



# NCEL

National Caucus of  
Environmental Legislators

December 13, 2022

Dear Senate Majority Leader Schumer, House Speaker Pelosi, Senate Minority Leader McConnell, House Majority Leader Hoyer, Senator Heinrich, Senator Blunt, Representative Dingell, and colleagues,

We, 163 state legislators from 36 states, call on Congress to ensure dedicated funding for states, territories and tribes to protect and recover endangered and threatened species at the sub-national level. Proactive conservation measures are needed to address the nation's ongoing wildlife crisis.

The United States contains many unique species that are found nowhere else in the world. Some of these species are flourishing, yet many are in dire need of assistance. State fish and wildlife agencies have identified more than [12,000 species](#) that may become extinct unless there is human intervention. These species' risk of extinction is projected to increase as the threats of climate change and habitat loss are exacerbated.

States have developed State Wildlife Action Plans at the request of Congress, outlining necessary conservation actions to assess the health of their fish and wildlife populations. However, the funding that states receive through the federal State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program is insufficient to manage the over 12,000 at risk species. The current funding, [\\$56 million](#) in 2022, is only a small fraction of what is needed to save these species. In contrast, state fish and wildlife biologists estimate that funding 75% of necessary conservation efforts would be [\\$1.3 billion](#) annually for states and [\\$97.5 million](#) for tribes. It is vital that funding match the magnitude of the challenge at hand.

We have a proven track record of recovering imperiled species back from the brink of extinction. America's game species are a part of our cultural heritage. We once came close to losing part of our heritage as game species, such as white tail deer, elk, and wood ducks, were once at risk of disappearing. These species are now fortunately recovered, largely due to the support of hunters and anglers. While the contributions of hunters and anglers remain crucial for conserving species, we face a new conservation crisis today as climate change, habitat loss, emerging diseases, and invasive species threaten numerous wildlife and plant species at scales once unimaginable which calls for more diverse and dedicated funding streams.

This crisis is a direct threat to the country's economic well-being. More than 140 million Americans engage with the outdoor economy to make it the [4th largest sector](#) for annual consumer spending, generating [\\$862 billion](#) annually through hunting, fishing, birding, hiking, tourism, and other outdoor activities. Furthermore, the outdoor economy's inflation adjusted GDP growth was [18.9%](#) compared to [5.9%](#) of the United States' overall GDP growth in 2021. It supports [4.5 million](#) direct jobs and generates [\\$124.5 billion](#) in federal, state, and local tax revenue. However, the potential extinction of thousands of species would erode these benefits and inflict devastating impacts on hunting, fishing, tourism, and many additional aspects of the outdoor economy.

Lastly, protecting species today means spending less in the future. Conserving species at the state and tribal levels could reduce the need for protection under the stricter federal Endangered Species Act.

Protecting America's wildlife is good for business, good for taxpayers, and good for the country. We support and urge Congress to establish dedicated funding for proactive conservation efforts at the state, territory, and tribal levels.

Thank you for your consideration of the request!

Sincerely,

North Carolina Representative Pricey Harrison  
(NC-61)

Alaska Representative Andrew Josephson  
(AK-17)

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(AZ-2)

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(AZ-27)

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(GA-111)

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Massachusetts Representative Tram Nguyen  
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Wisconsin Senator Melissa Agard  
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