



RECOVERING AMERICA'S WILDLIFE ACT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act would provide \$1.3 billion per year to states, and \$97.5 million to tribal nations, to support at-risk fish and wildlife conservation. Below are answers to FAQ's:

How much money would Texas receive as a result of this legislation and how would it be spent?

Texas stands to receive more than \$50 million per year from this funding. Combined with the required match of 25%, there would be roughly over \$60 million to conserve Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Projects could include research, habitat management, habitat protection, land acquisition, education, and outdoor recreation specific to SGCN species listed in a state's Wildlife Action Plan.

What funding mechanism would be used to support SGCN conservation?

A percentage of existing federal revenues would be directed to the Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program, established in 1937. These funds would be sent to the various states for projects listed in the state's Wildlife Action Plan. There would be no new taxes.

What are State Wildlife Action Plans and how often are they revised?

Each state has completed a Wildlife Action Plan, which identifies at-risk fish and wildlife populations and strategies to conserve them. Plans are revised every 10 years. Texas last revised its plan in 2015.

How would the federal government determine each state's share of the total funds?

Funds would be apportioned annually to the state fish and wildlife agencies based on a formula of 50% proportion of land and water in a state, 25% proportion of human population, and 25% proportion of threatened and endangered vertebrates and invertebrates in the state.

How would Texas come up with the match?

As with existing Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration programs, applicants for the funds would be required to provide at least 25% in non-federal matching funds. The source of match could come from cash or in-kind services, previous grants, or other applicant-generated funds. Applicants who could apply for funding include state agencies, local governments, and private entities such as conservation organizations, land trusts, universities, nature centers, and private landowners. A preliminary analysis by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) determined that although there will need to be some work at the state level to generate the match, there are existing sources which could be counted as match. With private partnerships, as much as \$10 million may already be eligible. The funds could be used to begin conservation projects in the first year.



How can this money be used?

Can it be used to buy land? Yes, as long as it would benefit Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Can it be used to “replace” existing funding to free that up for other things? This is new funding and is not intended as a replacement for existing funding of SGCN species.

Can this money go to state parks? Yes, as long as the scope of the project is for SGCN conservation. The funds cannot be used to maintain or operate the park itself.

Can it be used for law enforcement? Yes, but only on a project or program specifically relating to SGCN species. It cannot be used for game wardens on “general patrol” for wildlife violations, but it could be used to pay for game wardens to do law enforcement operations related to SGCN.

Can it be used for education? Yes, so long as the education is centered on SGCN species.

Can it be used to acquire conservation easements? Yes.

Can the money be used for recreation purposes? The Recovering America's Wildlife Act would allow for up to 15% of a state's appropriation to be used to enhance wildlife-based recreation and conservation education, but there must be a tie-in to SGCN conservation.

Can it be spent on game species? This money can be used for either game or nongame species as long as they are SGCN species listed in the state's Wildlife Action Plan. **Can the money be used for deer?** No. The two deer species found in Texas are not categorized as SGCN species.

Will this new funding source take away from existing conservation funding sources?

Both the Blue Ribbon Panel and the authors of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act were very clear that this was to be additive, or complementary, and not compete with existing conservation programs. For example, the language of the bill specifically disallows using hunting or fishing license revenue to pay for this program, so existing funding sources will continue as before.

Will this take funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)?

No. Land and Water Conservation Fund monies come from energy production revenues and funding from the Recovering America's Wildlife Act would come from the general treasury, so the two programs are not competing.



Will the Texas funding all go to TPWD, or will some go to other agencies? Who else can apply for funds?

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will be stewards of the funding. They will then make funding available via grants to other state agencies, city governments, organizations, land trusts, universities, and others for research and conservation efforts that benefit Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Funding would also be available to private landowners through cost-share programs for voluntary private lands conservation that benefits SGCNs. All projects will require approval by both TPWD and the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS).

How will projects be reviewed/approved?

The process will be the same as for current federal funding. Projects are proposed to the state wildlife agency, via an advertised open Request for Proposal process, or through other appropriate channels. TPWD will evaluate the projects using established criteria based on SGCN conservation priorities, then submit them to USFWS for review.

What other funding mechanisms were considered?

The Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources considered more than twenty potential funding options, including taxes on pet or bird food, excise taxes on outdoor equipment, and voluntary corporate donations. It was ultimately decided that using existing revenues is the most viable option based on factors such as sustainability of funding, and the likelihood of passing legislation. According to a Public Opinions Strategies survey cited in the Blue Ribbon Panel final report, when advocates are given a range of options to fund State Wildlife Action Plans, they are much more supportive of using existing revenues than tax or fee increases.

Why not pick a tax on outdoor related equipment?

First, a new tax would be politically unpalatable, with the outdoor recreation industry and other interests likely to oppose. Second, a comprehensive economic analysis revealed the list of taxable items would not generate enough money to address the need.



What about the Texas Sporting Goods Sales Tax?

The Texas Sporting Goods Sales Tax (SGST) is a state, not a federal, program. The SGST is not a separate tax, but an estimate of sales tax collected by Texas on sports equipment. The SGST was formulated to fund Texas State Parks, but the Texas Legislature has historically appropriated only a fraction of SGST for parks. The portion of SGST provided by the state legislature is intended primarily to pay for the huge backlog of maintenance and repairs needed in the parks. It would not be used to help state parks manage at-risk wildlife.

What do energy companies think of this legislation?

In the last legislative session, energy company representatives actively supported the bill. We are not aware of any push back from the energy sector. Oil and gas representatives also served on the Blue Ribbon Panel whose recommendations informed the Recovering America's Wildlife Act language. Oil and gas is supportive of the legislation because it is viewed as preventative maintenance - a way to keep at-risk species from turning into regulatory hurdles by becoming endangered species. When fish and wildlife populations are healthy, both economic and ecological concerns are addressed.

How likely is this legislation to pass?

State and national leaders believe this is the country's best chance to make sweeping improvements for conservation. The legislation has generated broad national enthusiasm because investing in preventative conservation is a common sense solution to protect wildlife and ecosystem services which support our economy, agriculture, health, and quality of life. Furthermore, it will help avoid regulatory road blocks to development and industry, and the high costs of recovery when species become endangered. We will save far more than what we invest because we know that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure".

In the last legislative session 185 bipartisan Members of Congress, including 14 Texans, co-sponsored the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. Acquiring cosponsors in the current legislative session will depend on Members of Congress from Texas hearing from Texans who care about fish and wildlife conservation.



For more information:
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Questions?
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