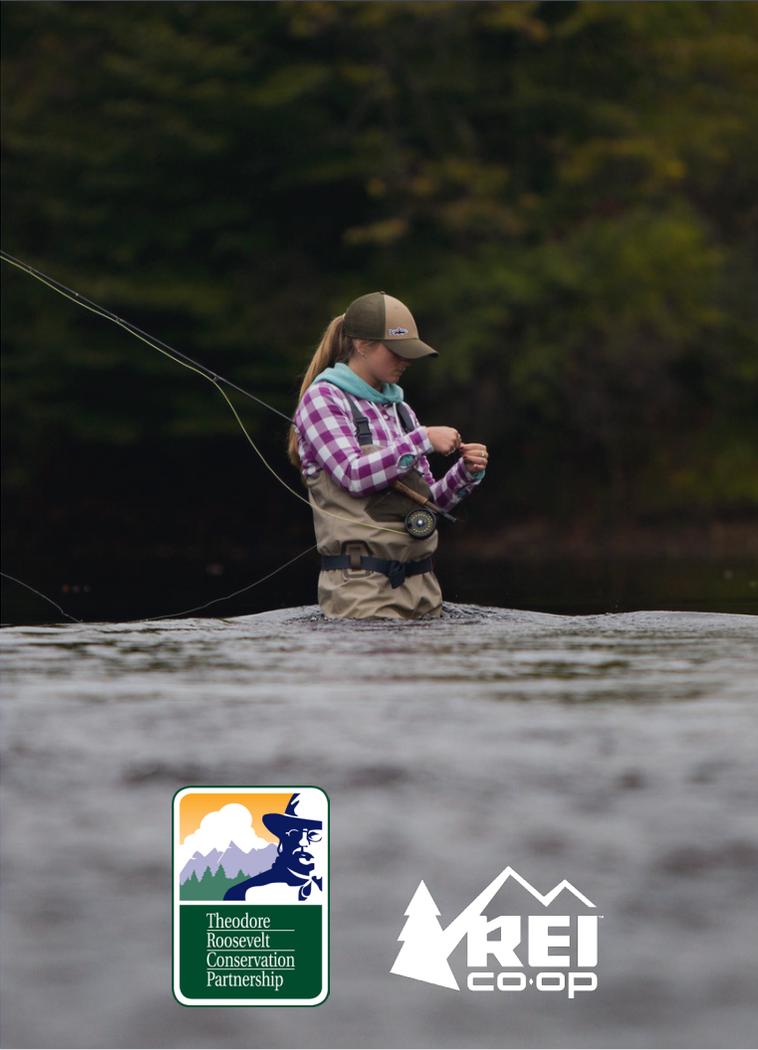




# Accessible Private Lands:

*A report on the  
Voluntary Public Access and  
Habitat Incentive Program*





# INTRO

Outdoor recreation is big business, contributing \$778 billion to the U.S. economy every year. From hunting and fishing to hiking and climbing, all sectors depend on access to our land and water. And while public lands and waters provide great access, 70 percent of the nation's lands, exclusive of Alaska, are in private hands, including some of the best fish and wildlife habitat in the nation.

That is why **we cannot afford to overlook the recreational opportunities and conservation value offered by private lands and made possible through the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP).**



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# HISTORY

VPA-HIP, once commonly known as “open fields,” is the only federal program dedicated to creating public access on private lands. This is particularly important for hunters, anglers, and wildlife watchers in states east of the 100th meridian, which separates the wet and fertile eastern United States from the dry and arid West.

Championed by the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership’s founder, Jim Range, VPA-HIP helps states to create innovative ways of incentivizing private landowners to open their lands to the public for wildlife-dependent recreation. **It is the single best federal tool for increasing recreational access on private lands.**

Established and funded through the 2008, 2014, and 2018 Farm Bills, VPA-HIP makes grants to states to increase public access to private lands for hunting, fishing, and other forms of outdoor recreation. VPA-HIP funding is also utilized to provide technical resources and assistance to landowners for wildlife habitat improvement and enhancement projects. And the program allows states to assume liability, alleviating a roadblock for many landowners to open their lands to the public.

This report looks at the innovative ways in which VPA-HIP is being used to boost access across the country, particularly in states where a shortage of public access to wildlife-dependent recreation is reaching crisis proportions. For instance, despite Illinois being the fifth most-populous state, it is one of five states with the least public land available, with a whopping 96 percent of the state’s acreage under private ownership.

Often layered with other Farm Bill conservation programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Program or Wetland Reserve Easements, VPA-HIP increases the public benefit of these powerful conservation tools by adding a recreational access component to private lands managed for conservation.





# ARIZONA



## ARIZONA ACCESS PROGRAM

*19,600 Acres*

*\$2,809,250 Awarded*

## RECREATION BENEFITS

*Canoeing/Kayaking*

*Turkey Hunting*

*Archery Deer Hunting*

*Fishing*

*Small Game Hunting*

*Hiking*

*Photography*

*Bird Watching*

*Camping*

*Wildlife Watching*

Determining which places are open to outdoor recreation can be difficult. To make it easier for the public to learn about the private lands that are open to them, the Arizona Game and Fish Department utilized its VPA-HIP funding to develop and promote a user-friendly website ([azaccessmap.com](http://azaccessmap.com)) and give the public critical information about making the most of previously inaccessible lands.

Arizona was an early pioneer of voluntary public access. Since 1986, the state has operated its own voluntary public access program called Access Arizona. This program was boosted by a \$1-million VPA-HIP grant in 2011. With this funding, more than one million acres were added to the existing program.

The grant also supported the creation and maintenance of a web-based map with information on program resources. This easy-to-use website helped to increase recreational use from 4,661 individuals to 11,983 recreationists—a 150-percent bump. According to a 2016 report conducted by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, landowner demand for the program exceeded \$1 million per year, which indicates a need to continue to increase grant funding.





# COLORADO

In 2015, Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Colorado Department of Natural Resources were awarded a \$1.5-million VPA-HIP grant to acquire and develop habitat on privately owned land for public access.

VPA-HIP funding was used to help the DNR launch the Corners for Conservation initiative, with a goal of enrolling land for walk-in public access and establishing quality habitat for upland birds, big game, pollinators, and grassland species. The habitat improvements took place in spring 2016 on 82 corners belonging to seven landowners. In 2017, 19 landowners planted on 120 corners, for a two-season total of 1,665 acres.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife partnered with Pheasants Forever to create the Novice Hunter Program, which helps new hunters find land access and hunting mentors. A handful of Colorado's Walk-In Access Program properties are reserved for graduates of the program to provide a safe and low-pressure hunting area for first-timers.

## WALK-IN ACCESS PROGRAM

*82 New Hunting Destinations*  
*\$1,519,100 Awarded*

## RECREATION BENEFITS

*Deer, Elk, and Pronghorn Hunting*  
*Pheasant Hunting*  
*Waterfowl and Dove Hunting*  
*Wildlife Watching*





# GEORGIA



## WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

*13,411 Acres*

*\$993,664 Awarded*

## RECREATION BENEFITS

*Dove Hunting*

*Waterfowl Hunting*

*Fishing*

*Hiking*

*Wildlife Watching*

*Deer Hunting*

*Turkey Hunting*

*Hiking and Camping*

*Small Game and Quota Hunting*

*Adult-Child Hunts*

*Ladies-Only Hunts*

Roughly 93 percent of Georgia's land is privately owned, despite the state boasting 630,000 resident and non-resident hunters in 2011. A shortage of public lands creates a tremendous obstacle for those looking to venture afield in the Peach State.

With help from VPA-HIP, the state has greatly expanded public access opportunities. In 2014, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources was awarded a \$993,000 VPA-HIP grant to expand its Wildlife Management Area program, which provides public access to private lands for outdoor recreation. In 2018, VPA grants opened an additional 5,800 acres in the state.

Georgia utilizes VPA-HIP funding to augment its successful Wildlife Management Area program, which includes the Chattahoochee Fall Line project. Comprised of the Almo, Blackjack Crossing, and Fort Perry Areas, this project totals 10,400 acres. In addition, Georgia leverages VPA-HIP grants to benefit youth, people of color, military veterans, and disabled or special-needs hunters and anglers.





The Illinois DNR has used VPA-HIP grants to implement and expand the state's first public access program for hunting and fishing on private lands. A \$525,000 grant awarded in 2010 was used to develop the Illinois Public Access Program (IRAP), which began enrolling landowners in the targeted watersheds of the Illinois River and Kaskaskia River. As IRAP manager Tammy Miller said, "Our goal with the program is to provide more places for outdoor recreational activities for youth and families."

Additional grants of \$1.7 million in 2014 and \$540,000 in 2015 have been used to expand the program, with a focus on youth opportunities throughout the state—including a mentorship program for new hunters. IRAP has enrolled more than 19,600 acres in 49 counties for outdoor recreation activities. These grants have also funded habitat projects, including non-native invasive species removal and prescribed burns, on more than 11,000 acres of enrolled property.

TRCP supporter and landowner Zane Zaubi has nearly 500 acres of land enrolled in the Illinois Recreational Access Program. In the four years he's been involved in the program, he estimates 50 hunters have had the opportunity to hunt white-tailed deer and turkeys on his land. In a recent statement, Zane asserted that "the most rewarding part of the program is sharing our land with up-and-coming sportsmen who need a place to go that's close to home and full of game."

# ILLINOIS

## RECREATIONAL ACCESS PROGRAM

*22,134 Acres*

*\$2,809,250 Awarded*

## RECREATION BENEFITS

*Canoeing/Kayaking*

*Turkey Hunting*

*Archery Deer Hunting*

*Fishing*

*Small Game Hunting*

*Hiking*

*Photography*

*Bird Watching*

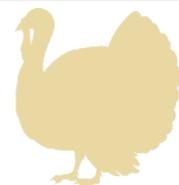
*Camping*

*Wildlife Watching*





# IOWA



## HABITAT AND ACCESS PROGRAM

*22,000+ Acres*

*148 Places to Hunt*

## RECREATION BENEFITS

*Deer Hunting*

*Turkey Hunting*

*Migratory Bird Game*

*Hunting*

*Pheasant and Small Game Hunting*

By stacking VPA-HIP with the Conservation Reserve Program, Iowa is turning marginal farmland into public access hot spots. In Harrison County, landowner Terry Plummer enrolled 400 acres of prairie into the Iowa Habitat and Access Program (IHAP). In the two years since he made this land publicly accessible, it has become a boon for pollinators, pheasants, and hunters alike.

A VPA-HIP grant to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources—funded by the 2008 Farm Bill—first made the statewide IHAP possible in 2012. In its first year, the pilot program covered 41 sites totaling 7,000 acres. In 2014, a second \$3-million VPA-HIP grant was used to provide conservation assistance to landowners and enhance 22,000 acres of wildlife habitat, which is now open to the public.

To ensure the program is working for the public, IHAP sites feature a survey box to collect user comments. Based on survey responses, the average hunter traveled 76 miles to reach the site, with 76 percent stating that they had a positive experience and 99 percent stating that they would hunt an IHAP site again.





Just outside of Kansas City, the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism worked with area landowners to open 660 acres of private land to public hunting. Initially operated as a pilot project for the 2018 spring turkey season, the property was recently enrolled into a multi-year contract that will enable participating landowners to improve habitat on their property while offering prime turkey and whitetail deer hunting opportunities to residents and non-residents.

Since 1995, the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism has administered the Walk-In Hunting Access Program, which provides hunting access on private property on a voluntary basis. Despite not offering any financial incentive, the program successfully enrolled more than one million acres by 2004.

Kansas is the largest recipient of VPA-HIP funding, receiving a \$1.5-million grant and a \$2.7-million grant since 2008. Like other Midwestern states, Kansas uses VPA-HIP funding to expand access to prime wildlife habitat by targeting acres already enrolled in U.S. Department of Agriculture conservation programs. In Kansas, this translates to public access on 3,800 acres of Conservation Reserve Program and over 400 acres of Wetland Reserve Easements.

# KANSAS

## WALK-IN HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAM

*98,000 Acres*

*\$4,200,000 Awarded*

## RECREATION BENEFITS

*Deer Hunting*

*Turkey Hunting*

*Small Game Hunting*

*Waterfowl Hunting*

*Fishing*

*Hiking*

*Photography*

*Bird Watching*

*Canoeing/Kayaking*

*Wildlife Watching*





# MICHIGAN



## HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAM

*22,437 Acres*

*\$3,080,650 Awarded*

Over half of Michigan's population lives in the southern region of the state, where only 3 percent of the state's public access lands are found. Michigan Hunting Access Program (HAP) managers have strategically targeted private lands in the Lower Peninsula and near urban centers to increase public access for the state's southern inhabitants who lack access to the outdoors.

## RECREATION BENEFITS

*Youth and Apprentice Hunting*

*Deer and Turkey Hunting*

*Small Game Hunting*

*Sharptail Hunting*

Through VPA-HIP grant funding of \$900,000 in 2010, \$1.2 million in 2014, and \$950,000 in 2015, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources has been able to expand its reach to the northern Lower Peninsula. In its first year with VPA-HIP funding, the program enrolled 2,749 new acres from 23 landowners and re-enrolled another 7,273 acres from 45 landowners. During the 2016 to 2017 hunting season, VPA-HIP funding supported a total of 22,437 acres across 126 properties, with state requirements for a minimum of 40 acres in each parcel.

As Monique Ferris, a program coordinator, told the Detroit Free Press, "Hunters taking trips to HAP lands contribute \$1.7 million annually to Michigan's economy. The majority of HAP hunter trips are within 25 miles of the hunter's home, making HAP lands extremely accessible."





# MISSOURI

Missouri Outdoor Recreational Access Program (MRAP) has made some of the state's most unique landscapes available for exploration. One example is the 20-acre Sandy Creek Natural Tunnel site. Located on private land but accessible to the public through a VPA-HIP-funded lease, the natural tunnel is 8 to 10 feet wide and 30 feet tall, straddling Sandy Creek, where more than 20 species of fish can be found.

In 2014, the Missouri Department of Conservation was awarded a \$1.1-million VPA-HIP grant to develop and implement MRAP.

A successful pilot program in seven eastern Missouri counties enrolled 1,579 acres, and a total of 6,311 acres across 27 properties statewide were enrolled in the program during the 2016 to 2017 hunting season. Approximately 8,400 additional acres were enrolled in MRAP as of October 2017. Today, MRAP supports recreation on 57 properties across the state.

## MISSOURI OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL ACCESS PROGRAM

*8,400 Acres*

*\$1,098,000 Awarded*

## RECREATION BENEFITS

*Archery Hunting*

*Fishing*

*Small Game Hunting*

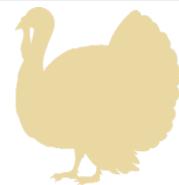
*Youth Hunting and Fishing*

*Wildlife Watching*





# MONTANA



## OPEN FIELDS PROGRAM

*60,000 Acres*

*\$1,198,060 Awarded*

Montana's Open Fields program increases the public benefit of the federal Conservation Reserve Program by offering landowners an additional \$5.00 per acre in exchange for walk-in public access for bird hunting. This arrangement boosts landowner demand for CRP while increasing game bird hunting opportunities for sportsmen and women.

## RECREATION BENEFITS

*Game Bird Hunting*

*Waterfowl Hunting*

*Wildlife Watching*

In 2012, Montana's Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks launched an Open Fields for Game Bird Hunters program to allow public access for hunting game birds and waterfowl on lands already enrolled in CRP. Since its launch, nearly 165 private landowners have enrolled more than 60,000 acres of land in the Open Fields program.

Montana's program has been supported by two VPA-HIP grants. In 2014, the first grant of \$490,000 was used to fund the department's effort to work with private landowners in opening access to as much as 48,000 acres of property for recreational activities.

This grant was matched with state funds from the Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program to grow Open Fields. In 2015, a subsequent \$700,000 grant was used specifically for the purchase of conservation leases on private lands enrolled in the Sage-Grouse Initiative Program to increase access to public viewing of sage grouse and other sagebrush-associated wildlife.





# NEBRASKA

In partnership with the National Wild Turkey Federation, Nebraska’s Game and Parks Commission used VPA-HIP funds to launch the Canyons Access Initiative. This program provides access to 12,500 acres of prime turkey, mule deer, white-tailed deer, and elk habitat in the Loess Canyons of the southwest corner of the state. The initiative has also been tremendously popular with landowners, whose demand for the program is outpacing available funding.

An estimated 97 percent of land in Nebraska is privately held. To greatly increase public access, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission uses its VPA-HIP grants to develop and expand the Open Fields and Waters (OFW) Program, which has created public access to private lands for hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation.

A key component to Nebraska’s OFW Program is targeting access to landlocked public lands and waters. This approach has greatly increased outdoor recreation opportunities in the state and has resulted in a 62.5-percent increase in days spent hunting on OFW lands over the life of the program.

## OPEN FIELDS & WATERS PROGRAM

*316,000 Acres*

*\$1,350,000 Awarded*

## RECREATION BENEFITS

*Upland Game Hunting*

*Big and Small Game Hunting*

*Turkey Hunting*

*Waterfowl Hunting*

*Fishing*

*Boating*

*Wildlife Viewing*

*Birdwatching*





# OKLAHOMA



## LAND ACCESS PROGRAM

*50,000 Acres*

*\$2,264,800 Awarded*

## RECREATION BENEFITS

*Turkey Hunting*

*Antelope Hunting*

*Dove, Teal, and Resident Geese Hunting*

*Fishing Access*

*Boating Access*

*Wildlife Viewing*

*Bird Watching*

A key objective of the Oklahoma Land Access Program is increasing “close-to-metro” hunting opportunities. To that end, OLAP has added more than 4,500 acres in the north-central region of the state, including OLAP’s closest-to-metro pheasant hunting and two miles of stream access on the Salt Fork of the Arkansas River for angling, recreational boating, and waterfowl hunting.

In 2015, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation received a \$2.3-million VPA-HIP grant to develop and implement the state’s first public access program on private lands for hunters and anglers.

While increasing hunting and fishing opportunities, OLAP also manages two walk-in wildlife viewing areas on 320 acres of land bordering the Red River near the Oklahoma-Texas border. Here, bird watchers can observe southwestern species such as the great-crested flycatcher, golden-fronted woodpecker, and Bullock’s oriole.





Over the span of 25 years, the Oregon Access & Habitat (A&H) program has enrolled more than 8 million acres and improved wildlife habitat on 1.6 million acres of private land. Oregon's well-established program received VPA-HIP funding of \$787,000 in 2010 and \$1.6 million in 2015 and used these grants to enroll 260,000 acres for hunting access. This included an expansion into Central Oregon, where participation has historically lagged.

The \$1.6-million grant awarded in 2015 was directed toward improving habitat for recreational activities, including hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and nature photography. Additionally, Oregon used VPA-HIP funding to improve wildlife habitat on more than 40,000 acres of private land by removing junipers, controlling noxious weeds, developing springs, restoring riparian areas, and seeding wildfire-damaged habitats.

# OREGON

## OREGON ACCESS & HABITAT PROGRAM

*260,000 Acres*

*\$2,346,895 Awarded*

## RECREATION BENEFITS

*Upland Game Hunting*

*Big and Small Game Hunting*

*Turkey Hunting*

*Waterfowl Hunting*

*Wildlife Viewing*

*Nature Photography*





# PENNSYLVANIA



## HUNTER ACCESS PROGRAM

*2.18 Million Acres*

*\$7,500,000 Awarded*

## RECREATION BENEFITS

*Hunting*

*Trapping*

*Fishing*

*Wildlife Viewing*

*Bird Watching*

VPA-HIP funding has revitalized the Pennsylvania Game Commission's Hunter Access Program by providing access to more than one-third of the land open to public hunting across the state. A key component of the program's success is its popularity with landowners.

To encourage landowner participation, Pennsylvania offers benefits such as free habitat technical assistance and management, as well as patrolling and enforcement of game law by Pennsylvania Game Wardens to reduce trespassing.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission has operated the Hunter Access Program for 80 years. The widespread involvement of volunteers allows the state to focus VPA-HIP dollars on bolstering the benefits awarded to cooperating landowners, rather than directly subsidizing access.

For instance, the Commission used VPA-HIP grants of \$1.5 million in 2010 and \$6 million in 2014 to provide landowners with nesting boxes for bats, owls, bluebirds, kestrels, and wood ducks or free tree and shrub seedlings to enhance wildlife food sources.





More than 95 percent of Texas is privately owned, putting public land out of reach for urban residents. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department focuses its VPA-HIP dollars toward providing public access within 100 miles of urban areas, making the outdoors more attainable for 80 percent of the state's population. Texas saw more than 10,000 sportsmen and women visit VPA grounds during the fall 2016 and spring 2017 hunting seasons.

Texas Parks and Wildlife used VPA-HIP grants of \$800,000 and \$2.2 million to expand public access to private lands for hunting and outdoor recreation. Additionally, funds were used to hire biologists to work directly with landowners and field staff in order to identify lands for leasing and access and support habitat maintenance or improvement. During the 2016 to 2017 hunting season, the VPA-HIP program enrolled 33,795 acres across 100 properties.

VPA-HIP grant funding has also been used to fund the Parks and Wildlife Department's River Access and Conservation Areas program, which provides resources for periodic river cleanups and improvements to encourage the sustainable use of areas leased for public access. Nearly a dozen River Access and Conservation Areas leased to the Parks and Wildlife Department have opened new sections river to the public.

# TEXAS

## PRIVATE LANDS HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAM

*33,795 Acres*

*\$3,058,268 Awarded*

## RECREATION BENEFITS

*Hunting*

*Fishing*

*Hiking*

*Boating*

*Wildlife Viewing*





# WISCONSIN



## VOLUNTARY PUBLIC ACCESS AND HABITAT INCENTIVE PROGRAM

*34,183 Acres*

*\$2,314,040 Awarded*

## RECREATION BENEFITS

*Big Game Hunting*

*Small Game Hunting*

*Turkey Hunting*

*Waterfowl Hunting*

*Fishing*

*Trapping*

*Wildlife Viewing*

In Wisconsin, wildlife-dependent recreation drives more than \$3.7 billion in annual spending. According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, every dollar spent investing in VPA lands generates an additional \$4.25 of economic activity. This return on investment underscores the power of access when it comes to the outdoor recreation economy.

Wisconsin's DNR has received VPA-HIP grants of \$936,000 in 2010 and \$1.4 million in 2015 to develop and expand recreational access to private lands and support wildlife habitat enhancement. The program now includes more than 175 landowners and 34,000 acres available for public access—more than doubling the initial size of the program.

VPA-HIP has played a particularly important role in Wisconsin. For decades, the state funded a Public Hunting Grounds (PHG) program to provide access for hunting and fishing on private lands. Unfortunately, as the incentives became less competitive, the program enrolled only 14,000 acres by 2010, and the trend was only getting worse.

VPA-HIP funding not only secured PHG lands, but also allowed the DNR to focus on expanding public access for wildlife-dependent recreation in the southern part of the state, where most of its population is concentrated.





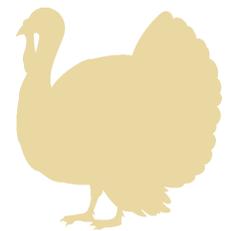
# VPA-HIP PROJECTS INTO THE FUTURE

**In 2018, Congress stepped up its investment in VPA-HIP**, providing \$50 million via the 2018 Farm Bill, an increase from the \$40 million provided in the 2014 bill.

**In September 2019, the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) announced VPA-HIP funding opportunities to state and tribal governments.** States and tribes were eligible to receive up to \$3 million in federal dollars to be leveraged with partner funds for expansion of recreational access on private lands.

**In March 2020, the NRCS announced nearly \$49 million in VPA-HIP awards resulting from the September solicitation.**

Here is a brief outline of these awards, which will be implemented over the course of the next three years:





### **Arizona**

\$1.18 million to expand financial incentives to landowners.

### **Arkansas**

\$2.1 million to expand waterfowl hunting access on rice fields neighboring nearby National Wildlife Refuges and state Wildlife Management Areas.

### **Colorado**

\$1.2 million to expand the state's Walk-In Access program for small and big game hunters.

### **Georgia**

\$1.9 million will fund the lease of farm and forestland to expand opportunities for dove hunting in the state's Wildlife Management Area Public Access Program.

### **Idaho**

\$900,000 will fund the enrollment of additional hunting and fishing acres into the state's Access Yes! Program and jumpstart the creation of a Teton Valley Wildlife Viewing Project.

### **Illinois**

\$2 million will expand the Illinois Recreational Access Program with a focus on metropolitan areas and the enrollment of wetland easements.

### **Indiana**

\$750,000 will fund the strategic enrollment of acreage into the state's Access Program Providing Land Enhancements (APPLE) initiative.

### **Iowa**

\$1.5 million in funding to expand the Iowa Habitat and Access Program (IHAP).

### **Kansas**

\$2.1 million will fund the expansion of incentive payments and lease options made available to landowners seeking to enter existing public access programs.

### **Kentucky**

\$850,000 will fund agency efforts to create an access program with a focus on enrolling dove field and wetland easement acreage.





### **Michigan**

\$1.6 million to expand the state's Hunting Access Program (HAP) to provide sharptail grouse and deer hunting opportunities.

### **Minnesota**

\$2.5 million to expand incentives for landowners to enroll in Minnesota's Walk-In Access program.

### **Missouri**

\$2.23 million will expand the Missouri Outdoor Recreation Access Program (MRAP) to improve landowner coordination in recreational access and habitat improvement.

### **Montana**

\$1.89 million to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to provide more walk-in hunting access on previously inaccessible acres with high-quality game bird habitats.

### **Nebraska**

\$3 million to expand walk-in access to acreage within Nebraska's Open Fields and Waters (OFW) program. The funds will also support habitat improvement projects to support healthy populations of fish and game.

### **Ohio**

\$1.83 million will support the newly created Ohio Public Access for Wildlife (OPAW) program, opening acres to hunting, trapping, and wildlife viewing across the state.

### **Oklahoma**

\$3 million will support expansion of the Oklahoma Land Access Program (OLAP) near metropolitan areas and establishment of an online database of private acres open for access.

### **Oregon**

\$2.86 million will support expansion of existing public access programs and facilitate the reenrollment of access on expiring VPA-HIP acreage.

### **Pennsylvania**

\$668,361 will support fishing access via Pennsylvania's Public Fishing Access and Conservation Easement Program.





**Santa Clara Pueblo Tribe**

\$1 million will support access restoration and improved fishing opportunities in the Santa Clara Canyon on the Rio Grande.

**South Carolina**

\$469,476 in funds will facilitate the growth of the state’s Public Waterfowl Lottery Hunts Program, to support more duck blinds on private land.

**South Dakota**

\$2.18 million will support expanded hunting opportunities as well as new access to state fisheries from across private lands.

**Texas**

\$1.83 million will support the expansion of existing public hunting programs, increasing both available acreage and days. The funds will also increase maintenance capacity across state-leased fishing access sites.

**Virginia**

\$2.99 million will facilitate growth of Virginia’s Public Access Lands for Sportsmen program, and provide additional financial support to enrolled landowners seeking to improve wildlife habitat.

**Washington**

\$2.74 million will build upon existing state recreational access programs and support habitat restoration on enrolled lands.

**Wisconsin**

\$1.91 million will support wetland and grassland restoration in southern counties and support financial incentives for landowners to enroll acreage in the state’s Turkey Hunting Access Program.

**Wyoming**

\$1.54 million will support enrollment and habitat restoration on acreage in the state’s Yes Access, Lands, and Habitat programs.





# CONCLUSION

The Farm Bill's Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentives Program has been extraordinarily successful in providing recreators of all shapes and sizes with access to prime habitat, wildlife, and fisheries. As of 2020, the program has facilitated recreational access on 6.4 million acres across 34 states and one tribal reservation. In fact, in 2016 alone, recreation on VPA-HIP lands generated an estimated \$57.3 million in economic activity, directly and indirectly supporting hundreds of jobs and generating millions in state and local tax revenue. The program's return on investment varies state to state but averages \$5.20 in economic activity for every federal dollar invested.

**From Arizona to Wisconsin, this grant program is working to conserve the places we love. VPA-HIP is the perfect public-private partnership that leverages federal investment with state and partner funds to advance locally driven and supported conservation and access needs.**

As Congress continues to consider tools to advance outdoor recreation opportunities, the TRCP and our partners will be among the program's loudest champions on Capitol Hill to ensure that Americans can enjoy these cherished lands and waters for years to come.



