



PROMOTING PARTNERSHIPS FOR CONSERVATION THE LANDOWNER INCENTIVE PROGRAM

“Most of our Nation’s civic work is being done without the aid of the Federal Government. But we believe the Federal Government can work to enhance opportunities for Americans to serve their neighbors and their Nation.”

President George W. Bush
January 2002



Karner Blue Butterfly: Great Lakes States

The Bush Administration is committed to partnerships as an important tool to advance conservation. Over the past three years, the Department of the Interior has provided over \$1.3 billion [2002-2004] in grants to States and private landowners through various programs to preserve open spaces, restore habitat for wildlife, and protect endangered species. These partnerships between States and landowners on the one hand, and the Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management on the other, have resulted in substantial conservation benefits on the ground. Together, we have restored millions of acres of habitat; removed invasive exotic species and replanted native grasses and shrubs; improved riparian habitat along thousands of miles of streams; conserved limited water resources to benefit fish and other species; and developed conservation plans for endangered species and their habitat.

Building on this history of successful partnerships, in 2002, the Department launched two new conservation

initiatives: the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) and its component Private Stewardship Grants Program (referred to collectively as the Species Protection Partnership Program). Both programs offer positive incentives for private landowners to protect rare species and restore habitat, while engaging in traditional land management practices like farming or ranching. The Landowner Incentive Program is based on the highly successful Texas Landowner Incentive Program, initiated by then-Governor Bush in 1997, to involve landowners in voluntary efforts to benefit rare species in several Texas counties. Nationally, the Landowner Incentive Program offers a positive, non-regulatory opportunity for landowners and Tribes to protect at-risk and endangered species most of which depend upon private land for habitat; it is an entirely voluntary, incentive-based program, one that can benefit both the species and landowners. The goal is to implement projects that will help avoid the listing of at-risk species and assist in the recovery of the listed species. Landowners benefit by the continued use of their lands.

The Federal Landowner Incentive Program promises to achieve significant conservation successes on a national scale. In its first year, in 2003, the Fish and Wildlife Service provided \$34.8 million to States and private landowners to develop comprehensive programs to conserve and enhance habitat; provide thousands of acres of wetland habitat for breeding water birds and listed species; remove invasive plants; and provide training and technical assistance to private landowners. The State of Oregon, for example, received \$1.7 million to coordinate its new landowner incentive program and restore important tributary riparian habitat benefiting endangered salmon. The State of Colorado also received \$1.7 million to establish a program to provide technical and financial assistance to landowners and enter into agreements to protect 3000 acres of habitat for the Gunnison sage grouse and protect three miles of riparian habitat critical to the recovery of the Preble’s meadow jumping mouse.



On February 25, 2004, the Department will be announcing the 2004 grant awards for the Landowner Incentive Program. Forty States and one Territory will be receiving over \$25.8 million to establish or supplement their landowner incentive programs that provide technical or financial assistance to private landowners (Tier I capacity building grants) and to implement projects that protect or restore habitat for listed and at-risk species (Tier II grants).

In many States, the grants will continue important conservation activities initiated in 2003. Colorado, for example, will continue to provide technical and financial assistance, focusing efforts on the Gunnison sage grouse, Preble's meadow jumping mouse, and other species that depend upon short-, mid-, and tall-grass prairie habitat. Oregon will expand efforts to restore in-stream habitat for salmon, removing culverts, leasing water, and providing fish passage. California will manage thousands of acres of riparian, grassland, and wetland habitat to meet the needs of special status species. A few States will receive Tier I capacity building grants, enabling them to continue building their programs to become eligible for project funding in the future.

Together, the Landowner Incentive Program and Private Stewardship grants reflect a new way of doing business — working in partnership with landowners instead of against them. And the response from landowners is overwhelmingly positive. The President's 2005 budget includes a \$20 million increase for these programs.



Sage grouse: Great Plains

Ochs Ranch Easement, Colorado:

Haven to an at-risk population of Gunnison sage grouse, Colorado's Ochs Ranch is the site of an innovative partnership between the Federal government, the State of Colorado, and local conservation organizations.

Called "sage chickens" by many locals, these bantam-sized birds are commonly noted for their flamboyant mating practices with males puffing up big air sacks on their necks and emitting loud booming calls while strutting for potential mates.

The goal of this collaborative partnership is to protect through permanent easement approximately 2,766 acres of important Gunnison sage grouse habitat along

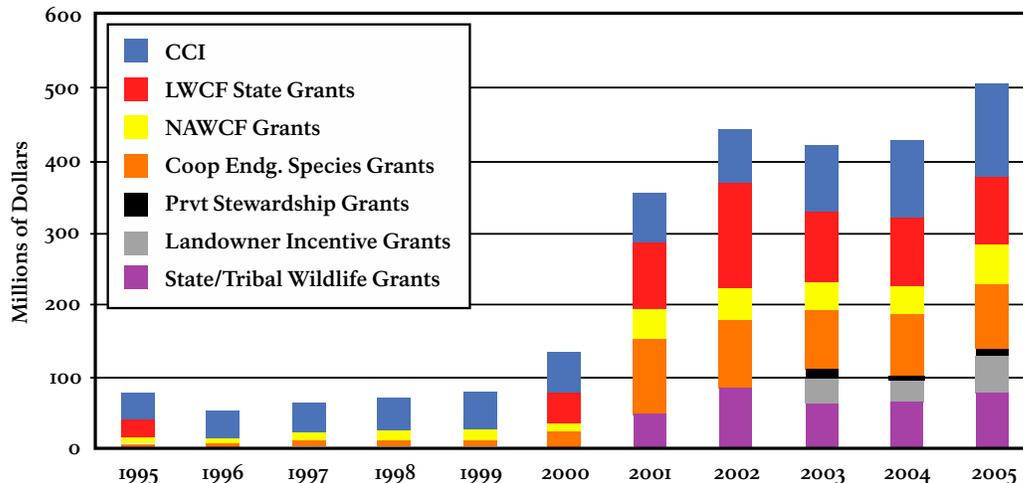
the Ohio Creek in Gunnison County, Colorado. The partnership purchased the Ochs Ranch and allowed eight neighboring ranch families to work the land in exchange for easements on their ranches or for cash, leading to the protection of approximately 4,500 acres. This project serves as a model demonstrating the compatibility of habitat conservation and productive agricultural activities.

The bird has been listed as a candidate for Federal threatened or endangered status.



Cooperative Conservation

CCI and Conservation Grant Programs



COOPERATIVE CONSERVATION

Secretary Norton has advanced a 4 C's vision of Conservation through Communication, Consultation, and Cooperation to implement the President's new environmentalism. Cooperative conservation provides opportunities to work with landowners and others through creative partnerships and to benefit America's national parks, public lands, and wildlife.

To achieve this vision, the President's 2005 budget includes:

- \$507 million for cooperative conservation programs in the Department of the Interior, an increase of over \$371 million or 270 percent above 2000:
 - \$90 million for cooperative endangered species grants, an increase of \$67 million or 290 percent above 2000;
 - \$80 million for State and Tribal fish and wildlife programs focused on species-at-risk;
 - \$60 million for the Landowner Incentive Program and Private Stewardship Grants Program, two new programs initiated by this Administration;
 - \$54 million for challenge cost share programs, an increase of \$38.9 million or 260 percent above 2000;
 - \$50 million for the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, an increase of \$19.7 million or 66 percent above 2000; and
 - \$1 million for Take Pride in America, a public lands volunteerism program.
- In 2003, the challenge cost share program funded 256 projects with more than 700 partners in 40 States and Puerto Rico. The ratio of matching non-Federal funds to Federal funds was nearly two-to-one, with the Federal portion at \$12.9 million and total funding at \$36 million.
- The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program has in the past three years:
 - Restored 703,723 acres prairie, native grassland, and other uplands;
 - Restored 151,097 acres of wetlands;
 - Treated 140,070 acres for invasive species;
 - Entered into 8,957 landowners agreements;
 - Rehabilitated 2,361 miles of riparian and in-stream habitat; and
 - Removed 156 fish barriers.



Willamette Valley, Oregon

Flanked by the Coast Range and the Cascades, the Willamette Valley takes its name from the river that flows through it. Historic cities and towns, settled more than a hundred years ago by emigrants from all over the world, are found throughout the region, but the area is perhaps best known for its diverse flora and fauna. A collaborative effort among a number of conservation partners, this innovative project is restoring riparian, prairie, and oak woodland habitat and habitat conditions for a total of 21 separate populations of seven Federally-listed species including Fender's blue butterfly, Oregon chub, Willamette Valley daisy, Bradshaw's lomatium, the streaked horned lark, a candidate species, and five Federal species of concern including northwestern pond turtle, yellow-breasted chat, and white-tip aster. In addition, the project is providing additional benefits for eight at-risk species including western meadowlark (the State bird) and the western gray squirrel and will enhance existing at-risk species benefits at five important sites in the Willamette Valley ecoregion. This

cooperative conservation project is also providing a foundation of restored habitat and restoration capacity on which to base coordinated species recovery efforts on targeted private lands throughout the Willamette Valley.



“Conservation, and especially the conservation of imperiled species, must be a partnership between the American people and their government. By making these grants, we are empowering citizens to restore habitat on their land and take other steps to protect and recover endangered, threatened, and at-risk species.”

Interior Secretary Gale A. Norton
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