U.S. House Natural Resources Committee Passes Landmark Wildlife Conservation Bill Out of Committee

The Texas Alliance for America’s Fish and Wildlife applauds the House Committee on Natural Resources for a bipartisan vote last week on the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act. The bill passed out of committee following a 26-6 vote and will now move to the House Floor. H.R.3742 would be one of the most significant pieces of wildlife funding legislation passed in over 80 years -- it would help reverse the decline in our nation’s fish and wildlife and protect our natural heritage for future generations.

Nationwide, natural resource biologists have identified more than 12,000 Species of Greatest Conservation Need, including over 1,300 here in Texas, that are under increasing threats such as habitat loss, invasive species, and disease. The majority of these are at-risk fish and wildlife like the Texas horned lizard (affectionately known as a “horny toad”), Pronghorn, Guadalupe bass, numerous shore birds and grassland birds, and the American bumblebee. The Recovering America’s Wildlife Act is a common-sense solution to this critical, growing problem.

The bill will dedicate $1.3 billion annually to state fish and wildlife agencies to implement their science-based wildlife action plans and an additional $97.5 million for tribal lands conservation. The funds would come from existing revenues, without any new taxes. It is estimated that Texas would receive over $50 million per year. This dedicated funding would be aimed at stabilizing at-risk fish and wildlife populations using a voluntary, non-regulatory approach.

Janice Bezanson of Texas Conservation Alliance says the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act “would bring much-needed funding to Texas for projects designed to keep species off the endangered species list – projects such as habitat restoration and wildlife reintroductions. It’s more cost-effective to protect declining species sooner, rather than later.”

Particularly interesting for a private lands state like Texas, the funding could expand cost-sharing programs for private landowners to conduct voluntary wildlife and habitat stewardship activities on their property. It will also be used to fund educational programs and introduce more Texans to outdoor recreation opportunities.

John Shepperd of the Texas Foundation for Conservation notes that passage of H.R.3742 would reap numerous other economic and quality of life benefits to Texans, “Healthy fish and wildlife populations
are the backbone of Texas’ fast-growing outdoor recreation economy, which includes hunting, angling, wildlife watching, kayaking, nature tourism, and hiking. Research has shown that time spent outdoors has many health benefits, and children do better in school when they have a connection to nature. Functioning ecosystems provide food, fiber, timber, pollination of crops, and such basic human needs as clean air and water."

More than a third of the Members of the U.S. House of Representatives have cosponsored the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act (162), including ten Texans from both sides of the aisle.

Concluded Bezanson, “The Recovering America’s Wildlife Act is good for wildlife, good for business, good for Texans.”

The Texas Alliance for America’s Fish and Wildlife is a coalition of 163 organizations and businesses which actively supports this important legislation. Every citizen can help, by urging their Member of Congress to co-sponsor H.R.3742.

Download PHOTOS of species and landscapes that will benefit from Recovering America’s Wildlife Act at our gallery page.

You can learn more about the Texas Alliance for America’s Fish and Wildlife and the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act by visiting www.txwildlifealliance.org.