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### **Bipartisan Bill to Help Declining Wildlife Introduced on Earth Day in Congress**

*Bill Would Create New Jobs, Provide Outdoor Recreation Opportunities in Texas*

With as many as one-third of America's fish and wildlife species on the brink of becoming threatened or endangered, a bill introduced April 22 on Earth Day in Congress seeks to reverse this trend, while creating thousands of new jobs and investing in the outdoor recreation economy. The bipartisan proposal has nationwide support from conservationists, hunters, anglers, businesspeople, and the outdoor recreation industry.

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act would provide \$1.4 billion to state and tribal wildlife conservation initiatives to support at-risk wildlife populations and their habitats. The funding would come from existing revenues and would not require any new taxes.

Texas would receive more than \$50 million per year for projects to conserve vulnerable wildlife like the much-loved Texas horned lizard, our state fish the Guadalupe bass, and many songbirds and coastal birds. This funding will also help recover species that are already endangered, such as sea turtles and the Whooping crane. The additional resources are urgently needed to aid fish and wildlife populations under increasing pressure from habitat loss, invasive species, emerging diseases, and extreme weather events in Texas and throughout the country.

Texas is home to more than 1,300 of the 12,000 species identified nationwide as *Species of Greatest Conservation Need*. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change the course of history for declining wildlife and help prevent them from becoming endangered. If a species is in such bad shape that it qualifies for the "emergency room" measures of the Endangered Species Act, it is much more difficult—and more expensive—to recover the species. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. That is the principle behind this bill.

Janice Bezanson of Texas Conservation Alliance notes that "the Recovering America's Wildlife Act would bring much-needed funding to Texas for projects designed to keep species off the endangered species list, without raising or creating new taxes. This legislation is good for wildlife, good for business, good for Texans."

The Texas outdoor recreation economy generates 327,000 jobs, \$14.4 billion in salaries and wages, and \$3.5 billion in state and local tax revenue (Source: Outdoor Industry Association). This growing part of our economy relies on healthy fish and wildlife populations. This bill will put Americans to work

restoring our nation's wildlife heritage and would create an estimated 33,000 new jobs through tree planting, grassland restoration, habitat work, outdoor recreation projects, and wildlife management.

"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," said John Shepperd, a spokesman for the [Texas Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife](#). "Research has proven children do better in school when they have a connection to nature. Functioning ecosystems provide food, timber, pollination essential for agriculture, flood mitigation services, and clean water, which benefits all of us."

State wildlife agencies will distribute the money through a competitive grant program. Conservation groups, land trusts, researchers, zoos, nature centers and others will be able to apply for habitat restoration, land protection, research, establishing conservation easements, reintroducing wildlife, and other initiatives listed in each state's Wildlife Action Plan.

Particularly beneficial for a private lands state like Texas, the funding could expand cost-sharing programs and technical guidance 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—important now more than ever. Time in nature is proven to have numerous benefits to human health and mental wellbeing.

This bill is a reminder that when we work together, we can still accomplish great things. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act gained a lot of bipartisan support in the last congressional session; 185 Members of Congress cosponsored the House bill, including 14 Texans.

The Texas Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife is a coalition of more than 165 organizations and businesses formed to support this important legislation. Every citizen can help, by urging their Member of Congress to co-sponsor the Recovering America's Wildlife Act.

[Download photos online](#) of some of the species and landscapes that will benefit from Recovering America's Wildlife Act.

Other resources:

[Economic Benefits of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act in Texas.](#)

[National Recovering America's Wildlife Act video.](#)

You can learn more about the Recovering America's Wildlife Act and the Texas Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife by visiting [www.txwildlifealliance.org](http://www.txwildlifealliance.org).