



BUDGET The United States Department of the Interior **JUSTIFICATIONS**

and Performance Information
Fiscal Year 2026

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

NOTICE: These budget
justifications are prepared
for the Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
Appropriations
Subcommittees.



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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fiscal Year 2026 President's Budget

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Executive Summary

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is the oldest Federal conservation agency, with roots extending back to 1871. As the primary agency in the Federal government dedicated to the management of fish and wildlife for the American public, the Service plays a crucial role in fostering a healthy environment and expanding access to outdoor activities. By offering opportunities for Americans to engage with the outdoors and cherish our shared natural heritage, the Service is committed to ensuring that these valuable resources are enjoyed responsibly.

Overall, the Service budget request articulates a vision of sustainability and innovation while responding directly to the national priorities outlined by the Administration. By investing in conservation and expanding outdoor recreational access, the Service is poised to enhance the well-being of ecosystems and communities alike, ensuring a prosperous future for America's natural resources. In 2026, as America prepares to celebrate its 250th anniversary, the Service is primed to enhance connections between the Country and our wildlife heritage. Through its innovative programs and dedicated workforce, the agency promotes outdoor activities and the natural resources that enrich our lives.



Kids ice fishing day at Genoa National Fish Hatchery.

Credit: USFWS

American sportsmen and sportswomen will be central to this celebration. By championing hunting and fishing, expanding recreational opportunities, and enhancing trail systems, the Service underlines its commitment to responsible stewardship of Federal lands and waters. These efforts are designed to stimulate tourism, create jobs, and generate revenue, ensuring that present and future generations can enjoy and benefit from our natural and cultural treasures. Recent proposals include 42 new hunting opportunities across more than 87,000 acres of

Service public lands. These proposals demonstrate the Service's commitment to wildlife conservation activities and emphasize access for sportsmen and sportswomen.

The Service's budget request is crafted to increase operational efficiency, reduce costs, and align closely with the Administration's priorities. The emphasis is placed not only on advancing conservation initiatives but also on fostering an economy that harnesses the potential of our natural resources. This budget supports key Presidential goals, such as expanding outdoor access, effectively managing our lands and waters, and a strategic workforce that maximizes taxpayer dollars.

In its approach to foster healthy, balanced ecosystems, the Service is actively working to eliminate invasive species, facilitate the delisting of endangered species that have recovered, and apply sound scientific methods to safeguard both species and their habitats.

The Service's approach emphasizes its role as a good neighbor, aligning closely with the Department of the Interior's strategic goals, objectives, and priorities. With a proven track record of collaboration and coordination, the Service is dedicated to achieving better outcomes for States, partners, and the American public, as well as honoring trust and treaty responsibilities to Tribes and Native peoples. Furthermore, the Service works hand-in-hand with partners to address shared challenges, such as fire management and law enforcement. By providing reliable data and valuable scientific insights, the Service equips its partners with the tools needed for effective planning and decision-making, solidifying its role as a reliable source of science and information for communities across the Country.

Mission

The mission of the Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. Its purpose statement is to protect the natural world so current and future generations can live with, live from, and find awe in lands, waters, and wildlife. The Service envisions a future where people and nature thrive in an interconnected way and where every community feels part of and committed to the natural world around us.

Organizational History

The history of the Service begins with fish, wildlife, and the visionary leadership of Teddy Roosevelt. The journey began with the establishment of the U.S. Fish Commission on February 9, 1871, under the Department of Commerce, which was subsequently rebranded as the Bureau of Fisheries on July 1, 1903. In parallel, the Office of Economic Ornithology and Mammalogy was created within the Department of Agriculture in 1885, later renamed the Bureau of Biological Survey in 1905. The Biological Survey's mission expanded to encompass the protection of all non-fish wildlife in the U.S., and in 1900, it pioneered Federal wildlife law enforcement with the enactment of the Lacey Act.

In a landmark moment for conservation, President Theodore Roosevelt signed an executive order in 1903 that designated the Pelican Island Bird Reservation as the first unit of what would evolve into the modern National Wildlife Refuge System. In 1939, the Bureau of Biological Survey and the Bureau of Fisheries were merged and transitioned to the Department of the Interior. This merger marked the formal inception of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Over time the Service received additional authorities, such as the Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, which required that funding be available to manage recreation activities on refuges.

For over 150 years, amidst reorganizations and name changes, the mission of the Service has remained steadfast, essential, and focused on conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the lasting benefit of the American public. As the Service continues its evolution, it operates under a framework of Federal laws and executive orders that establish its primary responsibilities to safeguard migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, certain marine mammals, and inter-jurisdictional fisheries.

The Service also works to promote access to hunting and fishing. Hunting and fishing are a healthy, traditional recreational use of renewable natural resources deeply rooted in America's heritage, and can be an important wildlife management tool.

Service Programs

The Service, working with others, is responsible for a wide range of Federal programs relating to migratory birds, endangered species, interjurisdictional fish and marine mammals, and inland sport fisheries. The agency protects and manages habitat necessary to sustain fish and wildlife such as migratory birds, resident species and endangered species, including via the National Wildlife Refuge System and implementation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Service operates the National Fish Hatchery System, assists States and Tribes in the enhancement and restoration of fish and wildlife, conducts law enforcement to safeguard the Country's natural resources, implements domestic laws and international treaties related to wildlife trafficking and legal sustainable trade, and fosters a stewardship ethic in the American public through high quality outdoor experiences. These responsibilities and more are the foundation of the Service's mission, purpose and vision to benefit the American people.

Budget Overview

Budget Authority (\$000)	2024 Actual	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request
Current Authority without Supplementals	1,722,665	1,677,745	1,139,279
<i>Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act</i>			<i>91,000</i>
Current Authority with Supplementals	1,722,665	1,677,745	1,230,279

¹ Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

The Service plays a vital role in the conservation, protection, and enhancement of the Nation's fish, wildlife, plant resources and their habitats. As we enter a new era under President Trump's leadership, this budget request reflects a proactive approach to energy development on Federal lands and waters while ensuring the conservation of our natural environment. The 2026 budget presents new opportunities for a future driven by innovation and dedicated to optimizing sustainable use of our natural resources.

Topline Funding

This budget requests topline funding of \$1.1 billion for the FWS in 2026. This ambitious request underscores a strong national commitment to outdoor recreation, conservation, and the economic benefits stemming from these initiatives. Additionally, the budget optimizes the workforce and dedicates resources to frontline conservation efforts, which is crucial for achieving the Administration's objectives.

The budget proposes to merge the National Marine Fisheries Service's Office of Protected Resources and associated ESA and Marine Mammal Protection Act implementation responsibilities into FWS, which

will reduce redundancies and streamline permitting activities.

Budget Highlights

The Service budget request aligns directly with Secretarial priorities to enhance access to public lands and foster outdoor recreational activities. The American connection with public lands is strengthened through expanded access. Each year, millions visit national wildlife refuges, contributing significantly to local economies and driving the booming outdoor recreation industry. Outdoor activities such as hunting and fishing accounted for over \$394 billion in economic expenditures in communities across the U.S. in 2022, highlighting the importance of these recreational pursuits.

The budget request emphasizes the commitment to responsible stewardship of natural resources while offering greater access for outdoor activities, such as fishing and hunting, across numerous wildlife refuges and wetland management districts. With 401 wildlife refuges and 36 wetland management districts currently permitting hunting, and 343 wildlife refuges and 35 wetland management districts allowing fishing, expanding these opportunities remains a top priority.

Key activities in the 2026 budget, outlined below and elaborated in later sections, emphasize the Service's commitment:

- **Effective and Efficient Implementation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA):** This remains a cornerstone in facilitating species recovery and permitting the responsible use of American energy resources.
- **Stewardship of the National Wildlife Refuge System:** The Service is committed to expanding access for American sportsmen and sportswomen, enhancing their connection to nature.
- **Infrastructure Investments:** Ongoing maintenance and construction projects in the National Fish Hatchery System and National Wildlife Refuge System will ensure these vital facilities meet the needs of wildlife and the public.
- **Law Enforcement:** The Service prioritizes safety and security for the public and staff on Service lands, including the investigation and enforcement of wildlife laws to protect our natural heritage.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborating with States, Tribes, private landowners, and other stakeholders, the Service supports the preservation of working landscapes and fosters a community approach to conservation.

Effective and Efficient Implementation of the ESA

The Ecological Services (ES) Program contributes to the Secretary's priority goal of Enjoying Our Natural Resources While Ensuring They Remain Sound and Sustainable. This program emphasizes collaboration with States, partners, and stakeholders to protect and enhance habitats and species, directly supporting the Administration's emphasis on better outcomes for the Nation.

For FY 2026, the Service's budget request for the ES Program reflects key adjustments: a topline funding request of \$7.4 million for the Listing activity, alongside \$95.1 million for Planning and Consultation. The Service expects to complete approximately 5 listing packages and over 790 formal Section 7

consultations, demonstrating a continued focus on streamlining processes and enhancing project planning to minimize environmental impacts.

The Conservation and Restoration subactivity budget request is \$28.6 million. This subactivity aims to foster collaborative species conservation partnerships, vital for implementing the Administration's conservation priorities efficiently.

A crucial component of the Service's efforts is the Recovery subactivity, which sees a topline funding request of \$120.5 million. This increase in funding aims to intensify efforts in developing recovery plans and five-year status reviews for listed species. The goal is to facilitate delisting and downlisting actions and enhance partnerships to mitigate threats to species, which is essential for meeting both conservation and administrative objectives.

The 2026 Budget will consolidate the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act work of both the Service's Ecological Services program and NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service Office of Protected Resources into one program under FWS. Currently, the agencies are working to facilitate this transfer, which will reduce redundancies, increase scale to improve recovery, and streamline permitting activities on behalf of the American public.

In summary, the Service's budget requests for the Ecological Services Program reflect a strategic alignment with Secretarial and Administration priorities, focusing on implementing the ESA effectively while ensuring sound resource management. These changes emphasize collaborative conservation, streamline regulatory processes, and ultimately strive to protect the Nation's rich biodiversity for future generations.

Stewardship of the National Wildlife Refuge System

The Service proudly operates the National Wildlife Refuge System, which is among the world's most significant land and water systems dedicated to the conservation of fish and wildlife. The proposed budget of \$412.1 million reflects a strong commitment to enhancing these vital ecosystems, which have provided essential habitat and unparalleled outdoor experiences for all Americans since 1903.

With a focus on expanding opportunities for American sportsmen and sportswomen, the budget emphasizes the importance of outdoor recreation and the role of sportsmen and sportswomen as the backbone of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, which is admired globally. Most wildlife refuges are open to hunting, reinforcing the Service's dedication to conservation while promoting responsible recreational access. In a significant initiative, Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum announced the introduction of 42 new hunting opportunities across more than 87,000 acres within the Refuge System.

As we move forward, the continued investment in the National Wildlife Refuge System will help balance conservation with recreational access, ensuring that our natural resources are preserved for future generations. With a dedicated focus on both wildlife conservation and enhancing public access, the FWS is paving the way for a vibrant and sustainable future in outdoor recreation and wildlife protection.

Investing in Infrastructure

The 2026 budget underscores a strong commitment to enhancing the infrastructure of the Service by requesting \$13.7 million for construction programs. Maintenance challenges facing the Service are multifaceted, including damage from natural disasters like floods and hurricanes, as well as the development and upkeep of infrastructure in environmentally sensitive areas. The road systems within the National Wildlife Refuge System often consist of dirt roads rather than paved highways, complicating maintenance strategies and long-term cost forecasts. Additionally, maintaining infrastructure on remote island refuges, such as Midway Atoll, poses unique logistical difficulties.

The budget reflects the Service's ongoing efforts to prioritize safety and accessibility while addressing maintenance needs across various asset categories, including buildings, roads, bridges, and water management structures. The infusion of funding for infrastructure not only enhances visitor experiences but also supports local economies and job creation through construction and maintenance projects. This aligns closely with Secretarial and Administration priorities, promoting conservation and economic development.

In summary, the Service's commitment to infrastructure investment represents a vital step toward improving the functionality and safety of national wildlife refuges, ensuring that they continue to serve as cherished spaces for wildlife and the public for generations to come.

Wildlife Law Enforcement

The Service remains committed to protecting wildlife and ensuring public safety through robust law enforcement initiatives. The budget empowers Federal Wildlife Officers to secure the safety of visitors and staff. Collaborating with local and Federal agencies, these officers address vital issues such as drug trafficking and border security. FWS law enforcement is crucial for combating wildlife trafficking and protecting iconic wildlife that are safeguarded under domestic and international laws.

In a notable success, agents investigating the largest whooping crane poaching incident in modern history resolved the case after a seven-month investigation, leading to charges against four suspects under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. In addition to enforcement efforts, the FWS has enhanced access for exotic pet owners by digitizing two key permit applications, facilitating easier travel while ensuring compliance with wildlife regulations.

Through these investments and proactive measures, the FWS strengthens its capacity to protect wildlife and enforce the law, reinforcing the United States' commitment to global conservation and creating a sustainable future for both wildlife and communities.

Service Partnerships

The Service recognizes that effective conservation of resources across vast landscapes is inherently reliant on strong partnerships with States, Tribes, and various stakeholders. Central to this collaborative effort is the Service's engagement with landowners, aimed at preserving working landscapes that benefit plants, wildlife, and traditional land uses such as agriculture, ranching, and timber production.

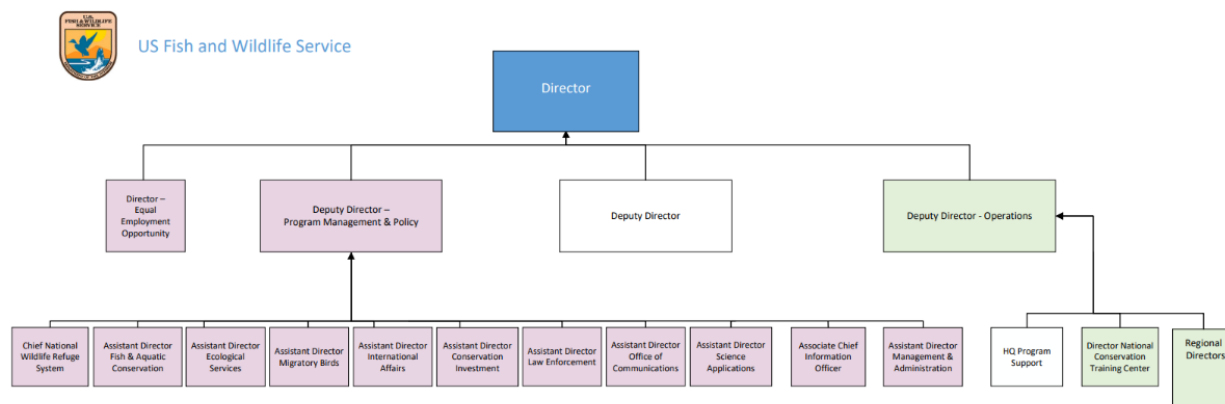
The budget request funds the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, which supports initiatives that enhance collaboration with landowners to implement conservation practices on private lands. By fostering partnerships, the Service not only promotes fish, wildlife and sustainable land use, but also strengthens the local economy by ensuring that conservation goals coexist with working landscapes.

These efforts align closely with Secretarial and Administration priorities emphasizing collaborative approaches to conservation. By investing in partnerships, the Service enhances its capacity to make impactful strides in habitat restoration and conservation, ensuring that essential ecosystems are conserved for future generations. This collaborative framework empowers landowners to be active participants in conservation, creating a shared sense of responsibility and stewardship for natural resources.

Moreover, the focus on partnerships underscores the Service's acknowledgment that successful conservation cannot occur in isolation. Engaging with local communities and stakeholders enables the Service to leverage additional resources and expertise, ultimately resulting in more effective and sustainable conservation outcomes.

In summary, the Service's commitment to reinforcing partnerships through targeted funding exemplifies a forward-thinking approach to conservation that meshes ecological integrity with economic vitality, ensuring a balance in managing the Nation's rich natural heritage.

Organizational Chart



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Ecological Services

Ecological Services

Activity: Ecological Services

Dollars in Thousands (\$000)

Activity/ Subactivity	2024 Actual	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request
Listing	22,000	22,000	7,375
Planning and Consultation	118,191	125,191	95,126
Conservation and Restoration	37,571	37,821	28,586
Recovery	110,522	105,522	120,522
Total	288,284	290,534	251,609

^{1/} Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Overview

The Ecological Services (ES) Program contributes to the Secretary's priority goal of Enjoying Our Natural Resources While Ensuring They Remain Sound and Sustainable. The work of the program is instrumental in reaching the objective of making sure species and natural resources are protected. It also contributes to the goal of Collaboration and Coordination Results in Better Outcomes for the Nation, States, and the People, particularly by working collaboratively with States, partners, and governments and providing reliable, valuable science information to our partners.

ES Field Offices provide leadership in environmental response and restoration and assist communities in balancing economic growth and conservation through their work to conduct timely environmental reviews of Federal permits and projects, conserve and recover species listed under the *Endangered Species Act* (ESA), and permit take of listed species.

The 2026 Budget will consolidate the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act work of both the Service's Ecological Services program and NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service Office of Protected Resources into one program under FWS. Currently, the agencies are working to facilitate this transfer, which will reduce redundancies, increase scale to improve recovery, and streamline permitting activities on behalf of the American public.

Program Elements

To achieve our mission and the Administration's priorities, the Ecological Services Program is comprised of the following subactivities:

- Listing – Uses the best scientific and commercial information available to identify plant and animal species currently or likely to become in danger of extinction.
- Planning and Consultation – Provides integrated advanced project planning, environmental review, and permitting assistance to resolve environmental concerns in support of economic growth, energy and timber production, and landscape planning.
- Conservation and Restoration – Delivers species conservation in partnership with States, Tribes, local governments, and private landowners to prevent the need to list a species when possible; protects and restores habitat important to Federal trust species; and provides databases and mapping products that are essential tools for conservation and restoration of species and habitats by landowners, other Federal and State agencies, and the public.
- Recovery – Works with communities and stakeholders to recover endangered and threatened species, with the goal to minimize or reduce threats to a listed species and improve their status so the species no longer needs Federal protection.

Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders

The Service has the statutory mandate and trust responsibility to fulfill its mission derived from various statutes and authorities. The Ecological Services Program plays a significant role in implementing the roles and responsibilities assigned to the Service under the following authorities (not an exhaustive list):

- *Coastal Barrier Resources Act*, as amended by the Coastal Barrier Improvement Act of 1990, (16 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.). Under this authority, the Service, acting for the Secretary of Interior, maintains the maps of the Coastal Barrier Resources System (CBRS), including proposing changes to Congress to correct mapping errors and add qualifying areas to the CBRS.
- *Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act*, (42 U.S.C. 9601, et seq.). Under this authority, the Service works with other natural resource trustees to quantify injury to the environment caused by the release of hazardous substances, ensure polluters pay the cost of restoring the environment, and implement projects to restore the environment to the condition it would have been in if the release had not occurred.
- *Declaring a National Energy Emergency* (Executive Order 14156). This order directs agencies to streamline environmental regulations that may burden the facilitation of the Country's energy supply and also requires the Secretary of the Interior to promptly review applications submitted for an exemption from the obligations imposed by Section 7 of the ESA.
- *Emergency Wetlands Resources Act*, (16 U.S.C. 3901). Under this authority, the Service's National Wetlands Inventory maintains the wetlands data layer on behalf of the Federal Government and provides the national report card on wetland status and trends at 10-year intervals that are used in policy direction across the government.
- *Endangered Species Act (ESA)*, (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544). The purpose of the ESA is to protect and recover imperiled species and the ecosystems upon which they depend.
- *Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act)*, (33 U.S.C. 1251-1387). Section 404 (m) authorizes the Service to comment on permit applications submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the discharge of dredged or fill material into navigable waters of the United

States. Section 208(i) authorizes the Service to provide technical assistance to States in developing management practices as part of its water pollution control programs and continue with the National Wetlands Inventory.

- *Federal Power Act*, (161 S.C. 791a et seq.). This Act provides that each license for hydropower projects issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission includes fish ways prescribed by the Secretary of the Interior or Commerce, and that conditions for the protection, mitigation and enhancement of fish and wildlife are based on recommendations of the Service and other agencies.
- *Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA)*, (16 U.S.C. 661-666(e)). One of the early conservation laws, this Act directs the Service to investigate and report on proposed Federal actions that affect any stream or other body of water and provide recommendations to minimize impacts on fish and wildlife resources.
- *Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production* (Executive Order 14225). This order aims to boost domestic timber production while also emphasizing forest health, wildfire mitigation, and economic benefits. It includes directives such as revising guidance to enhance timber production using tools like Good Neighbor Authority and Stewardship Contracting; streamlining forest management project consultation under the ESA; developing a programmatic consultation for Whitebark Pine; and exploring categorical exclusions under NEPA.
- *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)*, (P.L. 117-58). Among other provisions, this legislation provides funding for infrastructure projects ranging from roads, bridges, and major projects; passenger and freight rail and transit systems; airports; ports and waterways; power; etc. The Service received some funding under IIJA for ecosystem restoration, fish passage, and invasive species. Certain sections of the law allow for direct fund transfer to the Service to support environmental reviews.
- *Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)*, (16 U.S.C. 1361-1407). Under this authority, the Service manages the conservation of certain marine mammals, such as sea otter, walrus, polar bear, dugong, and manatee, consistent with the provisions of the Act.
- *The Migratory Bird Treaty Act* (16 U.S.C. 703-712) establishes Federal responsibility for protecting and managing migratory birds and implements bilateral migratory bird conventions with Canada, Mexico, Japan, and Russia.
- *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)*, (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.). The Service implements this Act to examine the impacts of its actions on the human environment, using public participation in the planning and implementation of all actions. The Service also reviews Federal agency environmental plans and documents when the Service has jurisdiction by law or special expertise.
- *Oil Pollution Act (OPA)*, (P.L. 101-380). Under this authority, the Service consults with others on the development of response plans that promote the protection, rescue, and rehabilitation of, and minimization of damage to, fish and wildlife resources and habitat harmed or jeopardized by an oil spill.
- *Unleashing America's Offshore Critical Minerals and Resources* (Executive Order 14285). This order directs agencies to expedite seabed mineral development by streamlining licensing for exploration and recovery, mapping priority resource areas, and identifying commercial opportunities both domestically and abroad.

Subactivity: Listing*Dollars in Thousands (\$000)*

Subactivity	2024 Actual	2025 Notional¹	2026 Request
Listing Total	22,000	22,000	7,375

^{1/} Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Description

The purpose of the ESA is to conserve endangered and threatened species and the ecosystems on which they depend. Before a plant or animal species can receive the protection provided by the ESA, it must first be added to the Federal lists of threatened and endangered wildlife and plants. Placing a species on the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife (50 CFR 17.11) or the List of Endangered and Threatened Plants (50 CFR 17.12), and designating critical habitat as required under the ESA, focuses resources and efforts by the Service and its partners on recovering the species.

The Service works closely with States and Tribes and other stakeholders during the listing process, which often includes the development of a species status assessment (SSA) that reflects the best available scientific and commercial information regarding life history, biology, and the factors affecting the viability of a species. The Service maintains a national listing workplan to encourage States, Tribes, industry, and the public to undertake conservation activities now for species on the workplan so that the species does not need the protection of the ESA.¹

¹ <https://www.fws.gov/endangered/what-we-do/listing-workplan.html>

Subactivity: Planning and Consultation*Dollars in Thousands (\$000)*

Subactivity	2024 Actual	2025 Notional¹	2026 Request
Planning and Consultation Total	118,191	125,191	95,126

1\ Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Description

Within Planning and Consultation, the Service works with stakeholders at the planning stages of Federally-authorized, licensed, or funded development projects—from highway expansions to energy development to mining and timber production—to ensure that development has minimal impact on wildlife and habitats, and development can proceed. The Service provides expertise in the ESA, Clean Water Act, NEPA, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, Federal Power Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. The Service saves the taxpayer money by engaging in development processes early, streamlining the permitting process, reducing paperwork, and ensuring minimized environmental and community impacts of development projects.

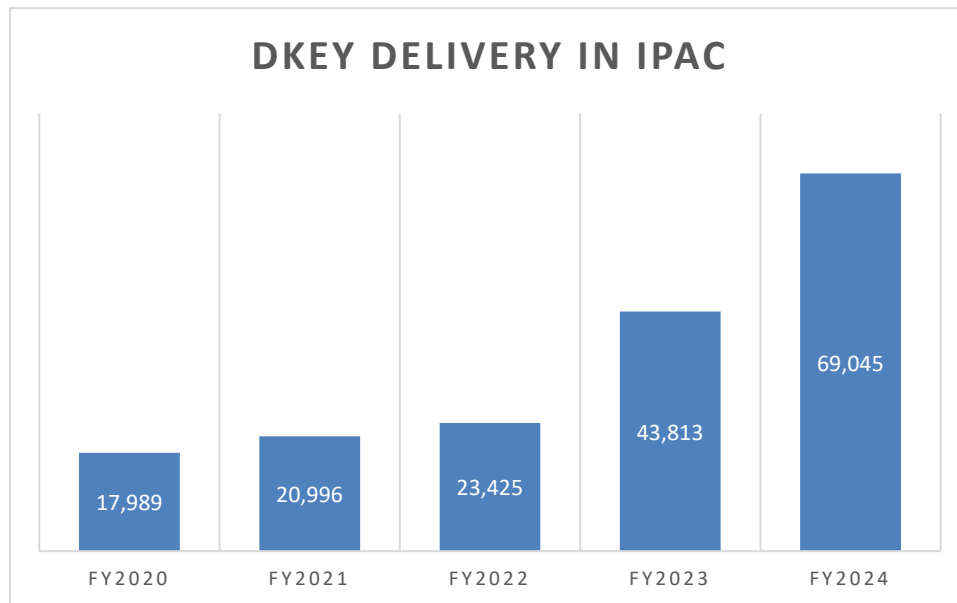
Environmental review functions constitute a large and growing workload for the Service in support of the Administration's prioritization of energy, timber, and mineral production. Service biologists provide species-oriented technical assistance to other Federal agencies, States, Tribes, contractors, and private industry to assist with project siting and minimization and mitigation of impacts, thereby facilitating timely environmental reviews, improving conservation outcomes, and implementing compliance and effectiveness monitoring.

Using the incidental take permit authority under section 10 of the ESA, the Service works in partnership with non-Federal entities to develop incidental take permit applications that include Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), and issue incidental take permits. The Service's incidental take permit program is a flexible process for addressing situations in which a non-Federal property owner's otherwise lawful activities might result in incidental take of listed wildlife. Under section 10, the Service facilitates private and other non-Federal land development through species and conservation planning that strikes a regulatory balance for development while mitigating impacts to species.

Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) Improving Section 7 Consultations

One of the ways the Service is using IPaC to increase the efficiency of section 7 consultations is through the use of determination keys (DKeys), logically structured sets of questions that assist users in complying with programmatic section 7 consultations. DKeys can cover both species and critical habitat and can even deliver concurrence letters for qualifying projects.

Three Pilot DKeys launched in 2016; today there are 33 DKeys available and more in development. DKeys provide consistent and transparent outcomes, and significantly reduce the time to complete consultation for qualifying projects. In the last 5 years, IPaC users generated over 175,000 documents using DKeys and the majority required no further action on the part of the Service or IPaC user. DKeys typically result in a final document in less than 15 minutes and all administrative logging for Service project tracking is completed automatically. This is a huge time savings and win-win for the Service, consulting Federal Agencies, and project proponents.



Subactivity: Conservation and Restoration*Dollars in Thousands (\$000)*

Subactivity	2024 Actual	2025 Notional¹	2026 Request
Conservation and Restoration Total	37,571	37,821	28,586

1) Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Description

Through the Conservation and Restoration program, the Service supports collaborative species conservation efforts, works to protect and restore habitats important to Federal trust species, and provides mapping products and databases that are essential tools for conservation and restoration of species and habitats by other Federal and State agencies, Tribes, stakeholders, and the public. Activities under this program further the Administration's priorities in multiple areas and provide technical experts to improve habitat connectivity and protect wildlife and habitat; provide tools and technologies to assist other Federal agencies, industry, States, Tribes and other partners in their decision-making to advance conservation of listed and at-risk species while balancing the needs of the communities; align conservation with the needs of landowners through different working models for partnerships; reduce the potential of harm to the environment through planning and preparedness for oil and hazardous materials spill response; encourage mitigation/adaptation efforts for riverine or coastal projects; and provide information and tools to advance community planning in order to prevent repeated damage from natural disasters.

Candidate Conservation

Candidate Conservation focuses on two primary activities: species assessment and facilitating voluntary conservation efforts for species considered for listing under the ESA. Candidate Conservation uses all available information to conduct a scientifically rigorous assessment process that identifies species that warrant listing and publish a Candidate Notice of Review identifying those species. The Service uses a species status assessment framework (SSA), which is an analytical approach to deliver foundational science for informing all ESA decisions.

The ESA not only inspires diverse partnerships to prevent species extinctions and recover listed species, but it also supports proactive collaborations with States, private landowners, industry, and conservation to conserve species before they require Federal protections. The Service's Candidate Conservation Program works with landowners to develop conservation agreements for actions to save at risk species and prevent the need to list the species in the future. Proactive conservation for at-risk species requires close engagement with communities and landowners because a majority of at-risk species are found on private lands. It takes private citizens, State and local government, and businesses to care and invest in saving these species. The Service's partnerships with these entities and support through technical assistance is critical to ensure these partners have the best available science and knowledge of the threats facing the species. Conservation Benefit Agreements (formerly Candidate Conservation Agreements or Safe Harbor Agreements) contribute to the conservation of at-risk species while providing participating landowners regulatory assurances via permits that authorize harm to species that is incidental to carrying out

beneficial management actions. Currently, the Service has 185 agreements with over 18.5 million acres and 2,854 stream miles enrolled. These agreements have been successful for preventing listing for many species such as: the eastern population of the gopher tortoise, Arctic grayling, Virgin River spinedace, San Fernando Valley spineflower, and Chapin Mesa milkvetch, and have the potential to do even more.

Marine Mammals

Marine mammals are a resource of great cultural, aesthetic, economic, and recreational significance. Enacted in 1972, the MMPA is one of the most important statutory authorities for conserving and managing marine mammals. This statute provides protection by prohibiting (with certain exceptions): (1) take of marine mammals in U.S. waters and by U.S. citizens on the high seas, and (2) the import, export, and sale of marine mammals and marine mammal parts and products in the U.S. Under the MMPA, marine mammal populations, and the health and stability of marine ecosystems upon which they depend, are required to be maintained at, or returned to, healthy levels. Through regular monitoring, the Service can learn more about the health and dynamics of marine mammal populations and the effects of global changes on marine and coastal environments.

National Wetlands Inventory

The Service is the principal Federal agency mandated with providing the public with the location and extent of wetland and deepwater habitats as well as wetland changes over time. The Service fulfills this mandate through production and stewardship of the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) Geospatial Dataset and mapper as well as the decadal National Wetlands Status and Trends Reports to Congress. Wetlands data is critical to supporting the Administration's priorities related to energy, minerals, and water security. NWI data streamlines planning and regulatory decision-making and lowers construction and maintenance costs for infrastructure development, including energy and mineral exploration, extraction, and transportation. NWI data also enables better strategic decision-making for safeguarding clean freshwater and protecting communities from floods and droughts thereby fostering healthy communities and strong economies. Finally, the data support conservation and recreation activities like hunting, fishing, and boating, as well commercial fisheries. The NWI website is one of the most visited in the Service. In 2024, the Wetlands Mapper was viewed over half a million times and NWI's web map services received nearly 45 million requests for information.

The Service partners extensively with Federal, State, and Tribal agencies as well as the private sector to produce and maintain the NWI data. For example, the FWS National Wetlands Inventory coordinates closely with the USGS National Geospatial Program, including sharing data and methods, to minimize duplication and maximize efficiency.

In FY 2026, the Service will continue to manage and distribute wetlands data for the public and cost-share with others to produce and update priority wetlands data, in part using the information provided in the sixth report to Congress on the National Wetlands Status and Trends report. The Service will also continue to support Federal, tribal, and State agencies, and other stakeholders in their use of the recent status and trends report data to meet their operational needs as well as plan for the next national report.

Coastal Barrier Resources Act

In the early 1980s, Congress recognized that certain Federal actions and programs have historically subsidized and encouraged development on coastal barriers, resulting in the expenditure of millions of tax dollars each year; threats to human life, health, and property; and the loss of natural resources. To remove the Federal incentive to develop these areas, CBRA and subsequent authorizations designated relatively undeveloped coastal barriers along the Atlantic, Gulf of America, Great Lakes, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico coasts as part of the John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System (CBRS), which made these areas ineligible for most new Federal expenditures and financial assistance. CBRA does not prohibit or restrict development conducted with non-Federal funds.

Environmental Response and Restoration

The Service's Environmental Response and Restoration Program protects and restores fish and wildlife populations, and habitats that have been injured by the release of oil or hazardous substances. To be effective in responding to emergency spills, the Service must maintain a cadre of trained responders. Funding for this preparedness is critical to maintain the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's required training certificates or medical monitoring, to supply responders and Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) practitioners with the equipment and supplies to prevent exposure and/or minimize injuries to spilled oil or environmental contaminants, and conduct associated pre-assessment investigations.

The Environmental Response and Restoration program oversees the NRDAR activities nationwide, covering nearly 90 percent of the 408 active Departmental cases. To achieve restoration, the Service uses its technical expertise to convert damage assessment recoveries to on-the-ground restoration. The Service uses appropriated funding to support ongoing cases and conduct early investigations that could potentially lead to restoration projects worth millions of dollars. The program has a commitment to the public to restore injured natural resources and support local communities, rural economies, States, and Tribes.

Subactivity: Recovery*Dollars in Thousands (\$000)*

Subactivity	2024 Actual	2025 Notional¹	2026 Request
Recovery Total	110,522	105,522	120,522

¹ Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Description

Preventing extinction and achieving recovery of listed species has always been, and will continue to be, one of the Service's highest priorities. It serves the Secretary's objective of conserving our land and water by managing its fish and wildlife. The goal of recovery is to minimize or remove the threats that led to the species' listing and to work toward reclassifying the species from endangered to threatened, and toward delisting the species altogether. This process requires technical leadership, monitoring, planning, and management together with close coordination with Service partners. The Service plays a vital role in guiding the recovery planning process, and in facilitating, supporting, and monitoring the implementation of recovery actions by the Service and others.

Recovery plans, non-regulatory roadmaps for the work that needs to be done to achieve downlisting or delisting a species under the ESA, are required under the ESA. Recovery plans are developed collaboratively with States, Tribes, and interested partners. Recovery plans may address multiple species, identify specific recovery tasks, establish downlisting and delisting criteria, and provide timetables and cost estimates. There is a public review process for each draft recovery plan. The Service advances the Secretary's priorities of creating a conservation stewardship legacy second only to Teddy Roosevelt and striking a regulatory balance by enhancing and increasing partnerships with agencies, industry, private landowners, and organizations to implement highest priority recovery actions identified in recovery plans for endangered and threatened species under the trusteeship of the Service in the United States and its Territories, such that known threats to the species may be reduced or eliminated.

The ESA requires the Service to review the status of listed species once every five years to determine whether the current listing status, as endangered or threatened, is still appropriate. This assessment includes a notice to the public requesting information on the species under review. These documents are important tools to gather new information, assess threats to the species, and validate whether protection under the ESA is still necessary.

Justification of Program Changes

Recovery Activities— The Service is focused on the ESA mandates that are inherently Federal, including development of recovery plans, five-year status reviews, and has prioritized rulemakings to downlist or delist species whose status has improved. In FY 2025, the Service anticipates proposing or finalizing 8 delisting and downlisting actions. At the requested FY 2026 funding level, the Service expects to propose or finalize 15 delisting or downlisting rules. This increase will also expand the Service’s capacity to work with other DOI bureaus, Federal agencies, States, and other stakeholders, to ensure recovery plans have objective and measurable recovery criteria and address five-year status review recommendations on the national workplan. The Service has established a process to revise recovery plans to ensure that each plan has quantitative criteria for what constitutes a recovered species, and is implementing a streamlined approach to recovery planning to facilitate timely development of plans for all newly listed species.

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Habitat Conservation

Habitat Conservation

Activity: Habitat Conservation

Dollars in Thousands (\$000)

Activity	2024 Actual	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request
Habitat Conservation Total	72,000	72,000	68,836

^{1/} Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the “Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025” (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Elements

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) and Coastal programs work through voluntary, nonregulatory, and collaborative partnerships to promote, identify, and support local solutions for conservation and restoration in an ecologically connected network of lands and waters. These programs deliver cooperative, on-the-ground conservation in targeted geographic areas and biologically sensitive landscapes. Field-based employees have an intimate knowledge of the natural resource concerns and conservation challenges in local communities. They support project management and design, public relations and partnerships, and implementation of projects. They cooperate with local partners to provide resources, and assistance with grant development, compliance, and implementation of local conservation strategies on private lands, Tribal lands, and in some cases, public lands such as National Wildlife Refuges, National Parks, and National Forests. Taken together, these programs empower landowners to conserve America’s natural resources and traditional land use for future generations while also supporting healthy fish and wildlife populations, addressing conservation challenges such as habitat fragmentation and invasive species, and reducing the threats from natural disasters to communities and infrastructure.

The PFW Program and Coastal Program provide Federal and private match dollars to local, often rural, communities where they create on-the-ground habitat projects that also support new jobs and provide income to local contractors and other industries. The impacts of the PFW Program and Coastal Program funds are multiplied in two dimensions. First, the program's expertise and funding can leverage additional resources from other partners that support projects. Second, spending creates jobs, generates tax revenues, and stimulates local economic activity as wages and purchases flow through local communities.

These programs also effectively leverage other Federal resources. For example, a large part of PFW work involves coordinating with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and supporting the delivery of Farm Bill Conservation Programs. The Coastal Program leverages the financial and technical assistance of other Federal programs, including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, the National Estuary Program, and the Defense Department’s Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program. Both programs deliver assistance and leverage resources that assist landowners, communities, States, and other conservation partners to implement on-the-ground habitat conservation projects for healthy and resilient landscapes and communities.

Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders

The PFW and Coastal Program are implemented under the following authorities:

- *Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act* (16 U.S.C. 661) directs the Service to investigate and report on proposed Federal actions that affect any stream or other body of water, and to provide recommendations to minimize impacts on fish and wildlife resources.
- *Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956* (16 U.S.C. 742 a-j) establishes a comprehensive national fish and wildlife policy and authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to take steps required for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fisheries resources and wildlife resources through research, acquisition of refuge lands, development of existing facilities, and other means.
- *Partners for Fish and Wildlife Act* (16 U.S.C. §§3771-3774) provides for the restoration, enhancement, and management of fish and wildlife habitats on private land through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, a program that works with private landowners to conduct cost-effective habitat projects for the benefit of fish and wildlife resources in the United States.
- *Title LIII of the Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025* (P.L. 118-159) pertains to Wildlife Innovation and Longevity Driver reauthorization Act, which reauthorizes the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.
- *Coastal Habitat Conservation Act of 2023* (P.L. 118-138) legislatively authorizes the Coastal Program to conduct collaborative landscape-level planning and on-the-ground coastal habitat assessment, coastal habitat protection, coastal habitat restoration, and coastal habitat enhancement projects in priority coastal landscapes to conserve and recover Federal trust species.

Activity: Habitat Conservation

Subactivity: Partners for Fish and Wildlife

Program Overview

The PFW Program is a non-regulatory, voluntary program for fish and wildlife habitat management on private land. Nearly 70 percent of the land in the United States is privately owned. To implement wildlife conservation and keep working lands working, the Service must engage in collaborative conservation with private landowners to implement local strategies. The restored areas provide valuable benefits to the landowner through improved forage for livestock and enhanced hunting and fishing opportunities. The restored areas also benefit the nearby rural communities by supporting tourism and recreation, protecting infrastructure from flood damage, and supporting America's agricultural production by conserving soil, controlling pests, and benefiting pollinators. Additionally, properties with habitats restored by the PFW Program can have increased property values, which greatly benefit the American people. The PFW Program works with private landowners on big game migration corridors and fish passage, provides economic multipliers for local economies through agricultural production, restoration contractors and suppliers, and improved recreation opportunities on private lands.

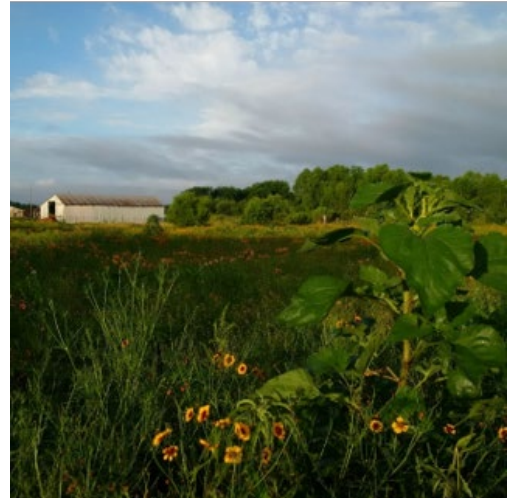
The Service works as habitat consultants who provide free technical and financial assistance to private landowners, managers, Tribes, schools, corporations, and local interest groups. Employees support partnership development and implementation from granting agencies, including other Federal agencies and States. This work includes using other voluntary tools like Conservation Benefit Agreements that protect private landowners who do voluntary wildlife habitat management on their property for listed species.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Restored Prairie Managed through Grazing Practices in Texas

A landowner in Yantis, Texas, purchased a neighboring dairy farm that consisted of a monotypic, non-native pasture that was overstocked, overgrazed, and void of nearly all wildlife. The landowner immediately began converting this land to a prairie farm. With the assistance of the PFW Program, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), the landowner removed non-native grasses and planted native bunch grasses and forbs instead. With the return of native grassland, birds, mammals, and pollinators, the landowner added cattle back into the ecosystem as well as prescribed fire to keep the prairie at an early successional growth phase.

With the inspiration of local youth and PFW Program support, the landowner founded the non-profit Northeast Texas Prairie Community Classroom on the eastern portion of her property. She converted the old dairy milking parlor into a classroom that now hosts the local homeschool co-op, landowner workshops, grazing coalition tours, and an annual prairie day. Research is conducted on the long-term purple martin colony of 86 pairs of migrating birds, as well as white-winged doves that roost on the property. The landowner also participates in manure and soil testing through NRCS to collect data on rotational grazing management of a native prairie ecosystem and works with TPWD using plots for herbicide and replanting of native vegetation.

The prairie farm was selected as the recipient of the 2024 Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation Lone Star Land Steward Award for outstanding land stewardship and community engagement.



Outdoor classroom ribbon cutting (left) and dairy farm pasture (right). Photo credit: USFWS

Activity: Habitat Conservation

Subactivity: Coastal Program

Program Overview

The Coastal Program is a non-regulatory, voluntary, collaborative, partnership-based program working in nationally important coastal watersheds to provide technical and financial assistance toward solutions to natural resource problems, such as salt marsh loss that endangers homes, industries, and infrastructure along the coast. The field-based employees work with communities to identify and support habitat conservation projects that accomplish locally developed goals, such as improving resilience to storms and improving recreation opportunities. Coastal Program employees assist with project management and design, partnership development, grant writing, and implementation of projects, including those from other granting agencies such as USDA Farm Bill programs, and other State or Federal watershed programs.

For example, in Maryland, the Coastal Program restored more than 4,200 feet of stream on the U.S. Army's Fort Meade. The projects will reduce nonpoint source pollution to Severn Run – a tributary to the Severn River, which flows directly into the Chesapeake Bay. Severn Run is home to the only reproducing brook trout population in Maryland's Coastal Plain. Brook trout help support the estimated \$400 million in annual revenue derived from freshwater sportfishing in Maryland. In Texas, the Coastal Program completed two conservation projects that support the recovery of the northern aplomado falcon on the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge. The Coastal Program worked with The Conservation Fund to protect more than 490 acres of coastal prairie adjacent to the Refuge by supporting the due diligence and costs-of-conveyance work. The property provides habitat for the federally endangered falcon, which nest on the Refuge. Additionally, the Coastal Program worked with The Conservation Fund and the Peregrine Fund to improve more than 1,000 acres of prairie on the Refuge by removing invasive mesquite and huisache shrubs. The work was supported by a ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Conservation Grant and the Coastal Program provided assistance with site selection, project compliance, and monitoring. The FWS works with partners, including private landowners, Federal, State, and tribal agencies, land trusts, and other interested parties on private and public lands.

Coastal areas, home to nearly 40 percent of the U.S. population, offer economic benefits like ocean navigation, fisheries, tourism, and recreation. They support over 54 million jobs and generate about \$10 trillion in goods and services. Coastal estuaries are vital, contributing to over 75 percent of the commercial fish and shellfish harvest and 90 percent of the recreational harvest in the U.S. Through its technical and financial assistance, the FWS works with partners to deliver habitat projects on private and public lands to maintain and restore these vital coastal watersheds. The Coastal Program also co-administers the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program that helps States and U.S. Territories conserve and restore healthy coastal wetlands to benefit communities.

The Coastal Program provides value to the American public by leveraging partners' resources at a ratio of 5:1, multiplying the FWS's impact in communities. Coastal Program projects support the Administration's goal of supporting local economies and creating local jobs from program projects.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Subsistence Fishing in Alaska

In western Alaska, the FWS worked with The Conservation Fund, Interior Alaska Land Trust, and the Sitnasuak Alaska Native Village Corporation of Nome to protect 1,830 acres of wetland and upland habitat and 10 miles of the Nome River. The protected property provides important habitat for more than 200 bird species and populations of chum, coho, and pink salmon, Dolly Varden, and Arctic grayling.



Aerial view of protected habitat adjacent to Nome River. Photo credit: The Conservation Fund

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National Wildlife Refuge System

National Wildlife Refuge System

Activity: National Wildlife Refuge System

Dollars in Thousands (\$000)

Activity	2024 Actual	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request
National Wildlife Refuge System Total	527,035	527,857	412,135

^{1/} Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Mission

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and restoration of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

Program Elements

The National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System) is a vast and vital network of public lands and waters dedicated to conserving America's rich fish and wildlife heritage. Americans' demand for outdoor recreation has increased significantly in the last five years, and the Refuge System provides visitors access to hunt, fish, watch wildlife, and enjoy the outdoors. The Refuge System spans more than 856 million acres of land and water and includes 573 national wildlife refuges, 38 wetland management districts, 48 coordination areas, seven National Monuments, and 760 million acres in Marine National Monuments.

The Refuge System protects waterways and public infrastructure across forests, prairies, deserts, coral reefs, tundra, and wetlands in all 50 States and five U.S. Territories as well as providing important habitat for a range of wildlife both rare and abundant. These protected areas play an indispensable role in safeguarding our Country's natural heritage, tribal resources, food security, and local economies.

Wildlife-Dependent

Recreation Opportunities.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 identifies six priority recreational uses: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. These activities are priorities on every refuge, if found compatible with the refuge's statutory



Archery hunters at National Elk Refuge, Wyoming

Photo credit: Tandem Stills and Motion

purposes. Alongside State lands, national wildlife refuges are especially known for waterfowl hunting experiences, and the Act ensures that this form of recreation can be practiced for years to come through sustainable harvests. A total of 401 wildlife refuges (70 percent) and 36 wetland management districts (95 percent) are open to hunting, and 343 wildlife refuges (60 percent) and 35 wetland management districts (92 percent) are open to fishing. Over 2.6 million hunters and over 8.3 million recreational anglers visited these refuges last year. Hundreds of hunting, fishing, and other recreation outfitters guide clients on wildlife refuges, providing a valuable renewable resource for local business owners. Demand for outdoor recreation has increased significantly and highlights the need for thoughtful planning, maintaining law enforcement presence, and infrastructure improvements so visitors can safely hunt, fish, watch birds, and enjoy the outdoors.



National Wildlife Refuges conduct habitat restoration, netting durable solutions often at a savings to the taxpayer like at Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge. Photo credit: USFWS

Public Benefit

The Refuge System delivers recreational and economic benefits to local communities. In FY 2024, the Refuge System hosted a record-breaking 69 million visits to national wildlife refuges, an increase of 53 percent since FY 2011. According to the FWS' Banking on Nature 2017 report, the economic impact on local communities from recreation visits totaled \$3.2 billion, and the Refuge System generates \$1.1 billion in job income and supports over 41,000 non-federal jobs nationally. Additionally, adequately managed national wildlife refuges make landscapes more adaptable and protected from natural disasters and catastrophic weather events. By protecting and restoring habitats, refuges buffer against floods, storm surges, erosion, and catastrophic fire, reducing costs tied to storm disaster recovery and safeguarding wildlife and communities.

Broad Management Toolbox

In collaboration with local, State, territorial, and Tribal partners and through long-term planning and public engagement, refuge managers employ a variety of tools like habitat restoration, invasive species control, biological surveys and studies, and prescribed fire. They also manage cultural resources, public safety, and emergencies, and provide visitor services to engage local communities through volunteer and youth programs.

Tribal Trust Responsibilities

The Refuge System honors our Trust Responsibilities to Tribal Nations. Refuge System leadership is committed to moving beyond the compliance/regulatory relationship toward a proactive approach of strategic collaboration with Tribes rooted in open communication and respect. These relationships will empower communities and enhance the quality of conservation for the benefit of present and future generations.

Emergency Management & Physical Security

The Office of Emergency Management and Physical Security program (OEMPS) delivers FWS' emergency management and physical security responsibilities nationwide. The Physical Security program protects FWS employees, property, and facilities from unauthorized agents and unlawful activities. The Emergency Management program addresses preparedness and leads FWS' response to disasters and emergencies such as hurricanes, wildlife disease outbreaks, unusual mortality events, and hazardous chemical spills.

The Refuge System provides oversight, guidance, expertise, and leadership through the integration of our programs and participates in activities as described in the National Response Framework. Through this effort, FWS takes measures to prevent, protect against, prepare for, mitigate the effects of, respond to, and recover from all hazards that may affect any part of the agency, the species, and habitats managed, and the people and communities served.

Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders

The National Wildlife Refuge System is implemented under the following authorities:

- *The Fish and Wildlife Act (16 U.S.C. 742a-742j)* establishes a comprehensive national fish and wildlife policy and authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to take steps required for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fisheries resources and wildlife resources through research, acquisition of refuge lands, development of existing facilities, and other means.
- *The Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661-666e)* directs the Service to investigate and report on proposed Federal actions that affect any stream or other body of water, and to provide recommendations to minimize impacts on fish and wildlife resources.
- *The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee)* provides authority, guidelines, and directives for the Service in administering the lands and waters of the National Wildlife Refuge System, including establishing six wildlife-dependent recreation activities as priority uses.
- *The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (P.L. 105-57)* spells out wildlife conservation as the fundamental mission of the Refuge System, requires comprehensive conservation planning to guide management of the Refuge System, directs involvement of private citizens in land management decisions, and provides that compatible wildlife-dependent recreation is a legitimate and appropriate use that should receive priority in refuge planning and management.
- *The National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer Improvement Act (P.L. 111-357)* authorizes cooperative agreements with nonprofit partner organizations, academic institutions, or State and local governments to construct, operate, maintain, or improve refuge facilities and services, and promotes volunteer, outreach, and education programs.

- *The Refuge Recreation Act (16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4)* authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to administer refuges, hatcheries, and other conservation areas for recreational use, when such uses do not interfere with the area's primary purposes.
- *The EXPLORE Act (P.L. 118-234)* provides certain Federal land management agency authorities aimed at improving outdoor recreation opportunities on Federal lands and waters.
- *The Nutria Eradication and Control Act (P.L. 108-16)* allows the Department of the Interior to provide financial assistance to States for (1) eradicating or controlling nutria, and (2) restoring marshland damaged by nutria. Nutria are invasive, semi-aquatic rodents.
- *The National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Act (P.L. 106-408)* reinforces National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act provisions to raise public understanding and appreciation for the Refuge System.
- *The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 410hh-3233, 43 U.S.C. 1602-1784)* provides for the designation and conservation of certain public lands in Alaska, including units of the Refuge System, and for the continuing subsistence needs of Alaska Natives.
- *The Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 715-715d, 715e, 715f-715r)* authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to conduct investigations and publish documents related to North American birds and establishes a Migratory Bird Conservation Commission to approve areas recommended by the Secretary for acquisition.
- *The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (16 U.S.C. 718a-718k)* requires waterfowl hunters 16 years of age or older to possess a valid Federal Duck Stamp.
- *The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703-712)* establishes Federal responsibility for protecting and managing migratory birds.
- *The Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136)* establishes a National Wilderness Preservation System.
- *The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-295, title VI)* mandates the development of both the National Preparedness Goal and National Preparedness System.
- *The Pandemic and All Hazards Preparedness Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-417)* improves the Country's public health and medical preparedness and response capabilities for emergencies, whether deliberate, accidental, or natural.
- *The Homeland Security Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-296, title V)* created the Department of Homeland Security. Title V addresses the response time and preparedness of responders, for terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies. In addition, it establishes standards, joint exercises, and trainings.

- *The Presidential Policy Directive-40 (PPD-40) (July 15, 2016)*, National Continuity Policy, prescribes continuity requirements for all Federal Executive Branch Departments and Agencies to ensure a comprehensive and integrated national continuity program that will enhance the credibility of our national security posture and enable a more rapid and effective response to and recovery from a national emergency.
- *The Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (Feb. 28, 2003)* enhances the Country's ability to manage domestic incidents by establishing a single, comprehensive National Incident Management System.
- *The Department of the Interior Departmental Manual Part 900 - Emergency Management Program* outlines policy, functions, and responsibilities for emergency management and homeland and national security for all bureaus and offices within the Department.
- *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service policies (090 FW 1, 090 FW 2, 32 FW 1)* establish responsibilities for continuity of operations, emergency management. and physical security within FWS.
- *John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, Recreation Act of 2019 (P.L. 116-9 further amends Public Land Corps Act of 1993 Under Title 42 USC Sec 12591; Title 16 USC Sec 1721-1726.* Beyond permanently authorizing the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Dingell Act includes provisions like amendments to the Public Lands Corps Act: enhancing public land access, establishing the Every Kid Outdoors program, improving wildlife habitat protections, and promoting outdoor recreation opportunities across public lands nationwide; it also includes measures to improve wildfire response resource tracking and management.

Activity: National Wildlife Refuge System**Subactivity: Wildlife and Habitat Management****Program Overview**

The Refuge System facilitates conservation on millions of acres across the U.S. and its territories through its wide-ranging wildlife and habitat management and partnership activities. Refuges provide habitat for nearly half of all bird and mammal species in the U.S. and protect critical spawning and nursery habitats for freshwater fish. Refuges are managed in an adaptive management cycle (planning, design, implementation, and monitoring) to achieve specific outcomes for the benefit of wildlife and habitat and to support high-quality, wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting and fishing.

General Wildlife and Habitat Management

Wildlife and Habitat Management includes water management, habitat management and restoration, wilderness character monitoring in the refuge system, and invasive species prevention, eradication, and control. These tools, used often in collaboration with State and local partners, are all aimed at ensuring a balanced conservation approach to benefit both wildlife and the American public. This work requires significant investment in our capacity to be responsive to our many partners and carry out efficient and effective conservation.

Specifically, general program activities in this subactivity fund refuge operations, including monitoring plant and animal populations; restoring wetland, forest, grassland and marine habitats and ensuring native seed sources; managing habitats through activities such as manipulation of water levels, prescribed burning, haying, grazing, timber harvest, and planting vegetation; preventing and managing invasive plants and animals; monitoring air quality; investigating and cleaning up contaminants; preventing and controlling wildlife disease outbreaks; and assessing quality and quantity of shared freshwater supplies that are required by the refuge system units. These activities are vital for the Refuge System and support adjacent landowners and partners to achieve local, landscape and national level goals.

Inventory and Monitoring

The Refuge System prioritizes understanding habitat changes and monitoring management interventions to optimize conservation strategies through adaptive management and collaboration with partners. This process involves inventory and monitoring of wildlife populations and supports data curation to ensure effective access and utilization of information among employees, partners, and the public.

Wildlife Health

FWS co-chairs the Department of the Interior's One Health Group, which focuses on developing proactive strategies for wildlife, human, and environmental health issues. One Health promotes early detection and rapid response through incident command system implementation to limit exposure and prevent the geographic spread of diseases. One example is the vaccination of California condors for protection against highly pathogenic avian influenza. Additionally, the Refuge System remains committed to the implementation of the Wildlife Health Initiative developed through the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) with Federal, State, and tribal partners. This program for cross-jurisdictional monitoring, detection, and response to wildlife disease, including those that may threaten livestock, pets, and humans.

The Wildlife Health office also monitors wild bison health on five refuges that provide healthy, wild bison for the conservation of the species and Tribal ecological and cultural restoration of bison.

Invasive Species Management

The Refuge System experiences first-hand the negative impacts of invasive species to hunting, fishing, infrastructure, human health, and native plants, fish, and wildlife populations. FWS implements critical management activities on field stations and adjacent lands to prevent the introduction and secondary spread of invasive species through systematic prevention, early detection, surveillance, rapid response, eradication, containment, control, and education. FWS also coordinates and collaborates with States, Tribes, territories, and private landowners to advance mutual priorities and promote efficiency and cost savings. Taken together, these efforts protect recreational opportunities, native ecosystems, food security, and critical infrastructure and this comprehensive invasive species management framework has become a national model.

Two core components of the Refuge System's invasive species management framework include working with partners to implement the Invasive Species Strike Teams (ISST) and the Large Invasive Species program. Early Detection and Rapid Response through the ISST aims to limit the establishment or the

range of invasive species and prevent the need for more costly ongoing treatments. As of FY 2024, there were 21 ISSTs with at least one team in each FWS Region.

Marine National Monuments

The Refuge System co-manages five Marine National Monuments. FWS also has 182 National Wildlife Refuges in coastal areas, including the Great Lakes. These refuges and monuments protect nearly every type of coastal and marine ecosystem, including salt marshes, mangroves, corals, rocky shores, deep sea, Arctic, and hydrothermal vents. The areas also protect our maritime heritage, including areas that were heavily involved in World War II.

Funds appropriated for Marine National Monuments have provided for basic regional stewardship of these marine resources. These ecosystems are subject to significant threats, including foreign fishing fleets, coastal erosion, ocean acidification, marine debris, coral bleaching, harmful algal blooms, and diminishing fish stocks upon which people and communities depend. These areas support coastal and ocean economies that require healthy, abundant resources. FWS uses our place-based programs to educate and inspire visitors to become champions and stewards of the marine environment, ensuring these marine resources remain intact and healthy for generations to come.



Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument contains several shipwrecks from WWII, including the USS Macaw, a submarine rescue ship which sank at Midway Atoll NWR/Battle of Midway National

Activity: National Wildlife Refuge System
Subactivity: Refuge Visitor Services**Program Overview**

Opportunities for outdoor recreation draw nearly 69 million visits each year to national wildlife refuges, boosting local economies across the Nation. Refuges are near communities of all sizes, and offer visitors the opportunity to hunt, fish, hike, view wildlife, and photograph nature. FWS enables these opportunities on national wildlife refuges with a customer-centered focus and by leveraging myriad national and local partnerships to increase awareness and engagement with these nearby outdoor spaces. The bureau also ensures cultural resource compliance, which is a cornerstone of our strong relationships with Native American Tribes.

Public Access

Refuges work closely with State agencies and private partners to provide outdoor access where it is compatible with refuge purposes. For example, hunting is allowed on 401 wildlife refuges and 36 wetland management districts. More than 14 million acres in the Refuge System are open to hunting in the continental U.S., and nearly all the refuge lands in Alaska. Wildlife refuges and wetland management districts deliver premier experiences from duck hunting in the Prairie Pothole Region to brown bear hunting in Alaska. Some hunts are designed specifically for youth and veterans.

Customer-Centered Focus

The Office of Management and Budget identifies FWS as a high-impact service provider due to the Refuge System's recreational visitation. To ensure visitors have safe recreation visits on national wildlife refuges, FWS maintains virtual trip planning resources, including electronic passes and permits, and maintains on-site wayfinding and interpretive signage and printed guides.

Local Partnerships

FWS' conservation success in the Refuge System is partly due to its dedication to fostering strong public and private partnerships and serving as a vital asset to local communities. The Visitor Services program coordinates these partnerships to expand conservation efforts, enhance recreational access, and create lasting positive connections between communities across the country and their natural and cultural heritage. Vital partnerships include:

- *Friends groups.* Small nonprofits that support individual national wildlife refuges and other FWS sites by managing nature stores, helping at events, supporting projects, and enhancing education programs.
- *Volunteers.* Individuals nationwide donate time and energy to refuges, restoring habitat, monitoring wildlife, greeting visitors, teaching youth to hunt and fish, and leading tours.
- *Local Community Engagement.* The Refuge System works with communities in cities, suburbs, and rural areas to ensure that conservation benefits are shared across many sectors. Partnerships range in size and scope. For example, hundreds of hunting, fishing, and other recreation outfitters guide clients on wildlife refuges, providing a valuable renewable resource for local business owners. In partnership with local businesses, refuges also help host wildlife viewing festivals in the Midwest and the South. These events bring vital revenue to rural and suburban communities.



An angler casts from a fishing pier at Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge near New Orleans, LA.

Image: USFWS/Ian Shive

Cultural Resources

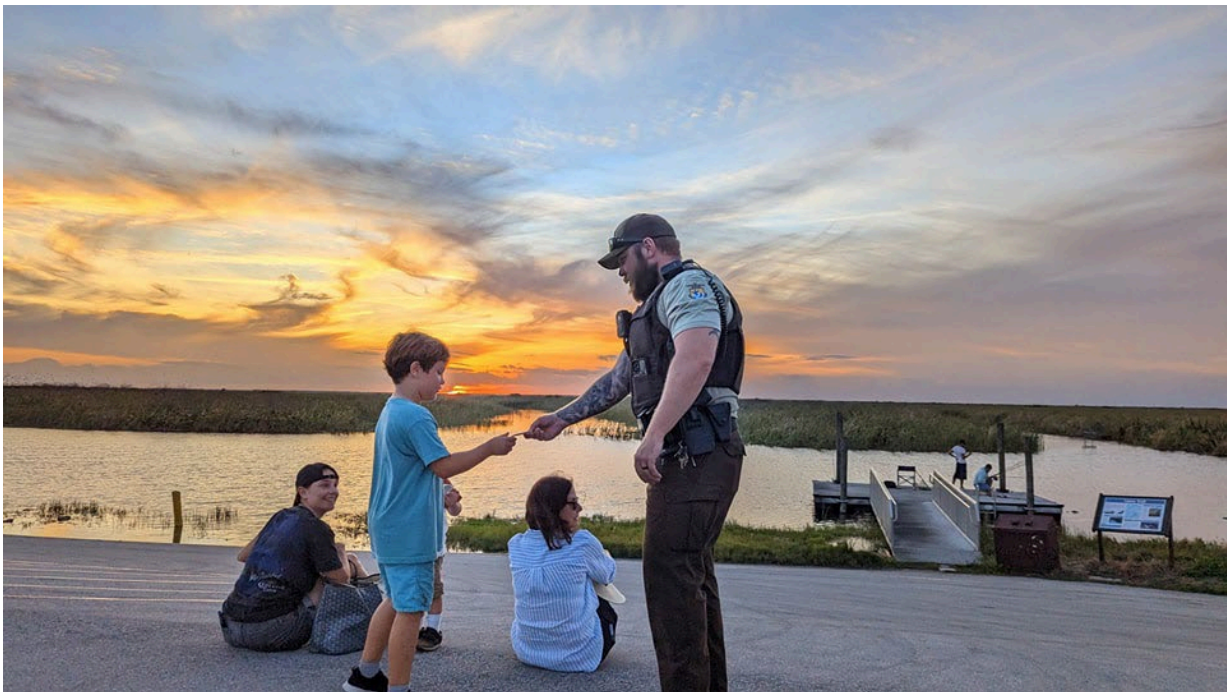
The Cultural Resources program began in the mid-late 1970s in response to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and its implementing regulations, 36 CFR 800. Today, the FWS-wide cultural resources program is a primary means of engagement with Native American Tribes regarding Trust resources and stewards more than 6 million museum property items that have come to the agency via laws like the Archaeological Resources Protection Act and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). The Program provides national guidance and support in administering Federal laws that conserve, manage, protect, and restore cultural resources.

Activity: National Wildlife Refuge System**Subactivity: National Wildlife Refuge System Law Enforcement****Program Overview**

The Refuge System Law Enforcement (NWRS LE) program supports the Secretary's strategic goal of ensuring national security through infrastructure and innovation through the protection of the American people and property. The Refuge System's cadre of Federal Wildlife Officers (FWOs) support recreational uses, protection of endangered species, habitat conservation, and a broad spectrum of FWS programs, ensuring public safety, education, and resource protection.

FWOs serve as ambassadors for the Refuge System and FWS. They support the public as hunter safety instructors; coordinate with veterans and disabled sportsperson's groups to create outdoor opportunities; and lead youth shooting, hunting, and fishing events on refuges. They are routinely involved with local and other Federal law enforcement agencies in cooperative efforts to support nationwide disaster recovery efforts, efforts along the borders, and other incident responses. FWOs are usually stationed in rural areas where mutually supporting their local law enforcement is vital.

These officers will support Executive Orders 14194 *Imposing Duties to Address the Situation at Our Southern Border* and 14198 *Progress on the Situation at Our Southern Border* as they work cooperatively with other law enforcement to combat the Country's drug problems and address border security issues.



*Federal Wildlife Officer interacting with visitors at wildlife refuge Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, FL.
Image USFWS/Maria Perez.*



Federal Wildlife Officers during an ESF-13 briefing while deployed on Hurricane Milton. Photo taken by FWS employee.

Activity: National Wildlife Refuge System

Subactivity: Conservation Planning

Program Overview

Refuge System planning processes aim to enhance public access while reducing regulatory burdens on the public. FWS accomplishes this goal by collaborating with States, Tribes and other key partners, gathering public input, and engaging interested parties and local communities. The 1997 Improvement Act mandates that FWS complete a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for every unit of the Refuge System and revise or review the CCP every 15 years.

Subactivity: Refuge Maintenance

Program Overview

The Refuge Maintenance subactivity underpins every aspect of Refuge System operations. Infrastructure investments open access to public lands for outdoor recreation such as fishing, hunting, and wildlife observation; create jobs; and support local, State, and national economies. Investments also maintain and modernize facilities and fleets to improve operational efficiency and reduce costs to the American taxpayer. Refuge Maintenance is one of several Refuge System program areas where local maintenance and trade skill workers can find employment and training opportunities.

FWS lifecycle management involves analysis of asset condition, mission impact, and project cost data to prioritize infrastructure investments. This approach enables FWS to identify the most efficient, cost-effective method for completing infrastructure projects, such as employing Maintenance Action Teams, disposing of assets, and adopting strategies to extend the useful life of an asset. This approach is

especially critical since inflation, supply, and labor shortages have pushed construction contract costs up over the past few years.

As of the end of FY 2024, FWS maintains over 46,000 assets representing nearly \$62 billion in replacement value, including 6,400 buildings; 19,000 roads, bridges, and trails; 8,800 water management structures; and 12,200 other real property assets.

Maintenance Support

Refuge Maintenance Support includes supplies, materials, and salaries to maintain and manage facilities and equipment. Maintenance employees are a critical component of proactively maintaining refuge facilities for visitors, employees, and the trust resources that FWS protects. Maintenance employees not only maintain infrastructure and equipment but also maintain habitat to support public recreational activities like hunting, fishing, hiking, and bird watching.

Annual Maintenance

Annual Maintenance encompasses non-salary expenditures for preventative maintenance imperative to keep the Refuge System infrastructure and fleet functioning. Proactively maintaining facilities through Maintenance Support and Annual Maintenance is 40 percent more cost-effective on average than waiting until maintenance is deferred or assets are damaged or destroyed. Annual maintenance can include a variety of activities, from grading trails, roads, and parking lots to support safe and reliable access for hunting and fishing to maintaining high-hazard dams and flood protection levees to protect neighboring communities.

Deferred Maintenance

Deferred Maintenance projects repair, rehabilitate, dispose of, or replace constructed real property assets. Funds are directed to the highest priority, mission-critical projects based on facility condition, asset priority, consequences of failure to act, and return on investment in accordance with Departmental guidance and FWS guidance. To help address the FWS deferred maintenance backlog, FWS implements strategies such as utilizing Maintenance Action Teams to the extent possible, partnering with non-profit volunteer organizations for labor, emphasizing proactive investments, improving data quality, and increasing focus on preventative and routine maintenance investments.

FWS provides Congress and the public with annual DM backlog financial reports that include explanations of major changes in the FWS DM backlog from one year to another and identify each project's mission support/criticality rating. For FY 2024, FWS reported a deferred maintenance and repair estimate (DM&R) of \$3.1 billion. The Refuge System's portion of DM&R for FY 2024 was \$2.6 billion. FWS is responsible for a real property portfolio with a current replacement value (CRV) of \$61.8 billion, including the Refuge Systems' portfolio CRV of \$55.7 billion.

FY 2024 National Wildlife Refuge System

Asset Type	Replacement Value (billions)	Number of Assets	DM Repair Cost (billions)
Buildings	\$7.9	5,218	\$0.6
Other Structures	\$6.1	9,740	\$0.3

Roads, Bridges, Trails	\$14.8	18,032	\$1
Water Management	\$26.8	8,495	\$0.7
Total	\$55.6	41,485	\$2.6

FY 2024 US Fish and Wildlife Service

Asset Type	Replacement Value (billions)	Number of Assets	DM Repair Cost (billions)
Buildings	\$10.2	6,430	\$0.7
Other Structures	\$9.3	12,224	\$0.6
Roads, Bridges, Trails	\$15.2	19,105	\$1
Water Management	\$27.1	8,837	\$0.8
Total	\$61.8	46,596	\$3.1

Equipment and Vehicle Management

The Refuge System requires an extensive fleet of vehicles and equipment to successfully carry out the conservation mission and provide safe and reliable public recreation and education opportunities. The Refuge System employs rental and leasing options to provide a cost-effective, efficient program. Equipment and Vehicle Management funds optimize fleet management to meet mission needs and serve as an example of efficient use of public assets.

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Migratory Bird Management

Migratory Bird Management

Activity: Conservation and Enforcement

Program: Migratory Bird Management

Program Overview

The Migratory Bird Program works to conserve healthy bird populations valued by the American public. Our mission is to lead migratory bird conservation and management through effective partnerships, applied science, and innovative strategies, working with partners to manage birds under laws such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, and Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. We serve the American public to achieve the following goals:

1. Provide Leadership in Migratory Bird Conservation
2. Conserve and Manage Sustainable Populations of Birds of Management Concern
3. Conserve Habitat for Migratory Birds of Management Concern
4. Manage Bird Data and Information for Use in Decision Making

The Program accomplishes these goals by operating continental-scale bird monitoring programs; coordinating bird conservation partnerships at nearly every geographic scale; issuing permits to authorize the take and possession of birds in a continued effort to balance resource use with conservation; and working with partners to conserve habitat. The Program also generates close to \$40 million a year from the sale of Duck Stamps, which serves to protect wetland habitat via the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Birds are enjoyed by millions of Americans for birding, hunting, and viewing around their homes and in their communities. Birds are a significant driver of tourism, retail, and conservation funding in the U.S. The 2022 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation Report estimated that 2.8 million people in the U.S. participate in migratory bird hunting and 96 million people (3 out of 10 Americans) consider themselves birdwatchers. These individuals spend billions of dollars each year participating in bird-related recreation activities. Birds also provide important ecosystem services to people, including insect and rodent control, plant pollination, and seed dispersal, providing additional economic benefits.

The Migratory Bird Program collaborates with various entities, including Federal agencies, States, Tribes, and nongovernmental organizations, to manage migratory bird species and conserve their habitats through partnerships and management plans. Over the last century, the Service and its partners have successfully halted the intentional over-exploitation of migratory birds and protected millions of acres of habitat. Despite past successes, migratory bird populations are still declining, with a significant loss of three billion breeding birds in North America since 1970. The decline in bird populations is attributed to habitat loss, invasive species, disease, and human-caused mortality. The mission of the Migratory Bird Program remains as crucial today as it was when the Service was established: to ensure a legacy of healthy bird populations for the American people.

Program Elements

Four elements comprise the Migratory Bird Management program:

- Conservation and Monitoring – Conducts monitoring and assessment activities on migratory bird species, sets hunting seasons, develops conservation plans, and collaborates with partners to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts and reduce human-caused mortality.
- Permits – Facilitates public engagement in migratory bird activities through permitting and authorizations, while reducing regulatory burdens and promoting long-term conservation of migratory birds.
- Federal Duck Stamp Office – Conducts the annual Federal Duck Stamp (Duck Stamp) Contest, produces the Duck Stamp required for waterfowl hunting, and provides proceeds to conserve wetland habitats. Coordinates the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design program for educational opportunities through the arts.
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan and Migratory Bird Joint Venture Partnerships – Implements a continental conservation plan through collaborative, voluntary partnerships that conserve waterfowl and other migratory bird habitats.

Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders

More than 25 laws, treaties, and conventions mandate the Service sustain over 1,100 species of migratory birds including the following:

- The *Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act* (16 U.S.C. 668-668C) prohibits the import, export, or take of Bald or Golden Eagles including their parts and products without permits, and prohibits the sale, purchase, or barter of their parts or products.
- The *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 2901-2911) directs the Secretary of the Interior to undertake research and conservation activities, in coordination with other Federal, State, international and private organizations, to fulfill responsibilities to conserve migratory nongame birds under existing authorities, including the identification of non-game birds that without additional conservation action could become candidates for listing under ESA and the actions necessary for their conservation.
- The *Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act* (16 U.S.C. 718) requires waterfowl hunters to purchase and possess a valid Federal waterfowl hunting stamp before hunting migratory waterfowl and directs proceeds to the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund to conserve wetland habitats within the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- The *Migratory Bird Treaty Act* (16 U.S.C. 703-712) establishes Federal responsibility for protecting and managing migratory birds and implements bilateral migratory bird conventions with Canada, Mexico, Japan, and Russia.
- The *Duck Stamp Modernization Act of 2023* (P.L. 118-25) allows an individual to carry an electronic stamp, rather than a paper stamp, at the time of hunting waterfowl.

Subactivity: Migratory Bird Management
Program Element: Conservation and Monitoring**Program Description**

The Migratory Bird Program approaches its conservation and monitoring responsibilities by focusing primarily on Birds of Management Concern (BMC). BMC species are a subset of species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act that require special management attention. The following four categories of birds comprise the BMC: migratory birds for which we hold hunting seasons, Birds of Conservation Concern, migratory bird species in conflict with people, and Bald and Golden Eagles.

One of the primary reasons the U.S. signed international migratory bird treaties was to cooperatively manage and regulate the purposeful take of migratory birds used for recreational and subsistence hunting. Because birds migrate across State and international boundaries and are subject to international and Federal law, the Service is the only entity in the U.S. that has the authority to open annual hunting seasons for migratory birds. FWS approaches this responsibility by relying on the best data available from waterfowl banding, aerial surveys, and hunter harvest surveys to inform decisions in close partnership with treaty partners, States, and Tribes.

The Service also is instrumental in conserving migratory nongame species. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act directs the Service to monitor and assess nongame bird populations and their change over time. Species identified as being at-risk for becoming listed as threatened or endangered are deemed a Bird of Conservation Concern. Through technical assistance and partnership, the Service aims to promote effective, voluntary conservation strategies. For example, initiatives like the Bird Collisions Prevention Alliance bring together over 100 organizations to reduce bird mortality from collisions and light pollution. The Service also provides the public with decision-support tools to guide the siting, design, and operation of projects, ensuring they are bird-friendly.

When a protected migratory bird harms human interests, like agriculture, the Service takes a systematic approach to find and implement management solutions with stakeholders. The Migratory Bird Program promotes comprehensive solutions to these problems by coordinating extensively across regions, programs, and often multiple agencies. This level of collaboration is necessary to address issues that are complex or larger in scale than typical cases where a depredation permit is issued, such as those involving Double-crested cormorants. Because one tool to managing these conflicts is the potential use of lethal control, the Service is the only entity that can authorize the take of migratory bird species.

Bald Eagles and Golden Eagles are both species of importance to the American public and many Native American Tribes. While Bald and Golden Eagles are protected by the MBTA, they are afforded additional protections under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Eagles have been of management concern to the Migratory Bird Program ever since Bald Eagles were delisted from the Endangered Species Act in 2007. The Service is responsible for managing eagles to ensure the preservation of both eagle species.

Subactivity: Migratory Bird Management
Program Element: Permits**Program Description**

In 1918, the MBTA was enacted to implement the first of four international treaties to protect migratory birds. Recognizing the need to protect and manage birds that were both injurious and beneficial to humans, the MBTA established a system of regulations and permits. Today, permits serve as the main way to interact with the public. The goal is to support long-term conservation of migratory birds and promote shared stewardship. Our objective is to implement an efficient permitting program with a strong biological foundation. Because human demands on migratory birds leave them vulnerable, we use permits as a conservation tool.

Permits allow the public to engage in specific activities that comply with the MBTA and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, balancing usage and conservation. Permits also help build partnerships and monitor how activities affect migratory bird populations. By using innovative approaches like regulatory authorizations and general permits alongside traditional specific permits, the Migratory Bird Program is reducing regulatory burdens on the public while facilitating development and promoting the long-term conservation of migratory birds and eagles. Both the MBTA and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act require permits for activities that could affect these species. The Migratory Bird Program administers several regulations under these laws, detailing available permits, application procedures, and criteria for issuance. Permittees include industries, State and Tribal wildlife agencies, law enforcement, military airfields, zoos, aquariums, individuals, and others whose activities may impact migratory birds.

The Migratory Bird Program advances the Administration's goal of reducing regulations by expanding regulatory authorizations (which do not require permits), automating general permit issuance, and streamlining specific permit processes. For instance, a recent shift from a permit system to regulatory authorizations allows the public, educators, and government employees to possess migratory birds and eagles in certain situations, eliminating the need for over 10 percent of specific permits. In 2024, the Service introduced a new rule to improve the efficiency of permitting for Bald and Golden Eagles. This rule established general permits, which are issued immediately upon self-certification and registration, reducing processing delays. In the first year under the new regulation, almost 400 general permits were issued, a sixfold increase from previous years. For energy projects, the number of permits issued rose from an average of three per year to over 100 in just nine months. The rule also updated specific permits, allowing for faster review by Service staff with streamlined requirements.

Subactivity: Migratory Bird Management
Program Element: Federal Duck Stamp**Program Description**

The Federal Duck Stamp Office plays a vital role in conserving migratory bird habitat within the National Wildlife Refuge System through the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, or Duck Stamp. The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act requires all waterfowl hunters aged 16 years or older to possess a valid Federal Duck Stamp. Since its inception in 1934, Duck Stamp sales have generated over \$1.2 billion, conserving more than 6 million acres of habitat for birds and wildlife via the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Migratory Bird Program conducts the Federal art contest and produces the Duck Stamp, which sells for \$25, and raises approximately \$40 million annually. Of this amount, 98 percent of proceeds go toward wetland conservation. In 2024, sales topped \$37 million. The 2025-2026 stamp will mark the 19th year of the Electronic Duck Stamp (E-Stamp) program, which has sold over 1 million E-Stamps since its pilot in 2007. The E-Stamp is a useful tool for customers, allowing anyone with an internet connection to quickly buy Duck Stamps, no matter where they live. The Service will keep encouraging qualified States to participate in the program to better serve customers.

The Migratory Bird Program also conducts the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program, which actively engages K-12 students in wildlife education and conservation through art. About 20,000 students participate in the annual art contest which, along with related activities and events showcasing their artwork, reaches another 300,000 families, educators, and community members each year. The winning artwork is showcased on stamps and state hunting brochures.

Subactivity: Migratory Bird Management**Program Element: North American Waterfowl Management/Joint Ventures****Program Description**

More than 40 years ago, waterfowl populations in North America were at historic lows. In response, the waterfowl management community in the U.S. and Canada created a strategy for habitat protection and restoration, recognizing the importance of international cooperation in restoring shared wildlife resources. The North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP or Plan) was the result of this cooperation and remains a model for international conservation efforts. Launched in 1986 with Canada and joined by Mexico in 1994, the Plan has successfully supported healthy populations of ducks, geese, and swans by conserving habitats through partnerships. The Plan has evolved over time to increase public awareness of the ecological and economic benefits of waterfowl conservation.

The habitat goals of the Plan and the priorities for conservation partnerships are mainly carried out by 18 Migratory Bird Joint Ventures (JVs). These regional partnerships involve Federal, State, and local governments, businesses, individuals, and nonprofits. JVs are considered a model for collaborative conservation, using advanced science and resources to ensure diverse habitats sustain migratory bird populations. Additionally, three species JVs focus to enhance scientific understanding to manage populations of specific bird species: Arctic Goose, Black Duck, and Sea Duck.

As noted above, JVs coordinate partner efforts to deliver diverse habitat conservation on the ground which is critical for the resilience of bird populations. Using the best available science, JVs can anticipate how different bird populations will respond to habitat conservation efforts and then develop tailored conservation plans that specifically meet the needs of these populations. This approach ensures that habitat management resources are directed where they can have the greatest impact at the lowest cost, enabling partners to concentrate their efforts on the most critical areas to support healthy populations of migratory birds. JVs also recognize that effective bird conservation does not always need to start with birds. Activities that focus on things like reducing flooding or improving water quality provide tangible benefits to the surrounding communities and create habitats that benefit bird species at the same time.

Law Enforcement

Office of Law Enforcement

Activity: Law Enforcement

Program Mission

The Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) is the investigative arm of the Service tasked with enforcing wildlife laws, regulating wildlife trade, and investigating wildlife crimes. It is our mission to protect wildlife and plant resources through the effective and efficient enforcement of Federal laws. By working collaboratively with Federal, State, Tribal and foreign enforcement agencies and other conservation partners, the program helps recover endangered species, conserve migratory birds, preserve wildlife habitat, safeguard fisheries, combat invasive species, and prevent global wildlife trafficking.



The Service recognizes the dedication and expertise of its OLE personnel, including special agents, wildlife inspectors, intelligence analysts, forensic scientists, and professional support staff. These professionals are on the front lines of safeguarding legal wildlife trade and combating illegal trafficking that threatens our national security and natural resources, undermines economic integrity, and funds transnational criminal networks.

Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders

The Service has the statutory mandate and trust responsibility to fulfill its mission derived from the Country's wildlife and plant protection laws and several Presidential actions. Brief descriptions of several of these various laws and orders follow:

- The *Lacey Act* (16 U.S.C. 3371-3378) prohibits the importation, exportation, transportation, sale, or purchase of fish, wildlife, or plants taken or possessed in violation of Federal, State, tribal, or foreign laws.
- The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703-712) makes it unlawful to pursue, hunt, kill, capture, possess, buy, sell, purchase, or barter any migratory bird including their feathers, parts, and products.
- The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668C) prohibits import, export, or take of Bald or Golden Eagles including their parts and products without permits, and prohibits the sale, purchase, or barter of their parts or products.
- The Endangered Species Act (ESA) (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543) prohibits the importation, exportation, take, and interstate or foreign commerce of fish, wildlife, and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered species.
- The Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) is an international treaty to which 183 countries are parties, including the United States. CITES is implemented in the United States under the ESA and provides a set of universal protections and controls involving the international movement of plant and animal species engaged in significant global trade.
- The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (16 U.S.C. 718) requires waterfowl hunters to purchase and possess a valid Federal waterfowl hunting stamp before take of migratory waterfowl.
- The Marine Mammal Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 1361-1407) establishes a moratorium on the take and importation of marine mammals, including parts and products.
- The Airborne Hunting Act (16 U.S.C. 742j-l) prohibits taking or harassing wildlife from aircraft.

- The National Refuge System Administration Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee) provides guidelines for administration and management of all areas in the refuge system.
- The African Elephant Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 4201-4245) places a moratorium on the importation of raw or worked ivory from African elephant-producing countries that do not meet certain criteria.
- The Wild Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 4901) limits or prohibits the importation of exotic bird species as necessary to ensure that their populations are not harmed by international trade.
- The Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 5301-5306) prohibits the import, export, or sale of any product, item, or substance containing, or labeled or advertised as containing, any substance derived from tiger or rhinoceros.
- The Antarctic Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 2401) makes unlawful for any citizen to take, possess, or sell any native bird or mammal from Antarctica.
- The Archeological Resources Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 470aa) prohibits excavation, removal, damage, or alteration to any archaeological resource located on public or Indian lands without a permit.
- The Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 (IACA) (P.L. 101-644) is a truth-in-advertising law that prohibits misrepresentation in marketing of Indian arts and crafts products within the United States.
- The Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt (END) Wildlife Trafficking Act (P.L. 114-231) authorizes support for law enforcement training, investigative capacity building, range state conservation programs, and other important tools to protect and sustain wild populations of imperiled species in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and other critical locations.
- The Big Cat Public Safety Act (P.L. 117-243) governs the trade of big cats, limits the possession and exhibition of big cats, and restricts direct contact between the public and big cats.
- In conducting investigations of wildlife crimes, OLE frequently encounters and investigates violations of other Federal laws to include conspiracy, smuggling, money laundering, narcotics, cybercrimes, unlawful possession and trafficking of firearms, mail fraud, tax evasion, wire fraud, corruption, and bribery.
- The Presidential Executive Order on Enforcing Federal Law with Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking (issued February 9, 2017) strengthens enforcement of Federal law in order to thwart transnational criminal organizations and subsidiary organizations, including criminal gangs, cartels, racketeering organizations, and other groups engaged in illicit activities. This Executive Order specifically lists wildlife trafficking as a targeted transnational crime that presents a threat to public safety and national security.

Program Overview

The Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) plays a critical role in enforcing U.S. wildlife laws by investigating crimes, regulating wildlife trade, and interdicting illegal shipments of wildlife and injurious species at the Country's borders. These actions are integral to the Service's mission of conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The OLE personnel help safeguard the United States from transnational crime, increase public health and safety, protect against biosecurity threats, and uphold commitments under domestic and international conservation statutes. The program's investigative and inspection operations deter and dismantle criminal enterprises that exploit wildlife resources to finance broader illicit activities, including drug and weapons trafficking and terrorism.

Protecting our Country's Interests

Special agents serve as the Service's primary criminal investigators, targeting violations that pose risks to national security, public safety, economic stability, border integrity, and native species. Their caseload includes investigations that are often intertwined with other areas of trafficking and financial crime, as well as those focused on the exploitation of Federally protected species such as eagles, marine mammals, migratory birds, and at-risk wildlife and plants. Agents execute complex investigations by collecting evidence, conducting interviews and surveillance, executing search warrants, and coordinating with local, State, tribal and international partners.

These multi-year operations often require undercover infiltration of sophisticated trafficking networks. Priorities include high-value targets that endanger U.S. species or contribute to criminal enterprise. Enforcement efforts align with national security priorities, including President Trump's Executive Order 13773 on Enforcing Federal Law with Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking.

Wildlife inspectors are stationed at key U.S. ports of entry, where they ensure compliance with wildlife trade laws while facilitating lawful commerce. Their work directly supports economic efficiency and international cooperation by helping businesses, research institutions, and other lawful entities navigate complex regulatory requirements. Inspectors also identify and interdict smuggled wildlife, reducing risks to public health and the environment.

The OLE's effectiveness is bolstered by specialized intelligence, digital forensics, and technical surveillance teams. These units deploy advanced tools to support investigations, strengthen interagency coordination, and enhance the Service's ability to identify, monitor, and disrupt criminal activity. The OLE's partnerships with the U.S. Intelligence Community, Department of Defense, and foreign governments further ensure that enforcement activities protect both national resources and global biodiversity.

In FY 2024, OLE conducted nearly 12,000 wildlife crime investigations, which resulted in \$2.26 million in fines and restitution, \$6.4 million in civil penalties, 80 years in prison, and 254 years of probation. Wildlife Inspectors processed over 185,000 declared wildlife shipments and facilitated legal trade valued at nearly \$6.7 billion.

National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory

The Service's National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory (Lab), the world's only full-service crime laboratory devoted exclusively to supporting wildlife law enforcement, is vital to the Service's efforts to fight the illegal wildlife trade and protect plants and animals. Lab scientists identify the species of wildlife parts and products (seized as evidence) to link suspect, victim, and crime scene through the examination of physical evidence, cause of death determinations, and crime scene analysis.

The Lab can scientifically identify the species source of mammal, bird, plant, and reptile wildlife parts and products, a function frequently used by Service special agents, wildlife inspectors, and U.S. Department of Justice prosecutors. Conclusive evidence of criminal activity in wildlife investigations often hinges on the ability of investigators and prosecutors to establish the origin of animal or animal parts, often by country, so the Lab's capacity is integral to enforcing wildlife laws and treaties.

Program Elements

The program elements for the Office of Law Enforcement:

- Law Enforcement Operations – funds the day-to-day activities of special agents, intelligence analysts, forensic scientists, and support staff who serve critical roles in facilitating legal trade, fighting wildlife trafficking, and in the successful prosecution of criminals who break Federal and international wildlife laws.
- Equipment Replacement – maintains and replaces property and equipment, including scientific instruments at the National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory; purchases and configures vehicles to satisfy operational requirements.

International Affairs

International Affairs

Program: International Affairs

Program Mission

The International Affairs program leads domestic and international efforts to protect, restore, and enhance the world's wildlife and their habitats. Through implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Service works to ensure that wildlife trade is legal, traceable, and biologically sustainable. These efforts enforce responsible resource management and make America more prosperous by facilitating economic opportunities for U.S. individuals and businesses. The Service is a leader in evidence-based conservation, ensuring a strong return-on-investment (ROI) for every dollar going towards wildlife conservation. These investments safeguard valuable species and habitats and strengthen national security by deterring wildlife crime, supporting law enforcement and reducing the risk of zoonotic disease outbreaks that threaten the health of the American people and the strength of the U.S. economy.

Program Elements

The International Affairs program comprises the following elements:

- International Conservation – This program provides technical and financial assistance to conserve high-priority species and habitats of value and concern to the American public. International Conservation is a leader in the use of conservation evidence and utilizes data to demonstrate the program's impact and improve the effectiveness of its investments.
- International Wildlife Trade – This program is responsible for implementing CITES and domestic laws of the United States to ensure international wildlife trade is legal, traceable, and does not threaten the sustainability of animals and plants in the wild. This program provides global leadership in the implementation of CITES, applies scientific analysis to decision-making concerning the conservation and sustainable use of U.S. native and international species, manages a conservation permitting program, and combats illegal wildlife trafficking.

Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders

The Service has the legal mandate and responsibility to engage in the conservation of wildlife species both within and beyond our borders and to engage the public through clear and transparent communication. These obligations are contained in domestic laws, international treaties, and other multilateral agreements. Examples include:

- The *Endangered Species Act* (ESA) (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543) prohibits the importation, exportation, take, and interstate or foreign commerce of fish, wildlife, and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered species.
- The *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* (CITES), which was ratified in 1973, is an international agreement to ensure international trade in specimens of CITES-listed animals and plants is legal, traceable, and does not threaten the survival of the species.

- The *Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt (END) Wildlife Trafficking Act* (16 U.S.C. 7601-7644) aims to disrupt the ability of terrorists and criminal syndicates to profit from wildlife trafficking.
- The Pelly Amendment to the *Fishermen's Protective Act of 1967* (22 U.S.C. 1978) authorizes prohibition of the import of any products from a foreign country when nationals of that country, directly or indirectly, are engaged in harvest or trade that diminishes the effectiveness of any international program for the conservation of endangered or threatened species, and the Secretary has certified such fact to the President.
- The *Canada/Mexico/U.S. Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management* is an international treaty that facilitates and enhances cooperation and coordination among the wildlife agencies of the three nations in projects and programs for the conservation and management of wildlife, plants, habitats, and ecological integrity of ecosystems of mutual interest.
- The *Convention on Wetlands of International Importance* (Ramsar Convention) is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.
- The *Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere* (Western Hemisphere Convention) is an international treaty that aims to preserve, in their natural habitats, all species and genera of native American fauna and flora from extinction, and to preserve areas of extraordinary beauty, striking geological formations or regions of aesthetic, historic or scientific value.
- The *Lacey Act* (18 U.S.C. 42; 16 U.S.C. 3371-3378) prohibits the importation, exportation, sale, or purchase of fish, wildlife, or plants taken, possessed, transported, or sold in violation of Federal, State, Tribal, or foreign laws. The Lacey Act also prohibits the importation and shipment of wildlife species that are designated by the Secretary of the Interior as injurious and requires live wildlife to be imported under humane and healthful conditions.
- The *Big Cat Public Safety Act* (BCPSA) (P.L. 117-243) amends the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 to clarify provisions enacted by the *Captive Wildlife Safety Act* (CWSA) and to further the conservation of certain wildlife species, including to end private ownership of big cats as pets and to prohibit exhibitors from allowing direct public contact with big cats, including cubs.
- The *Wild Bird Conservation Act* (WBCA) (16 U.S.C. 4901-4916) helps ensure that exotic bird species are not harmed by international trade and encourages wild bird conservation programs in countries of origin.
- The *Migratory Bird Treaty Act* (MBTA) (16 U.S.C. 703-712) makes it unlawful to pursue, hunt, kill, capture, possess, buy, sell, purchase, or barter any migratory bird including their feathers, parts, and products.

- The *Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act* (BGEPA) (16 U.S.C. 668-668d) makes it unlawful to take; possess; sell; purchase; barter; offer to sell, purchase or barter; transport; export or import; at any time or any manner, any Bald Eagle or any Golden Eagle alive or dead, or any part (including feathers), nest, or egg thereof.
- The *Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region* (Cartagena Convention) and its *Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife* (SPAW Protocol) aim to protect, preserve, and sustainably manage areas that need conservation to safeguard their special value and the threatened or endangered flora and fauna they contain.

Program Overview

Maintaining America's access to valuable natural resources, whether for enjoyment, economic growth, or security, requires coordinated and effective conservation efforts both domestically and abroad. The Service, through the International Affairs program, supports the enjoyment of natural resources while ensuring they remain sustainable. This includes supporting conservation efforts that address threats and strengthen capacity to manage and protect wildlife; providing leadership in international wildlife management policy; and implementing laws and regulations in the United States to ensure the international trade in wild plants and animals is legal, traceable, and biologically sustainable.

Through its International Conservation program, the Service addresses the illegal poaching of critical species by providing targeted assistance, building self-reliance of foreign governments to protect these species in their habitats, and fostering interagency collaboration to combat illegal wildlife trafficking. The Service's International Wildlife Trade program protects at-risk species in several ways. It ensures protections under the Endangered Species Act reflect changing threats, evaluates permit applications for activities ranging from scientific research to the importation of sport-hunted trophies, wildlife and plant products, and live animals, and negotiates with and supports foreign governments to improve their compliance with CITES and other relevant agreements. These actions strengthen the work of key Service programs including the Office of Law Enforcement, which enforces wildlife laws, investigates violations, and supports prosecutions of criminals, in partnership with foreign government agencies, through extradition.

The Service's work in the International Affairs program addresses numerous native species whose ranges extend beyond our borders. These species include monarch butterflies, marine mammals, and marine turtles, as well as native species of animals and plants that are traded internationally, such as American alligator, American ginseng, paddlefish, bobcat, river otter, and various freshwater turtles. The conservation of these species and their habitats provides concrete benefits to U.S. residents and to the U.S. and global economy. As an example of the value of this trade, the declared value of U.S. exports of skins from American alligators, bobcats, and river otters from 2013 to 2018 totaled more than \$790 million. The Service works closely with State agencies and Tribes to ensure that wildlife trade involving U.S. native species, is legal, traceable, and biologically sustainable and that U.S. business can compete internationally through a scientifically robust yet efficient permit process.

International Conservation Strategies

Foundations for Evidence-Based Decision-Making

The Service's international financial assistance programs are agency leaders of evidence-based conservation. In support of the Evidence Act (2018) and the Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act (2016), the Service's International Affairs program pioneered methods and partnerships to establish clear, measurable goals against which progress and Service resources can be monitored and evaluated. For species and projects where the Service has provided sustained support, the agency is able to assess the return on investment (ROI) of its activities. The average ROI of International Affairs programs is supported by third-party analysis and demonstrates the cost-effectiveness of investments. In specific cases where data exists, an estimated \$33 to \$438 in economic value is created for every \$1 invested.

Conserving Priority Species and Habitats of Value and Concern to the American Public

International Affairs works to safeguard native species from the potential negative impacts of international trade and strengthen capacity to tackle conservation challenges that affect the health and viability of species that are important to the U.S. economy and have intrinsic value to the American people. The Service works with partners to find innovative solutions to combat the most urgent threats to species survival, enforce compliance with CITES, and build national sovereignty and self-reliance in wildlife management. This approach keeps critical wildlife populations alive, healthy and sustainable at their source—ensuring availability and potential for economic prosperity. This strategy offers an important, cost-effective complement to the Service's Office of Law Enforcement frontline law enforcement efforts, by tackling the impacts of threats such as corruption and zoonotic disease before they reach our borders.

International Affairs also provides technical support and coordination across the Service to strengthen U.S. leadership through engagement with foreign counterparts on wildlife management and enforcement issues beyond CITES. The International Affairs program leads the implementation of the annual Committee meeting for the Canada/Mexico/U.S. Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management (Trilateral Committee). This provides an important platform for the three countries to coordinate on issues related to law enforcement at the borders as well as management of shared wildlife populations. The International Affairs program also coordinates U.S. implementation of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. Through this work, the International Affairs program designates wetlands of international importance that are critical as migratory stopover sites for bird species important for American ecosystems and economies.

International Wildlife Trade Strategies

Sustainable Use of Wildlife

The United States is one of the world's largest importers and exporters of legal wildlife and wildlife products and plays a significant role in the global legal wildlife trade, currently valued in billions of dollars annually. To facilitate legal, prosperous trade between the United States and other CITES Parties (currently 185 Parties, including 184 countries and the European Union) and ensure such trade does not threaten the survival of CITES-listed animals and plants in the wild, the Service serves as the U.S. CITES Management and Scientific Authority. Each Party to the treaty is required to designate one or more

Management and Scientific Authorities to make legal and scientific non-detriment findings, issue CITES permits and certificates, and monitor trade. For the United States, these authorities are delegated to the Service's International Affairs program.

CITES Implementation and Leadership



Naimah Aziz, Head of the U.S. Management Authority for CITES, chairs the treaty's 77th Standing Committee meeting on behalf of the United States. Credit: Russell Husen/DOI

CITES provides the necessary framework to ensure scientific integrity and global cooperation in order to facilitate legal and sustainable trade and combat wildlife trafficking for over 40,000 species of wild plants and animals. The International Affairs program implements CITES by leading the United States engagement at CITES meetings, ensuring that U.S. exports and imports comply with CITES requirements, and supporting CITES capacity-building and compliance around the world.

Meetings of the Conference of the Parties (CoP), which take place every two to three years, provide a strategic platform to advance science-based policymaking, reinforce U.S. leadership, and build strong diplomatic alliances and cooperation. At such meetings, the Parties review the implementation of CITES, make decisions regarding the financing and function of the CITES Secretariat, decide on species amendments to Appendices I and II, consider reports presented by the Secretariat and Parties, and adopt recommendations for improving the implementation and effectiveness of CITES.

In addition to the CoPs, the work of the Parties is also carried out through regular Committee meetings, which take place yearly between CoPs. These include the Standing Committee, Animals Committee, and Plants Committee meetings. The Standing Committee provides policy and operational direction to the Secretariat regarding CITES implementation, considers implementation and enforcement matters, and advises the other committees as appropriate. The Animals and Plants Committees consider scientific and technical matters and provide guidance based on biological and other specialized knowledge. Among other responsibilities, the Animals and Plants Committees undertake periodic reviews of CITES-listed species to ensure that species are appropriately listed and advise when trade in a particular species may be unsustainable. Throughout this work, the Service adheres to the principles of scientific objectivity and integrity and uses the best available scientific information and trade data to inform U.S. positions and in making required non-detriment findings.

The Service supports effective CITES implementation in the United States through a variety of activities: administering the Country-wide permitting program, maintaining trade records and compiling annual trade reports, consulting and coordinating with the CITES Secretariat and other CITES Parties, supporting law enforcement efforts, monitoring trade levels, and revising U.S. regulations to reflect updated CITES policies. The Service has also focused on strengthening the capacity of partners to implement CITES in their own countries, play leadership roles in CITES decision-making, and improve the effectiveness of CITES broadly.

Supporting U.S. State, Tribal, and Local Economies through Conservation of Native Species

The Service works to enhance trust, reduce regulatory burden, and ensure that biologically sustainable wildlife trade remains an important part of the U.S. economy by working directly with partner State agencies and Tribes to implement CITES for U.S. native species of economic importance. Examples of this collaboration include assessing the status of native species impacted by trade, seeking input on CITES permit findings where appropriate, facilitating participation on U.S. delegations to CITES meetings, and coordinating CITES export programs. Through its CITES Interagency Coordination Committee, the Service works closely with all U.S. agencies with equity in wildlife trade, including the States through the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), to facilitate communication and coordination, and ensure a coordinated and agreed U.S. government approach in CITES.

Innovating and Improving a Responsive and Efficient Permitting Process

The Service's conservation permitting program managed through the International Affairs program issues more than 20,000 permits and certificates to the American public per year under CITES and other permitting authorities. These permits support U.S. international wildlife trade, valued at more than \$1 billion annually. These permits are a critical tool for law enforcement globally to distinguish the legal from illegal trade which is estimated annually to be \$7-\$23 billion for wildlife and plants and another \$30-\$100 billion for illegal logging and associated trade. The permits and certificates authorize a wide variety of activities, such as import, export, re-export, and introduction from the sea; captive breeding of non-native species; and interstate commerce.

This permitting work supports individuals, businesses, scientific institutions, States, Tribes, and others, and is a strong component of the Service's efforts in supporting the U.S. economy, small business and local livelihoods dependent on our renewable natural resources. In addition, this work is a component of the Service's efforts to prevent emerging pandemics, as permits facilitate the import and re-export of biological samples needed for medical research, including studies preventing future outbreaks of zoonotic diseases.

In evaluating permit applications, the Service uses the best available biological information to make findings, as required by Service regulations and CITES. This includes determining if the specimens to be exported were legally acquired and whether the export will be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild, or under the ESA, whether it will enhance the survival of species. Decisions on whether to issue permits are frequently made in close consultation with foreign CITES authorities, State wildlife agencies and Tribes, other Federal agencies, the CITES Secretariat, other relevant experts, and applicants. The Service is carrying out a permit improvement plan to modernize its International Affairs permitting program, reduce processing delays, and meet the current and future needs of the American public. By aligning staff, processes, and technology, the Service is using data to assign work more efficiently, prioritize applications based on conservation and economic factors, and streamline review steps. Where appropriate, steps will be automated, revised, or removed to speed up our processing and approvals without losing scientific rigor. These improvements will also give applicants greater transparency into the status of their applications and estimated processing times—ensuring that those who depend on timely decisions have the information they need, when they need it.

ePermits

In 2020, the Service introduced ePermits, an online system that allows applicants to apply for permits electronically. Several Service programs collaborated to create this system to issue their respective permits, and more programs may join in the future. ePermits simplifies the application process, making it more efficient and less burdensome for those involved in legal, sustainable trade and other wildlife use. In the future, ePermits will also support automated processes using technology such as artificial intelligence to assist with reviewing applications, issuing permits, and reporting—all of which will enable permit processors to make better decisions based on data. As ePermits evolves over time and functionality expands, the Service can shift staff away from administrative tasks and allow them to focus on processing more permits, reducing applicant burden, and improving customer service, all while maintaining or increasing the conservation benefits of permitting.

Cross Program Strategies***Combating Wildlife Trafficking***

Wildlife trafficking is a direct threat to many species and is a multibillion-dollar transnational criminal industry that involves the unlawful harvest of and international trade in animals and plants, including their parts and derivatives. This illegal activity poses a threat to our national security, and economic prosperity by draining valuable and limited natural resources, fueling organized criminal syndicates, and robbing sovereign nations of lawful revenue. The International Affairs program works to reduce the threats to American borders, including the potential for zoonotic disease outbreaks as well as the introduction of foreign pests that may have severe impacts on American industries, by tackling illicit activity before it reaches our shores. With funds from the Service's program on International Conservation, the International Affairs program operates at a critical point in the supply chain and prevents the illegal hunting and trafficking of threatened wildlife.

Partnerships to Tackle Transnational Crime

Our International Affairs and Office of Law Enforcement programs represent the Department of the Interior on the interagency Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking (Task Force). Bringing together 17 Federal departments and agencies, the Task Force serves as the primary Federal platform for coordination and priority-setting for a whole-of-government approach to wildlife trafficking. Through the Task Force, the Service helps implement the Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt (END) Wildlife Trafficking Act, providing support to develop and advance anti-trafficking strategies at U.S. Embassies in countries identified as significant source, transit, or destination locations for the illegal wildlife trade. An example of the impact of this coordination includes denying U.S. visa access to individuals in other countries involved in wildlife crime.

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Fish and Aquatic Conservation

Fish and Aquatic Conservation

Dollars in Thousands (\$000)

Activity	2024 Actual	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request
Fish and Aquatic Conservation Total	226,793	223,016	152,015

^{1/} Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the “Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025” (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Overview

Since its founding, the Service has worked to conserve and restore populations of aquatic species and their habitats. The Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program (FAC) operates in a collaborative and integrated fashion, utilizing innovative tools, expertise, partnerships, and strategies to provide a holistic approach rooted in the mission and goals of the Administration. These complementary strategies are as essential to our mission as the facilities, and dedicated staff in communities across the country.

Every \$1 million invested through FAC projects generate over \$2.5 million in local output and 17+ private-sector jobs—a proven multiplier that keeps paychecks and spending power in towns across America.

America’s freshwater ecosystems are among the world’s richest in abundance and variety. These waters, and the species that reside within them, support recreational, commercial, and subsistence fishing as well as economic, cultural, and community resilience. FAC contributes to the long-term conservation of these ecosystems by further supporting recreational, commercial, and subsistence

fishing as well as rehabilitating habitat and restoring connectivity in these systems. Our facilities welcomed more than 1.3 million visitors last year, providing recreational opportunities, and inspiring new generations of stewards.

Program Elements

The Fish and Aquatic Conservation program is comprised of the following program elements:

- National Fish Hatchery System (NFHS) Operations - employs advanced propagation and supplementation techniques ensuring more than 100 million healthy fish and other aquatic species are available annually to meet mitigation and tribal trust responsibilities as well as support recreational, subsistence, and commercial fishing economies. In addition to National Fish Hatcheries, the NFHS also includes Fish Health Centers, Fish Technology Centers, and the Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Program.
- Maintenance and Equipment - maintains and improves property and equipment, including the repair, rehabilitation modernization, and replacement of mission critical assets, for 85 facilities and field offices conducting aquatic habitat and species conservation work.

- Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation - develops the science and evidence-based information the Service and its partners rely upon to assess, conserve, and restore freshwater aquatic habitats and native fish species. Specific program areas include:
 - Habitat Assessment and Restoration - improves habitat for native freshwater fish and other aquatic organisms through collaborative programs such as the National Fish Passage Program and the National Fish Habitat Partnership.
 - Population Assessment and Cooperative Management - works in cooperation with Tribes and other partners to understand current and emerging challenges facing our Country's native aquatic species and freshwater habitats, to proactively manage these complex systems, and monitor and evaluate the impacts of conservation actions.
- Aquatic Invasive Species - prevents and controls the introduction and spread of invasive species, a primary threat to the Country's natural resources.

Socio-Economic Benefits:

The cascading environmental, social, and economic benefits stemming from the Service's work to individuals and communities nationwide are clear, with investments resulting in substantial impacts. For example, Apache trout have been delisted from the Endangered Species Act after decades of work and co-stewardship with the White Mountain Apache Tribe; Early Detection and Rapid Response strategies with States are preventing invasive species from taking hold; and 13 Federal agencies are working together as part of the Federal Interagency Fish Passage Task Force to share resources and expertise on aquatic barrier removal, reducing risk from flooding, and improving access to recreational opportunities. FAC's work through the National Fish Passage Program create construction, engineering, and other jobs, stimulating local economies while restoring degraded and fragmented river, tidal, and floodplain habitats.

A recent analysis estimated that for every \$1 million invested in 2022-2023 for fish passage projects, an average of 13 jobs were supported and \$1.5 million was contributed to the project area's local economy through construction and implementation. The 2022 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation reported that nearly 40 million anglers, age 16 or older, went fishing in 2022, spending a combined \$99.4 billion, with the average angler spending \$2,490 per year.

Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders

The Fish and Aquatic Conservation program is authorized by a wide range of statutes, treaties, compacts, and orders. Relevant statutes and orders include, but are not limited to:

- *The Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742a-742j)* - establishes a comprehensive national fish and wildlife policy and authorizes the Secretary to take steps required for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fisheries and wildlife resources through research, acquisition of refuge lands, development of existing facilities, and other means.
- *The Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661-666(e))* - directs the Service to investigate and report on proposed Federal actions that affect any stream or other body of water and to provide recommendations to minimize impacts on fish and wildlife resources.
- *The Endangered Species Act (ESA) (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544)* - prohibits the import, export, or taking of fish and wildlife and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered species; provides for adding species to and removing them from the list of threatened and

- endangered species; and for preparing and implementing plans for their recovery.
- *The Mitchell Act (16 U.S.C. 755-757)* - authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to carry on activities for the conservation of fishery resources in the Columbia River Basin.
 - *The Colorado River Storage Project Act (43 U.S.C. 620)* - provides that facilities will be built and operated to mitigate losses of, and improve conditions for, fish and wildlife in connection with the Colorado River Storage Project.
 - *The Sikes Act (16 U.S.C. 670a-670o)* - directs the Secretary of Defense to conserve and rehabilitate natural resources on military installations and requires the military to work with the Service in preparing integrated natural resource management plans.
 - *The Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Species Prevention and Control Act, as amended by the National Invasive Species Act, (NISA, 16 U.S.C. 4701 et seq.)* - authorizes the Service to develop and implement a program to prevent and control infestations of zebra mussels and other nonindigenous aquatic invasive species in waters of the United States.
 - *The Lacey Act Amendment, (18 U.S.C. 42; 16 U.S.C. 3371-3378)* - provides that the Secretary designate injurious wildlife and ensure the humane treatment of wildlife shipped to the United States.
 - *America's Conservation Enhancement Act, (16 U.S.C. 8201 et seq.)* - Title II encourages partnerships among public agencies and other interested persons to promote fish conservation. It codified the National Fish Habitat Partnership and established a new 26-member National Fish Habitat Board to promote, oversee, and coordinate implementation of the program.
 - *Executive Order 14154: Unleashing American Energy (January 20, 2025)* – encourages energy exploration and production on Federal lands and waters and initiates an immediate review of all agency actions that potentially burden the development of domestic energy resources.
 - *Executive Order 14225: Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production (March 1, 2025)* – facilitates production of timber, lumber, paper, bioenergy, and other wood products as critical to the Country's well-being and essential for construction and energy production.
 - *Executive Order 14239: Achieving Efficiency Through State and Local Preparedness (March 18, 2025)* – recognizes that national security and preparedness is most effectively managed at the State, local, and individual level, supported by the Federal government.
 - *Executive Order 14276: Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness (April 17, 2025)* – promotes productive harvest of our seafood resources and protects seafood markets from unfair trade practices.
 - *Executive Order 14292: Improving the Safety and Security of Biological Research (May 5, 2025)* – addresses concerns about biological agents and pathogens without adequate safeguards.

Subactivity: National Fish Hatchery Operations**Program Description**

The National Fish Hatchery System (NFHS) works with States, Tribes, and other partners and stakeholders to build healthy aquatic systems supporting recreational, subsistence and commercial fishing while advancing broad scale energy harvest and economic development through innovation and supplementation. The system has been operating for more than 150 years under the authority of numerous treaties and consent decrees, statutes, and recovery and restoration plans, and consists of 71 National Fish Hatcheries (NFH), one historic National Fish Hatchery, six Fish Health Centers (Health Centers), seven Fish Technology Centers (Technology Centers), and the Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Partnership Program (AADAP).

The Health Centers detect, identify, monitor, and mitigate diseases inside and outside fish hatcheries. By detecting emerging diseases in fish and other aquatic organisms, the work supports early intervention and risk management, preventing zoonotic spillover or disruptions to commercial aquaculture and fisheries. These efforts directly support Executive Order 14292 to improve safety and security of biological research by reinforcing biosafety practices, enabling science-based oversight, and minimizing the potential for unintended risks. Incorporating aquatic pathogen monitoring into national biosecurity frameworks ensures comprehensive threat reduction across both terrestrial and aquatic systems.

Technology Centers are instrumental in advancing innovative technologies that address critical aquatic system management challenges and advance industry growth, directly supporting the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. Through their focus on aquaculture, species restoration, and fish health management, these centers generate essential scientific outputs that underpin evidence-based policymaking. By leveraging cutting-edge tools like artificial intelligence, data analytics, and genomics, they drive industry leading research and practical solutions for aquatic system health. Their collaborative efforts across government, academia, and industry contribute directly to maintaining the Country's leadership in both environmental conservation and emerging technologies, reinforcing the importance of a balanced, forward-thinking approach to innovation.

The Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Partnership program is the only program in the country dedicated to securing U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approvals for fish health-related medications. AADAP's National Investigational New Animal Drug (INAD) Program provides legal access to 18 medications while they are working their way through FDA's drug approval process. These medications keep fish and other aquatic animals healthy by treating diseases caused by parasites and bacteria; sedating animals so that they may be safely handled; and assisting in spawning aquatic animals that would otherwise not spawn on their own. An average of 24 million fish and 75 different fish species per year are treated using INADs through 900 studies that are then used to support new drug development for aquatic animals. AADAP increases the Service's science capacity and contributes to the agency's unique and critical role in innovative new animal drug approvals.

Subactivity: Maintenance and Equipment**Program Description**

By developing and applying wide-ranging aquaculture methods and products, the NFHS builds healthy aquatic systems supporting recreational, subsistence and commercial fishing while advancing broad scale energy harvest and economic development through innovation and supplementation, directly reinforcing partners like Tribes and industry. The NFHS' 85 facilities (71 National Fish Hatcheries, one historic National Fish Hatchery, six Fish Health Centers, seven Fish Technology Centers) are showing their wear, with the average National Fish Hatchery age over 80 years old. Finding ways to modernize our facilities is vital to ensure the NFHS advances the needs and progress of the partners like Tribes and industry by innovating and sharing modern aquaculture practices.

Properly functioning hatcheries require complex life-sustaining system of wells, pumps, pipelines, filters, and heating/cooling equipment to deliver a consistent, well-oxygenated water supply; tanks, ponds, and raceways to grow fish; and boats and trucks to transport this valuable cargo to its destination. A comprehensive asset management system prioritizes water flow, control and quality to sustain captive aquatic populations to meet NFHS and Service goals.

Deferred Maintenance

Applying deferred maintenance funds to the NFHS offers a critical opportunity to modernize and streamline its infrastructure in support of long-term mission resilience while also reducing the current backlog. These funds can be strategically invested in upgrading water management systems, replacing aging mechanical and electrical equipment, and integrating cost efficient technologies. By focusing on projects that innovate outdated systems and mitigate risks, resource shortages, or system failure, the NFHS can transition from reactive asset management to a forward-looking, resilient operational model. This modernization effort directly supports federal priorities around infrastructure efficiency, cost-effective stewardship, and strategic investment in natural resource facilities.

Annual Maintenance

Applying annual maintenance funds through a lens of lifecycle cost management and preventative maintenance ensures the NFHS maintains operational integrity while minimizing long-term expenses. Regular servicing and performance optimization of core infrastructure, such as pumps, filtration, and energy systems, streamlines operations and reduces emergency repairs resulting in improved production and performance of live animals. Embedding mission resilience and innovation into routine maintenance planning with tools like the Service Asset Maintenance Management System and condition assessments enables facilities to sustain performance under stress, extend the lifespan of assets, and better support goals. This proactive, cost-conscious approach aligns with current executive priorities promoting resilience, efficiency, and innovation in Federal infrastructure systems.

Fisheries Office Maintenance and Equipment

FAC field office maintenance and equipment funds purchase and maintain over \$34 million in assets such as boats, vehicles, and specialized fisheries equipment. This equipment is essential for inventory and monitoring of aquatic species and is critical to the Service's mission to build healthy aquatic systems supporting recreational, subsistence and commercial fishing while advancing broad scale energy harvest

and economic development through innovation and supplementation.

Subactivity: Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation

Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation Overview

The FAC Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation program supports a network of “waders in the water” field biologists dedicated to the protection, restoration, and recovery of native fish and our Country's freshwater ecosystems. Through this program, Service biologists work with partners and local communities to monitor population status and trends; develop sound conservation and management plans; assess and restore habitat; prevent, eradicate, and control aquatic invasive species; and evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of aquatic conservation efforts. The program collaborates internally with other Service programs (e.g., National Wildlife Refuges, Ecological Services, Migratory Birds) and DOI, and externally with Tribes, States, other Federal agencies, private landowners, and local communities to work towards unified goals and objectives on species and ecosystems that cross jurisdictional boundaries.

Work through the Aquatic Habitat and Species Conservation program ensures the responsible investment of taxpayer dollars and is essential to the mission of the Service. This work supports recreational opportunities and the subsequent economic benefits to local communities and provides lessons for future conservation actions to be implemented more effectively. America’s freshwater ecosystems provide important benefits to communities and local economies through recreational, commercial, and subsistence fishing resulting in economic and community resilience.

Habitat Assessment and Restoration

Program Overview

The Service utilizes its national network of field biologists to work with partners to restore aquatic habitats for the benefit of Federal trust species and local communities. Through this network, the Service works to restore normal flows to streams, rivers, floodplains and tidal areas, restore riparian areas and wetlands, remove barriers to fish passage and aquatic connectivity, and improve water quality. The Service enlists the voluntary efforts of landowners and local communities, provides technical expertise, delivers cost-shared resources to complete habitat conservation projects, and organizes habitat conservation projects with Federal agencies, State governments, private landowners, Tribes, local communities, and other organizations. The Service works to restore degraded habitats benefits communities through development of more resilient infrastructure, reduced public safety hazards, and improved recreational opportunities. The National Fish Passage Program (NFPP) and National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) are two of the tools used by the Service to collaboratively restore aquatic habitats with partners.

National Fish Passage Program

The NFPP is a cooperative conservation program that relies on a small network of Service biologists and engineers stationed throughout the country to provide technical expertise, financial assistance, coordination with partners to plan and implement aquatic ecosystem restoration projects, and installation of fish screens and constructed riffles at agricultural water diversions. The completion of these projects reopens access to tens of thousands of miles of rivers and streams that improve habitat for aquatic

organisms, strengthens infrastructure, improves safely, and provides long term economic and community benefits.

Money invested in fish passage projects supports **\$520 million** in economic value added and represents a \$1.5 million return on every million invested. (FY 2022-FY 2025) (Conserving, Restoring and Enhancing America's Fisheries and Aquatic Resources)

National Fish Habitat Action Plan

Developed in 2006 and updated in 2012, the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Action Plan) provides the framework for the NFHP. In October of 2020, Title II of America's Conservation Enhancement (ACE) Act codified NFHP and established a new 26-member National Fish Habitat Board (Board) to promote, oversee, and coordinate implementation of the program. The Service is leaning into the vision for program implementation established by Title II of the ACE Act.

The Service provides funding and staff support to the Board and 20 Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs) to coordinate hundreds of projects across the U.S. to protect, restore, and improve stream banks, provide aquatic connectivity, plant vegetation, renovate oyster reefs, and improve other habitat conditions. The Service coordinates with FHPs to develop strategic plans, identify and develop priority fish habitat conservation projects, provide technical and engineering support, and assist with required environmental compliance and permitting. All projects funded through this program are evaluated relative to the extent that they improve recreational fishing and increase public access.

Population Assessment and Cooperative Management

Program Overview

The Service aids partners in efforts to maintain self-sustaining, healthy, and diverse populations of native fish and other aquatic species. Service biologists monitor native fish and other aquatic species population status and trends, and work with partners to develop sound plans to conserve these resources. A particular focus through the Population Assessment and Cooperative Management program is fulfilling the Tribal trust responsibilities of the Federal government by providing fisheries technical assistance, training, financial support, and equipment to help strengthen Tribal Nations.

Monitoring and Assessment

For more than 150 years, the Service and its partners have assessed and monitored the outputs and outcomes of fish and aquatic conservation and management efforts. Service biologists across the country provide valuable technical expertise and capacity, working with partners to strategically plan, collect, and compile the data necessary to establish a wide range of conservation and management strategies and actions. These fundamental and foundational activities contribute to achieving a desired biological outcome for native fish and other aquatic species. Threats to fish and other aquatic species and their habitats are predicted to continue to grow in frequency and complexity, resulting in the need for robust assessment and monitoring capacity to collect, assemble, and provide the best available data to inform conservation and management actions.

Tribal Trust Responsibilities

The Service works with Tribes, Tribal consortia, and Tribal resource agencies to manage a diverse array of fish and aquatic resources on millions of acres of Tribal and Alaska Native lands, usual and accustomed areas of Tribal use, and/or ceded lands pursuant to Treaty rights. The Service plays a key role fulfilling the Tribal trust responsibilities of the Federal government by providing technical assistance, training, financial support, and equipment to help strengthen Tribal Nations.

Alaska Subsistence Management Program

Subsistence harvest of wild foods is a cornerstone of traditional Native and non-Native rural life in Alaska. For many rural Alaska communities there are no alternative food sources. There are 130,973 people, approximately 16 percent of all Alaska residents, living in rural areas of the State that qualify for a Federal subsistence priority. The State's rural residents harvest about 18,000 tons of wild foods each year - an average of 295 pounds per person. Fish make up about 56 percent of this harvest statewide. Federal subsistence management is a joint effort of both the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture to implement the subsistence management program and enforce subsistence regulations. FWS works closely with the DOI Office of Subsistence Management, which leads the DOI Federal Subsistence Management Program.

Aquatic Invasive Species

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) cause tremendous harm to our environment and inflict enormous economic burdens. Nonnative invasive species are a threat to national security and American interests with direct threats to energy systems, infrastructure, navigation, and human health and safety. Further, they diminish fish and wildlife resources, recreational opportunities, agricultural productivity, personal property values, and public utility operations.

AIS Impacts and Accomplishments

- Since its establishment, the ANSTF has guided development of 47 State or interstate management plans that identify feasible, cost-effective management measures to prevent and control infestations of AIS.
- The Service is continuing to implement the National Early Detection and Rapid Response Framework, strengthening coordination and capacity across jurisdictional boundaries to detect and respond to new invasive species throughout the United States.
- Management and control efforts continue to target quagga and zebra mussels, sea lamprey and invasive carp as high-priority species, leveraging prevention, surveillance, control, and outreach resources among partners.

Preventing the establishment of invasive species is the most effective strategy to avoid long-term costs to the American people. The Service's authority to prevent importation of harmful, injurious species into the U.S. is provided in part by Title 18 of the Lacey Act (18 U.S.C. 42(a)). The Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act (NANPCA) of 1990, amended by the National Invasive Species Act (NISA) in 1996, provides authority for establishment of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANSTF), the only federally mandated intergovernmental organization solely dedicated to preventing and controlling AIS. The ANSTF, co-chaired by the Service (through FAC) and NOAA, works in conjunction

with six regional panels and issue-specific committees to coordinate AIS efforts at national, State, and local levels and creates opportunities and synergies by sharing resources, tools, and expertise across agency and organizational lines.

Despite the best prevention measures, new introductions will occur, but locating and removing species before they can establish, spread and cause irreversible harm is the second line of defense. The Service has made significant strides to strengthen partnerships and use innovative approaches to assess risks and prevent invasive species threats before they become pervasive on the landscape. The AIS program is helping to advance applied technologies to assess and mitigate the environmental and economic risks and impacts associated with the introduction of AIS. Fish Technology Centers are leaders in the development and use of genetic tools to detect invasive species. Program staff also assesses species and pathway risks through risk screening, risk analysis, horizon scanning, and risk planning processes. Once an invasive species becomes established in the environment, multiple tools and significant resources are often necessary to lessen the impacts to public interests. AIS control work has focused on species such as invasive carp, zebra and quagga mussels, aquatic weeds, sea lamprey, and northern snakehead that are found across jurisdictional boundaries where federal coordination is the most effective. FAC plays a lead role in coordinating, implementing, and funding some of this national scale work.

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Science Applications

Science Applications

Activity: Science Applications

Dollars in Thousands (\$000)

Activity	2024 Actual	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request
Science Applications Total	33,781	33,781	0

^{1/} Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Overview

The Service prioritizes empowering landowners, States, and communities, keeping American conservation traditions alive, and preserving working lands for the benefit of species and of agriculture, ranching, timber and other traditional land uses. The 2026 President's Budget does not include funding for this program. The elimination saves U.S. taxpayer money and allows the bureau to focus on higher priority activities, including achieving energy and minerals dominance. This program is duplicative of other science activities funded elsewhere in the FWS and at partner agencies. In addition, some of this work may be continued at the State level and at academic institutions across the country, which are well positioned to focus on issues of regional and local importance.

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General Operations

General Operations

Activity: General Operations

Activity (\$000)	2024 Actual	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request
General Operations Total	153,796	155,501	103,000

^{1/} Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

The 2026 Budget supports the Administration's priority to streamline government and will continue efforts to unify and optimize administrative services across the Department to increase effectiveness and efficiency for the benefit of American taxpayers.

Program Mission

The General Operations Program enables the Service to accomplish its mission by providing management and support across the organization. It provides headquarters, regions, and field offices with resources and support services such as: Directorate leadership; Native American outreach programs; document tracking; budgeting and performance; management of personal property and fleet; acquisition of leased space; economics, analytics, and risk management; safety and health programs; processing of tort and third-party claims and Freedom of Information Act requests; servicewide bill paying; aviation management; National Fish & Wildlife Foundation support; and operation of the National Conservation Training Center. General Operations also ensures that the Service is in compliance with legal, regulatory, and Departmental policies for all administrative functions.

Program Elements

Six subactivities comprise the General Operations Program:

Central Office Operations – Headquarters offices provide the Service with the leadership, strategic direction, and necessary resources to accomplish mission priorities and goals. The offices included in this sub-activity are: Office of the Director; Native American Coordination Office; Regional Directors Offices; and Document Tracking/Controlled Correspondence.

Management and Administration – The Assistant Director for Management and Administration is responsible for the Joint Administrative Operations function which oversees Budget and Performance; Safety; and Economics, Analytics, and Risk Management. The Service centralizes its administrative operations such that functions requiring extensive training, certification or specialized knowledge (e.g., personnel policies and authorities) are centralized for cost and operational efficiencies.

Servicewide Bill Paying – Funds bills for DOI services, including Information Technology (IT), communications, and security. Servicewide Bill Paying also funds Workers' Compensation, Unemployment Compensation, and mail printing services.

Aviation Management – Provides the safety and training oversight of the Fish and Wildlife Service's fleet of planes and pilots, develops aviation policy, and administers the Service's Aviation Fire program, Unmanned Aircraft System Program, and Emergency Management for Aviation incidents.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) – Serves as the official foundation for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It runs a competitive challenge grant program to implement projects that further the conservation and management of fish, wildlife, plants, and other natural resources.

National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) – Opened in 1997 and located on 533 acres along the Potomac River in Shepherdstown, WV, NCTC is FWS's primary training facility and, as such, is considered the "Home" of the Service. NCTC consists of state-of-the-art training classrooms, an auditorium, a museum and archive, and a high-definition studio for video and broadcasting services.

Activity: General Operations

Subactivity: Central Office Operations

Program Overview

The Service's Central Office Operations provide leadership, strategic direction and the organizational management required to accomplish mission priorities and goals. These functions include policy provision from Administration-appointed officials, regional leadership, coordination of Service contact with Native American Tribes, and document tracking.

Native American Programs Coordination Office serves as a key point of contact for Native American Tribes. This office upholds Federal trust responsibility and supports Tribal sovereignty. It strives to work cooperatively with Tribes to further the Service's conservation mission.

Office of Communications oversees and coordinates the communications activities of the Service, including internal communications, public affairs, media services, congressional and legislative affairs, partnerships, webpage development, policy and compliance, printing and publishing, and multimedia communications.

Regional Directors (RDs) manage the conservation of our lands through the administration of programs throughout the Service. This includes development of recommendations on national and regional policies, plans, and procedures implemented by nearly 7,000 highly-skilled biologists, maintenance workers, law enforcement officers, and an array of additional talented personnel. RDs advise the Service Director and engage the public and partners by serving as liaisons to State, local, and tribal governments, as well as civic groups within their respective jurisdictions.

Office of the Director includes the Director, Deputy Director, and staff specialists, and provides policy direction and support for program and management activities of the Service.

Correspondence/Document Tracking is operationalized via DTS to assign correspondence for action, route correspondence to officials for their review and concurrence, and track correspondence and other packages. Developed by the Service, DTS is used across all bureaus of the Department.

Activity: General Operations

Subactivity: Management and Administration

Program Overview

Information Resources and Technology Management (IRTM)

The Service's Assistant Director for IRTM (AD-IRTM) is responsible for partnering with Service programs to ensure technology requirements of these programs are met. To that end, IRTM is responsible for the development of policy and Service-wide management and technology guidance that impact a myriad of business management and operational activities within the Service. IRTM develops, plans, and manages Service-wide Information Management and Technology functions and resources that enable all programs and regions in the Service to perform their mission.

The AD-IRTM also serves as the Bureau Associate Chief Information Officer (ACIO) and represents the Service as an active member of the DOI Chief Information Officer's Information Management and Technology Leadership Team. The components of IRTM include Operations, Policy/Planning, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Data Management, Cybersecurity and Privacy. These components cut across the full spectrum of information management and technology services to include customer support, infrastructure management, requirements processing, governance, strategic planning, geospatial services, application development and records management. The ACIO also manages the IT Investment Portfolio on behalf of the Service and oversees all IT acquisitions and complies with the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA).

Joint Administrative Operations (JAO)

The JAO provides administrative support essential to achieving conservation outcomes on the ground. JAO includes:

- *Budget and Performance:* Formulates, justifies, coordinates, and executes the Service's budget.
- *Administrative Services:* Manages personal property and fleet, and acquisition of leased space
- *Economics, Analytics, and Risk Management:* Coordinates OIG/GAO audits, creates Federal Register notices, and performs enterprise risk management, economic analysis, and enterprise analytics.
- *Safety:* Ensures safety and occupational health and processes tort and third-party claims.
- *Freedom of Information Act:* Coordinates and manages incoming FOIA requests across the Service.

Activity: General Operations**Subactivity: Servicewide Bill Paying****Program Overview**

Servicewide Bill Paying processes bills received by the Service for charges from the Department or other outside entities.

Communications, Information Technology, and Security

Expenses in this category include payments for domestic and international network services; costs associated with land, wireless, radio, and satellite communications; Certification and Accreditation (C&A) costs for IT systems; providing security for IT systems; and improving compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements. The funds in this category are exclusively for bills required to keep IT operations secure and modern.

DOI Working Capital Fund (WCF)

The Department of the Interior provides centralized administrative and business services and systems to its bureaus and offices and to other customers. The budget request includes funding for the Service's portion of the WCF bill.

Servicewide Workers' Compensation and Unemployment Compensation Costs

Workers' compensation covers costs associated with accidental on-duty injuries and deaths of employees. Unemployment compensation costs represent the estimated annual costs of paying unemployment compensation claims.

Postage

Expenses in this category include contract charges for intra-agency and Departmental courier and mailroom services.

Printing

Despite having reduced printing costs through the use of electronic media, printing is still required for certain documents during the course of business. The Service incurs the cost for printing these documents.

Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks (AS-FWP)

The Service contributes funding to cover the costs of salary, benefits, and travel for certain personnel under the Assistant Secretary for activities directly related to the Service.

Reimbursable Support Agreements

Expenses in this category relate to support services provided by the Department and external agencies. Examples include the Employee Assistance Program, administration of the Flexible Spending Plan, and storage services provided by the National Archives and Records Administration.

Memberships

Organizations sharing the Service's priorities may share membership and participation in professional, scientific, and conservation organizations.

Activity: General Operations**Subactivity: Aviation Management****Program Overview**

The safety and training oversight of the Fish and Wildlife Service's fleet of planes and pilots is the responsibility of the National Aviation Management office. The Assistant Director of the Migratory Bird Program serves as the bureau's Aviation Executive, overseeing this office and representing the Service as a voting member of the DOI's Executive Aviation Committee (EAC), which is responsible for developing strategic aviation objectives and initiatives. The National Aviation Manager, as a member of the DOI Executive Aviation Subcommittee (EAS), is responsible implementing the tasks assigned by the EAC. Additionally, the office is responsible for Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) program development within DOI, and the Service's Emergency Management for aviation incidents.

The National Aviation Management Office administers all Service aircraft acquisitions and vendor contracts in coordination with the Interior Business Center's Acquisition Services. The Service has identified and is implementing six priorities that will immediately improve its aviation enterprise: Automated Flight Following, Crew Resource Management, Instrument Procedures Simulator Training Program, Standardized Risk Assessment Processes, Aviation Management Communications, and National Aviation Training Plan.

The National Aviation Management Office uses its resources to meet the legal requirements of several important laws. These include the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Alaska Native Interests Lands Conservation Act, the Pacific Salmon Treaty, the Endangered Species Act, and Executive Order 14153 and DOI Secretary's Order 3422, "Unleashing Alaska's Extraordinary Resource Potential."

Activity: General Operations**Subactivity: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation****Program Overview**

Created by Congress in 1984, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) serves as the official foundation for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. NFWF is the Country's largest private conservation grant-maker supporting more than 20,400 projects in all 50 States. NFWF is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization lead by a Board of Directors approved by the Secretary of Interior.

The *NFWF-USFWS Conservation Partnership* supports a wide variety of grant recipients to implement projects that further the conservation and management of fish, wildlife, plants, and other natural resources. All of the funding is directed to on-the-ground conservation and no funds are used to support NFWF's administrative costs.

The NFWF runs a competitive challenge grant program with a statutory non-Federal matching requirement of 1:1 for all federally-appropriated dollars that NFWF awards. In recent years NFWF has averaged a 3:1 match. All grantee matching funds are non-Federal funds provided in cash or as in-kind services. NFWF uses the funding to leverage additional commitments of resources from corporations,

foundations, and conservation partners. The funds are invested through outcome-focused grant programs guided by conservation business plans developed in partnership with the Service. Individual projects are reviewed by diverse outside reviewers (e.g., Federal, State, non-profit, educational and private sector), NFWF, and the Service.

Activity: General Operations**Subactivity: National Conservation Training Center****Program Overview**

The National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's primary training facility. It opened in 1997 and is located on 533 acres along the Potomac River in Shepherdstown, WV. In addition to training Service employees, NCTC provides training on a reimbursable basis to conservation professionals from DOI, Federal, State, tribal, and local governments, not-for-profit conservation organizations, private landowners, and the business community. NCTC is a state-of-the-art training facility with multiple classroom buildings, a maintenance professional training facility, auditorium, the USFWS Museum and Archive, the USFWS Library, and a high-definition studio for video and broadcasting.

The NCTC delivers training in person and in virtual environments that reaches over 8,300 participants across 619 training days. Courses include a wide range of mission-critical curricula including leadership, program academies, biology, conservation policy, safety, and maintenance professional training. The NCTC's innovative training is also adapted to support virtual courses through remote learning training videos and webinars. Training curricula aligns with the Administration and DOI's priorities, such as enhanced recreational access to natural resources, restoring energy dominance, and fulfilling stewardship responsibilities.

In alignment with Secretary's Order 3429—*Consolidation, Unification and Optimization of Administrative Functions*, some training functions will be consolidated in FY 2026 under the Department. The NCTC facilities will be utilized to support the Department of Interior's Office of Employee Development.

Construction

Construction

Appropriations Language

For construction, improvement, acquisition, or removal of buildings and other facilities required in the conservation, management, investigation, protection, and utilization of fish and wildlife resources, and the acquisition of lands and interests therein; \$13,709,000, to remain available until expended.

Note.--This account is operating under the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (Division A of Public Law 119-4).

Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders

FWS has the legal mandate and responsibility to ensure its inventory of assets, facilities, and infrastructure is safe and adequate to accomplish its conservation mission and that operations are conducted in compliance with applicable regulations. More than 19 laws, statutes, and executive orders govern what the Construction program executes the funding it receives from Congress. Governing authorities are discussed below.

Refuge Recreation Act (16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4). Authorizes development of fish and wildlife areas for recreational use, including land acquisition and facilities construction and management.

National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee). Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to award contracts for the provision of public accommodations of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 715-715d, 715e, 715f-715r). Provides for land acquisition, construction, maintenance, development, and administration for migratory bird reservations.

Fish and Wildlife Act (16 U.S.C. 742a-742f). Authorizes the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources, including the acquisition and development of existing facilities.

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 9601- 9675). Authorizes Federal agencies to conduct cleanup and/or recover costs associated with releases of hazardous substances on or from land under our jurisdiction, custody, or control.

Federal Facilities Compliance Act (42 U.S.C. 6961). Requires Federal agencies to comply with Federal, State, and local solid and hazardous waste laws in the same manner as any private party.

Pollution Prevention Act, (42 U.S.C. 13101, 13101 note, 13102-13109), as amended by P.L. 101-508. Requires pollution that cannot be prevented at the source to be recycled in an environmentally sound manner and disposal as a last resort.

Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act (42 U.S.C. 7701 -7706). Establishes an earthquake hazards reduction program.

National Dam Safety Program Act (33 U.S.C. 467). Provides for Federal agencies to implement the Federal Guidelines for Dam Safety, which established management practices for dam safety at all Federal agencies.

National Energy Conservation Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 8152-8259). Establishes an energy management program in the Federal government and directs Federal agencies to perform energy surveys and implement energy conservation opportunities.

Energy Policy Act (EPAct) (P.L. 109-58). Extends previous Congressional direction to Federal facility managers with even greater goals of energy efficiency improvements in existing and new facilities, sustainable building design and construction, metering of all Federal buildings, and procurement of Energy Star equipment.

Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA) (P.L. 110-140). Intends to move the United States toward greater energy independence and security; protect consumers; increase the efficiency of products, buildings, and vehicles; and improve the energy performance of the Federal Government.

Energy Act of 2020 (P.L. 116-260). Expands energy and water investment requirements; expands energy auditing and reporting requirements; adds water metering to covered facilities; authorizes the Federal Energy Management Program (FEMP) and establishes program goals around energy and water resilience and environmental stewardship.

Migratory waterfowl and other wildlife refuge in California (16 U.S.C. 695k-695r). Provides for limitations on reduction of areas by diking or other construction in California and Oregon in the case of migratory waterfowl and other refuges, as well as other construction provisions.

Preservation of Fishery Resources (16 U.S.C. 760-1 to 760-12). Provides for the construction, equipping, maintenance, and operation of several named fish hatcheries.

National bridge and tunnel inventory and inspection standards (23 U.S.C. 144). Requires bridges on public highways and roads to be inspected.

Appropriation: Construction*Dollars in Thousands (\$000)*

Activity	2024 Actual	2025 Notional¹	2026 Request
Nationwide Engineering Services	5,588	5,588	5,588
Dam, Bridge, and Seismic Safety	2,427	2,427	2,427
Construction Projects	11,265	11,265	5,694
Total	19,280	19,280	13,709

¹/Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the “Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025” (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Overview

As a steward for America’s public lands, FWS’ infrastructure projects help millions of visitors experience our national treasures, provide water to the West, and support American jobs. FWS’ infrastructure projects support modernizing facilities and operations through new construction and rehabilitation projects, using American-made materials. The agency’s lifecycle management approach to infrastructure management delivers high-quality, timely, cost-effective, and code-compliant construction projects in support of FWS’ wildlife and public use mission objectives, including high-quality hunting and fishing. The Construction program delivers exceptional engineering design and construction, facility maintenance, and regulatory compliance to provide these benefits and deliver the FWS mission to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Construction program provides for the major maintenance, modernization, renewal, and improved lifespan of FWS facilities and is integral to the overall management of FWS’ portfolio.

Construction funding supports engineering and technical program management for FWS’ entire inventory of assets, including 573 National Wildlife Refuges, 38 Wetland Management Districts, 48 coordination areas, seven National Monuments, 70 National Fish Hatcheries and one historic fish hatchery, 51 Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices, six Fish Health Centers, seven Fish Technology Centers, Office of Law Enforcement Regional Area Offices, Field Offices, the Forensics Lab and Eagle Repository, and Ecological Services Field Offices, including the Puerto Rican Parrot recovery program and Black Footed Ferret recovery facility, as well as encouraging and expanding consolidation and colocation across Service programs.

Program Elements

Construction appropriations consist of the three activities and program elements.

Nationwide Engineering Services

Nationwide Engineering Services (NES) manages numerous construction and maintenance projects each year and protects employees, visitors, and volunteers by ensuring that operations comply with safety, laws and regulations and supports access to FWS lands.

Dam, Bridge, and Seismic Safety

The Dam, Bridge, and Seismic Safety activity supports the safety and security of FWS dams, bridges, and buildings. This effort is primarily accomplished for the most critical structures through inspections, assessments, and monitoring. Many of the functions carried out in this activity are prescribed by law.

Line-Item Construction

The Line-Item Construction activity contains the specific construction projects requesting funding each year. These projects reconstruct, repair, rehabilitate, and replace existing buildings or other structures/facilities, including dams and bridges. Projects for modernization, alteration, and construction of new buildings, structures and weather-related damage restoration and stabilization to ensure resiliency may be included. Funding covers project-specific planning, design, and construction management; construction, demolition, site work, and land acquisition; and the purchase of associated fixtures and equipment. These investments are critical to protect Federal lands and neighboring communities and implement lifecycle management to maximize the return on investment and maintain infrastructure in good condition.

Activity: Nationwide Engineering Services**Program Overview**

The Nationwide Engineering Services activity supports the implementation of safe, resilient construction and maintenance projects, regardless of funding source, and provides the guidance needed to comply with environmental and energy laws. The three program elements that comprise this activity are discussed below.

Core Engineering Services

Funding in Core Engineering Services provides technical oversight for construction and maintenance projects throughout FWS, regardless of funding source. Engineers provide technical expertise and assistance to the field for the entire construction lifecycle for Line-Item projects, Deferred Maintenance, and Federal Highways projects. Accomplishing these varied projects requires Headquarters' policy development, budget formulation and execution, coordination for efficiency and national technical consistency, and day-to-day supervision and technical guidance from regional managers.

Environmental Compliance

The Environmental Compliance program supports natural resource conservation and protects the health and safety of employees, visitors, and volunteers. On-site environmental compliance audits protect our natural resources by requiring proper management of hazardous wastes and hazardous materials and ensuring wastewater discharges entering rivers and streams are below EPA thresholds. Audits also ensure that drinking water provided by on-site systems is safe and in compliance with monitoring requirements. The program provides oversight, technical assistance, and training for more than 700 field stations to help ensure compliance with complex environmental laws and regulations at Federal, State, local, and tribal levels. The program also restores natural resources by providing project oversight and technical assistance for the clean-up of large-scale environmental contamination of air, water and soil pollution that may adversely affect human health and the environment.

Recently completed clean-ups demonstrate the positive impact on wildlife and benefit to the local

community associated with beneficial reuse of formerly contaminated areas. For example, at Crab Orchard Refuge in Illinois, hundreds of acres of land contaminated by previous industrial use have been cleaned up, with the restored land supporting an active agricultural program that includes haying, row crop production, and cattle grazing. These historical agricultural lands are still farmed through cooperative agreements with the Refuge.

Waste Prevention, Recycling and Environmental Management Systems

This program element supports the cost-efficient management of resources across FWS. It focuses on reducing operational costs, improving energy and water efficiency, and optimizing key program areas such as fleet management, waste product disposal, and overall general waste reduction to enhance facility performance and ultimate cost savings.

Activity: Dam, Bridge, and Seismic Safety

Program Overview

The Dam, Bridge, and Seismic Safety activity provides information needed for engineers to assess the safety and security of FWS' dams, bridges, and buildings. The three program elements that comprise this activity are discussed below.

Dam Safety and Security

The Dam Safety and Security program supports the safety and security of 16 high hazard dams, part of FWS' inventory of over 300 dams. These dams provide life-sustaining water resources to the American public throughout the country. FWS' dams serve several functions at once by providing community recreation, resiliency for flood control and flood risk reduction, drought mitigation, irrigation, wetland creation, water supply for hatcheries, nesting habitat for waterfowl, and recreational fishing. Funding supports critical activities to ensure FWS' existing portfolio of dams are resilient, maintained, identified for rehabilitation, and properly operated to protect human life, property, the environment, and the valuable natural resources on FWS lands. FWS uses Comprehensive Risk Analysis, hazard classification, individual risk assessments, risk-informed decision making, and the overall inspection condition of the dam to identify and prioritize dam repair and rehabilitation projects within the Services portfolio of dams in accordance with Federal Guidelines for Dam Safety, Departmental Manual, and current state of practice within the industry.



Lake Ilo Dam during and after rehabilitation construction, Lake Ilo National Wildlife Refuge, North Dakota, October 2024.

The formal inspection, analyses and rehabilitation of low hazard dams are the lowest priority based on the risk associated with failure. Formal inspections are recommended every five years in accordance with FEMA P-93, Federal Guidelines for Dam Safety, and conducting these inspections would help ensure compliance with State dam safety programs.

Emergency Action Plans for high and significant hazard potential dams provide site-specific guidance for on-site detection and mitigation of conditions that may cause dam failures, incidents or uncontrolled reservoir releases, and communication protocols for notifying first responders and evacuating downstream populations. Routine Safety Evaluation of Existing Dams (SEED) inspections identify dam deficiencies at the earliest stages so when addressed, FWS may stave off more serious/critical repairs, consequences, or interventions, reducing lifecycle costs, ensuring critical infrastructure resiliency, and avoid increasing the maintenance backlog.

Vehicular Bridge Safety

This funding supports work to improve the safety and integrity of FWS' approximately 700 vehicular bridges that serve essential access functions or provide primary public access. FWS accomplishes this work through the application of technically current design guidelines and a comprehensive inspection, appraisal, and inventory program. Bridge inspections are conducted at time intervals set by statute. During bridge inspections, FWS staff determine and verify safe load-carrying capacity; identify and recommend mitigation of unsafe conditions; and identify maintenance, rehabilitation, or reconstruction needs. As with dam safety projects, funding for bridge safety projects is requested as part of the Line-Item Construction activity.

Seismic Safety

This program element funds planning and analysis of the seismic safety of FWS' approximately 6,500 buildings. The work allows FWS to identify buildings that present a substantial risk to the safety of FWS personnel, volunteers, and visitors in the event of a significant earthquake. Program staff screen FWS owned buildings to identify those that are exceptionally high risk (EHR). Any building found to meet EHR criteria undergoes a rigorous engineering analysis, which includes development of a cost estimate to mitigate seismic deficiencies.

Activity: Line-Item Construction**Program Overview**

FWS has committed to completing Line-Item Construction funded projects in a timely manner. In FY 2024, FWS retrofitted the marine research vessel Tiglax, which is Aleut for eagle. The Tiglax was commissioned in July 1987 for the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, enabling crucial research to be conducted safely in some of the most dangerous waters. It is at sea for up to 200 days each year and covers over 15,000 miles. After nine years of planning and securing funding, five years of professional marine engineering, two years of preparing and issuing a contract, seven months in the shipyard, and 14 days travel back and forth, Tiglax is a new ship. New engines, generators and electrical systems, new navigation systems, new communication systems, and safety system upgrades will give it another 30 years of life, a savings of over \$30 million for the cost of a new vessel.



M/V Tiglax after retrofits, on the left at sea in Alaska and on the right, the interior engine room with all new components.

The requested funding for maintenance balances the operational needs across FWS, ensuring that the highest priority mission assets are receiving lifecycle investments, while also ensuring that other critical mission delivery occurs. The Department and FWS are working to improve performance measurement for construction projects, including a measure that projects are on time and on budget. Taxpayers dollars deserve to be spent efficiently and on projects that provide the greatest benefits to the American people and our treasured resources.

FY 2026 Construction Project Listing by Program

2026 Construction Project Listing by Program						
Program	DOI Rank Score	Interior Region	Station	State	Project Title/Description	Request (\$000)
National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS)	70	Alaska	Kanuti NWR	AK	Construct Fairbanks Office, Phase I of III	2,300
National Fish Hatchery System (NFHS)	65	Mountain Prairie	Valley City NFH	ND	Secure Water Source for Valley City NFH and Baldhill Dam Phase II of III	3,394
<i>Subtotal, NWRS</i>	2,300					
<i>Subtotal, NFHS</i>	3,394					
TOTAL	5,694					

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Project Data Sheet

U.S Fish and Wildlife Service Project Data Sheet

Total Project Score/Ranking: 70
 Planned Funding FY 2026 \$2,300,000
 Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

Project Identification

Project Title: Construct Fairbanks Office, Phase I of III
 Project No: 2024627268
 Unit/Facility Name: Kanuti NWR
 Region/Area/District: Alaska
 Congressional District: AL
 State: AK

Project Justification

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id #	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
35100000	10075368	Fairbanks Office		

Project Description (PD):

This project constructs a new office building for the Service's operations in Fairbanks, Alaska, to replace existing leased space. The project includes the new building and supporting infrastructure. The project will improve and expand public access, increase collaboration with conservation partners, and provide economic benefit for the State and local communities. The General Services Administration lease for the current 27,000 square foot office costs \$1,200,000 per year. Three National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) work out of this office space including Kanuti, Arctic, and Yukon Flats NWRs, with over 29 million-acres of refuge land managed from this location. The new facility will provide required office space for the three refuges and other FWS program offices located in Fairbanks, facilitating conservation partnerships with multiple State, Tribal, and Non-Governmental entities. The facility will meet Department of the Interior and Service space guidance, significantly reducing overall occupied square footage.

Phase 1 [p/d]: Plan Year:2026, Plan Cost: \$2,300,000

This phase of the project is not expected to further address DM&R costs for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Scope of Benefits (SB):

This project demonstrates a major and measurable contribution to established goals and objectives of the Department of Interior and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The refuge system would see an average of \$1,200,000 per year savings in lease costs for the Alaska Region.

Investment Strategy (IS):

A significant reduction in operations and maintenance costs is expected as the new building will be built to meet all energy and sustainability requirements. These cost savings will significantly reduce utility costs for the facility.

Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):

If this project is not completed, the Service will continue to lease office space at a cost of \$1,200,000/ year in a facility that does not meet Service needs. Lease costs are likely to increase at time of lease renewal. Annual lease costs will continue to impact regional budgets and critical funding for other mission needs.

Ranking Categories:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Score</u>
FCI Rating:	N/A	
API Rating:	N/A	
API/FCI	20%	0
Score:		
SB Score:	40%	40
IS Score:	20%	20
CFA Score:	20%	10
Total Score:	(100%)	70

Combined ranking factors = (0.20 x API/FCI score) + (0.40 x SB score) + (0.20 x IS score) + (0.20 x CFA score)

Capital Asset Planning

Capital Plan Business Case No

Required:

VE Study: Scheduled TBD Completed TBD

Project Costs and Status

Project Cost Estimate (this PDS):

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>
Maintenance Work:	\$0
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$2,300
Divestiture Work:	\$0
Total:	\$2,300

Project Funding History (entire project):

<u>History</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>
Funded to Date:	\$0
FY2026-CONSTRUCT Funding (this PDS):	\$2,300
FY2026-FLREA/FLTP/Donation Funding:	\$0
FY2026-FLREA/FLTP/Donation Funding:	\$0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$17,200
Total:	\$19,500

Class of Estimate: A,B,C, D C

Estimate Escalated to FY:

Planning and Design Funds:

Planning Funds Received in FY * \$0

Design Funds Received in FY * \$0

*These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated to the FY2026 budget on this project data sheet.

Major Milestones

Construction

Award/Start

- Scheduled:
- Actual: TBD

Project Complete:

- Scheduled:
- Actual: TBD

Project Data Sheet

Prepared/Last Updated: 05/24

DOI Approved: No

Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$

Current: 0

Projected: 0

Net Change: 0

U.S Fish and Wildlife Service Project Data Sheet

Funding Source: CONSTRUCT

Project Identification

Project Title: Secure Water Source for Valley City NFH and Baldhill Dam Phase II of III
 Project No: 2024618476
 Unit/Facility Name: Valley City NFH
 Region/Area/District: MOUNTAIN PRAIRIE
 Congressional District: 00
 State: ND

Project Justification

DOI Asset Code	FRPP Unique Id #	Description	API:	FCI-Before:
35500200	10027071	BLDG PUMP HOUSE, INTAKE PUMP HOUSE AND RIVER ACCES	100	0.99

Project Description (PD):

The intake pump house at Valley City was constructed in 1967 of concrete at 823 square feet. Sheyenne River water flows are consistently two feet higher than when originally built and has reduced the efficacy of the intake pump house due to silt loads and increases the risk of flood on station. The pipes and pumps need to be replaced due to pipe corrosion and the pumps being outdated, underrated, inefficient, and obsolete. Baldhill Dam NFH subunit receives its water from a reservoir (Lake Ashtabula) located upriver of Valley City NFH via a siphon extending out from the face of the dam. Both water sources are now positive for zebra mussels.

To eliminate invasive zebra mussels, new water filtration systems containing a rotating drum filter, and Ultraviolet (UV) treatment system is needed at both Valley City NFH and Baldhill Dam NFH to secure their water sources. Value Engineering (VE) will be accomplished during the planning/ design phase. An Architecture and Engineering firm completed a 15% planning and design in 2022, and the 85% solution is scheduled to occur in 2024.

These deficiencies were identified during the 2022 Comprehensive Condition Assessment (CCA) via inspection work order (INCA) 2022455765.

BEGIN PHASE INFO WO# 2018308805: Phase 1 [p/d]: Plan Year:2022, Plan Cost: \$326,000; WO# 2024618476: Phase 2 [c]: Plan Year:2026, Plan Cost: \$3,394,000 Phase 3 [c]: Plan Year:2027, Plan Cost: \$306,000 END PHASE INFO

Scope of Benefits (SB):

Valley City National Fish Hatchery including the Baldhill Dam NFH subunit are the only Federal Fish Hatchery facilities located in the Hudson Bay Drainage. Conservation efforts located in this reach including Canadian provinces and interjurisdictional fisheries are negatively impacted by presence and threat of Zebra Mussels in these facilities water supply. The presence of zebra mussels requires securing the water source at both facilities to prevent expansion of Zebra Mussels and further infrastructure failures so that continued restoration and support of wild populations of aquatic animals can take place.

Investment Strategy (IS):

This project will necessarily increase O&M costs due to the additional drum filtration, Ultraviolet (UV) sterilizers, and heaters in the winter.

Consequences of Failure to Act (CFA):

Failure to complete this project could potentially allow for future failure of the pumps and pipes, thus preventing water flow for fish production. This will also allow for the infiltration of Zebra Mussels into the production systems of both Valley City NFH and subunit Baldhill Dam.

<u>Ranking</u> <u>Categories:</u> <u>Category</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Score</u>
FCI Rating:	N/A	0.99
API Rating:	N/A	100
API/FCI Score:	20%	20
SB Score:	40%	40
IS Score:	20%	-5
CFA Score:	20%	10
Total Score:	(100%)	65

Combined ranking factors = (0.20 x API/FCI score) + (0.40 x SB score) + (0.20 x IS score) + (0.20 x CFA score)

Capital Asset Planning

Capital Plan Business Case Required: No

VE Study: Scheduled 2024

Completed TBD

<u>Project Cost Estimate (this PDS):</u>	<u>Project Costs and Status</u>	
<u>Activity</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Maintenance Work:	\$0	0
Modernization/Renewal Work:	\$3,394	100
Divestiture Work:	\$0	0
Total:	\$3,394	100
<u>Project Funding History (entire project): History</u>	<u>Dollars in thousands</u>	
Funded to Date:	\$326	

FY 2026 BUDGET JUSTIFICATION**CONSTRUCTION**

FY2026-CONSTRUCTFunding (this PDS):	\$3,394
FY2026-FLREA/FLTP/Donation Funding:	\$0
FY2026-FLREA/FLTP/Donation Funding:	\$0
Future Funding to Complete Project:	\$306
Total:	\$4.026

Class of Estimate: A, B, C, D C

Estimate Escalated to FY:

Planning and Design Funds:

Planning Funds Received in FY * \$0

Design Funds Received in FY * \$0

*These amounts for planning and design are included in the total formulated to the FY2026 budget on this project data sheet.

Major Milestones

Construction Award/Start

- Scheduled:
- Actual: TBD

Project Complete:

- Scheduled:
- Actual: TBD

Project Data Sheet

Prepared/Last Updated:

05/2

5 DOI Approved: No

Annual Operations & Maintenance Costs \$

Current: 3,794

Projected: 5,000

Net Change: 1,206

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Line-Item Construction Five-Year Plan -FY 2026-2030 (thousands of dollars)

Plan Fund Year	Priority	Facility or Unit Name	Project Title	Cong. District	Total Project	Funded to Date	Funding Request	Remaining to be Funded	Future Years of Plan with Funding	Investment Category/Work Classification	Funding Sources for Other Phases	DOI Score	Estimated DM&R Addressed
2026	1	Kanuti NWR	Construct Fairbanks Office, Phase I of III	AK-AL	\$19,500	\$0	\$2,300	\$17,200		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)		70	\$0
2026	2	Valley City NFH	Secure Water Source for Valley City NFH and subunit, Baldhill Dam [c] Phase II of III	ND-AL	\$4,026	\$326	\$3,394	\$306	2027	Modernization and Renewal (Recapitalization)		65	\$0
Total for Fiscal Year 2026							\$5,694						

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Line-Item Construction Five-Year Plan -FY 2026-2030 Target (thousands of dollars)

Plan Fund Year	Priority	Facility or Unit Name	Project Title	Cong. District	Total Project	Funded to Date	Funding Request	Remainin g to be Funded	Future Years of Plan with Funding	Investment Category/Work Classification	Funding Sources for Other Phases	DOI Score	Estimated DM&R Addressed
2027	1	Patuxent NWR	Chesapeake Bay colocation ES/LE/FWCO	MD- 05	\$4,863	\$0	\$4,388	\$475		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)		90	\$4,800
2027	2	Ankeny NWR	Construct Ankeny Hill Nature Center Phase II of III	OR- 05	\$4,130	\$2,130	\$1,000	\$1,000		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)		45	\$0
2027	3	Valley City NFH	Secure Water Source for Valley City NFH and subunit, Baldhill Dam [c] Phase III of III	ND- AL	\$4,026	\$3,720	\$306	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (Recapitalization)		65	\$0
Total for Fiscal Year 2027							\$5,694						

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Line-Item Construction Five-Year Plan -FY 2026-2030 (thousands of dollars)

Plan Fund Year	Priority	Facility or Unit Name	Project Title	Cong. District	Total Project	Funded to Date	Funding Request	Remainin g to be Funded	Future Years of Plan with Funding	Investment Category/Work Classification	Funding Sources for Other Phases	DOI Score	Estimated DM&R Addressed
2028	1	San Marcos FTC	Co-Location Of Service Staff (ES, LE, FAC) at San Marcos Aquatic Resources Center Phase II of II	TX- 25	\$5,500	\$1,143	\$4,357	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)		55	\$0
2028	2	National Eagle Repository	Replace Building Phase I of II	CO- 08	\$15,000	\$0	\$887	\$14,113		Modernization and Renewal (Replacement)		70	\$0
2028	3	Upper Souris NWR	Lake Darling Dam Semi Quantitative Risk Assessment	ND- 00	\$450	\$0	\$450	\$0		Maintenance		90	\$0
Total for Fiscal Year 2028							\$5,694						

US Fish and Wildlife Service
Line-Item Construction Five-Year Plan -FY 2026-2030 (thousands of dollars)

Plan Fund Year	Priority	Facility or Unit Name	Project Title	Cong. District	Total Project	Funded to Date	Funding Request	Remainin g to be Funded	Future Years of Plan Funding	Investment Category/Work Classification	Funding Sources for Other Phases	DOI Score	Estimated DM&R Addressed
2029	1	Gavins Point NFH	Replace Hatchery Building/Tank Room and Demo Existing Hatchery Building	SD-AL	\$2,800	\$0	\$2,800	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (Replacement)		100	\$2,650
2029	2	SE Idaho Complex	Colocation of multiple FWS Programs with BLM Phase I of II	ID	\$7,500	\$0	\$2,144	\$5,356	2031	Modernization & Renewal (New Constr.)		70	\$0
2029	3	Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge	Quanah Parker Dam Auxiliary Spillway Replacement	OK-04	\$750	\$0	\$750	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (Replacement)		70	\$0
Total for Fiscal Year 2029							\$5,694						

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Line-Item Construction Five-Year Plan -FY 2026-2030 (thousands of dollars)

Plan Fund Year	Priority	Facility or Unit Name	Project Title	Cong. District	Total Project	Funded to Date	Funding Request	Remaining to be Funded	Future Years of Plan Funding with	Investment Category/Work Classification	Funding Sources for Other Phases	DOI Score	Estimated DM&R Addressed
2030	1	National Black-Footed Ferret Conservation Center	Expand Operational and Rearing Facility Infrastructure.	CO-07	\$4,439	\$0	\$4,439	\$0		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)		70	\$475
2030	2	D.D. Eisenhower NFH	Fish Rearing Infrastructure Upgrades([p,d,ic]	VT-AL	\$7,252	\$0	\$1,255	\$5,997		Modernization and Renewal (New Const.)		60	\$800
Total for Fiscal Year 2030							\$5,694						

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Land Acquisition and Deferred Maintenance

Land Acquisition and Deferred Maintenance

Appropriations Language

This account does not require appropriation language due to permanent appropriation authorized by the Great American Outdoors Act, P.L. 116-152 (GAOA). However, Section 200303(c)(1) of GAOA includes a statutory requirement for the Department to submit an allocation of Land and Water Conservation Fund funding to Congress as part of the annual budget process.

Authorizing Statutes

The Fish and Wildlife Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 742a-742j). Authorizes acquisition of additions to the National Wildlife Refuge System for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources by purchase or exchange of land and water or interests therein.

Refuge Recreation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460-460k-4). Authorizes acquisition of areas that are adjacent to or within existing fish and wildlife Conservation Areas administered by the Department of the Interior, and suitable for (1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreation development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of listed, threatened, or endangered species, or (4) carrying out two or more of the above.

Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, as amended (54 U.S.C 200301-200310). Authorizes appropriations to the Fish and Wildlife Service to acquire land for National Wildlife Refuges as otherwise authorized by law.

National Wildlife Refuge Administration Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee). Establishes overall policy guidance, places restrictions on the transfer, exchange, or other disposal of refuge lands, and authorizes the Secretary to accept donations of land.

Endangered Species Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1534-1544). Authorizes the acquisition of land, waters, or interests therein for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, including those that are listed as endangered or threatened species, with Land and Water Conservation Fund Act appropriations.

Emergency Wetlands Resources Act (P.L. 99-645; 100 Stat. 3582). Authorizes the purchase of wetlands, or interests in wetlands, consistent with the wetlands priority conservation plan established under the Act.

Highlands Conservation Act (P.L. 108-421). Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to work in partnership with the Secretary of Agriculture to provide financial assistance to the Highlands States to preserve and protect high priority conservation land in the Highland region.

John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (P.L. 116-9). Permanently authorizes the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The Great American Outdoors Act, National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (P.L. 116-152). Authorizes a permanent appropriation of \$900,000,000 per year from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The LWCF funds the four main Federal land acquisition programs (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management) and provides grants to State and local governments to acquire land for recreation and conservation. Funding is

subject to Congressional allocation; the Act also mandated that account allocations and detailed project information be submitted by the Administration each year through the President's annual budget submission, and that such allocations, following review by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees may be modified through an alternate allocation.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Allocation of Land and Water Conservation Fund FY 2026

Dollars (Net Budget Authority)

Account/Activity/Project	State	Amount
Land Acquisition and Deferred Maintenance		
Federal Purposes		
Federal Land Acquisition		
Acquisition Management		5,408,000
Inholdings, Emergencies and Hardships		5,392,000
Federal Land Acquisition Subtotal		10,800,000
Deferred Maintenance		
Deferred Maintenance		17,260,000
Deferred Maintenance Subtotal		17,260,000
Federal Purposes Subtotal		28,060,000
State and Local Grant Programs		
Highlands Conservation Act (HCA)		10,000,000
State and Local Grants Subtotal		10,000,000
Land Acquisition and Deferred Maintenance Total		38,060,000
<u>Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF)</u>		
State and Local Grant Programs		
Species Recovery Land Acquisition		14,162,000
Habitat Conservation Plan Acquisition		26,000,000
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Total		40,162,000
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service LWCF Total (Net Budget Authority)		78,222,000

FY 2026 Land Acquisition and Deferred Maintenance Summary Table*(Dollars)*

Budget Authority/Activity	Amount
FY 2026 New Budget Authority	33,171,559
FY 2026 Estimated Sequestration Reduction (-5.7%)	-1,890,779
FY 2026 Estimated Pop Up (+5.7% of 2025)	6,779,220
FY 2026 Net Budget Authority	38,060,000

FY 2026 Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Summary Table*(Dollars)*

Budget Authority/Activity	Amount
FY 2026 New Budget Authority	40,163,626
FY 2026 Estimated Sequestration Reduction (-5.7%)	-2,289,327
FY 2026 Estimated Pop Up (+5.7% of 2025)	2,287,701
FY 2026 Net Budget Authority	40,162,000

LWCF funding for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF) program is displayed here to show the entirety of LWCF funding provided to the Service. For more information on program activities, please see the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund chapter.

Appropriation: Land Acquisition and Deferred Maintenance*Dollars in Thousands (\$000) - Net Budgetary Authority*

Activity/Subactivity	2024 Actual	2025 Notional¹	2026 Request
Federal Purposes			
Federal Land Acquisition	108,952	108,952	10,800
Deferred Maintenance	0	0	17,260
State and Local Grants			
Highlands Conservation Grants	10,000	10,000	10,000
Land Acquisition and Deferred Maintenance Total	118,952	118,952	38,060

^{1/} Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Overview

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was established by Congress in 1964 to support the protection of Federal public lands and waters – including national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and public lands recreation areas – and to provide recreation opportunities to all Americans. The LWCF also provides for grants to State and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The Department of the Interior’s 2026 budget proposes a new program for LWCF that supports investments in facilities and deferred maintenance to improve public access to recreation.

Through a variety of programs, LWCF supports our nationwide legacy of high-quality recreation and conservation areas. LWCF receives revenue from offshore oil and gas leasing to support outdoor recreation and conservation of natural, cultural, and historic resources across the country. Every State and most counties in the Country have benefited from the LWCF since its establishment.

The Department of the Interior is responsible for administering and implementing these important programs, in concert with the U.S. Forest Service. The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) amended the LWCF Act to make LWCF funding permanent and LWCF funding is provided through a mandatory account. GAOA requires the President’s annual budget submission to Congress include a proposed allocation of LWCF funding by account, program, and project for consideration as part of the annual budget process. LWCF funding is subject to a sequestration reduction of 5.7 percent. Beginning in FY 2022, the sequestered amount becomes available or “pops up” in the following year. Unless otherwise indicated, amounts referenced in this section reflect the Net Budget Authority that would be available for programs to execute after sequestration adjustments.

The Land Acquisition and Deferred Maintenance appropriation includes FWS’s Federal land acquisition and deferred maintenance programs and the Highlands Conservation Act grants to States program. LWCF also funds the land acquisition portion of Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund grants to States program (described in the CESCFC chapter).



In 2024, the Service acquired 600 acres in fee and a 515-acre conservation easement for Willamette Valley Conservation Area in Oregon. The acquisitions will conserve oak prairie and wetland habitat for the benefit of grassland and marsh birds and wintering waterfowl. Credit: Jonathan Bloomfield, USFWS.

Appropriation: Land Acquisition and Deferred Maintenance**LWCF Category: Federal Purposes****Activity: Federal Land Acquisition***Dollars in Thousands (\$000) - Net Budgetary Authority*

	2024 Actual¹	2025 Notional^{1,2}	2026 Request¹
Land Acquisition Management	18,028	18,028	5,408
Land Protection Planning	493	493	0
Exchanges	1,591	1,591	0
Inholdings, Emergencies, and Hardships	11,000	11,000	5,392
Sportsmen and Recreational Access	15,500	15,500	0
Line-Item Projects	62,340	62,340	0
Subtotal, Federal Land Acquisition	108,952	108,952	10,800

¹Bureau line-item funding amounts are Net Budget Authority, the amount available to execute after sequester and pop-up adjustments. All mandatory LWCF funding is subject to a sequestration reduction of -5.7% across all programs.

² Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Overview

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was established by Congress in 1964 to fulfill a bipartisan commitment to safeguard our natural areas, water resources, and cultural heritage, and to provide recreation opportunities to all Americans. In 1972, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) authorized using LWCF funding for the acquisition of land, waters, or interests therein for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, including those that are listed as endangered or threatened species. Acquired lands and waters become part of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) or National Fish Hatchery System (NFHS). When acquired in fee title, these lands and waters provide the public opportunities to hunt, fish, observe and photograph wildlife, and enjoy environmental education and interpretation. FWS purchases the minimum interest in land that is necessary to meet FWS's conservation mission. Therefore, if conservation easements will meet biological objectives, then typically FWS will pursue those rather than buying the land in fee.

Land Acquisition Management

This activity supports efforts directly related to the acquisition of lands within approved acquisition boundaries of the Refuge System. The funding supports all costs for staff and the administration, implementation, coordination, and evaluation of FWS' Federal land acquisition program. The land acquisition staff maintains the maps and property records for FWS-managed lands, and prepares right-of-way permits for oil, gas, and other pipelines, electrical transmission lines, and other infrastructure. Land acquisition management also funds contracts for boundary surveys, title work, and appraisals when the specific project appropriation is insufficient to fund these costs in addition to land costs, as well as limited DOI Office of the Solicitor preliminary and final title reviews and approvals.

Land acquisition staff provide specialized support for several realty-based functions, including:

- Working with willing sellers, from initial explanations of Federal acquisition options to the final acquisition, including processing and accepting donations. Lands from willing sellers will only be acquired with written approval from impacted state and local governments.
- Providing Agency appraisal coordination, including facilitating communication with DOI and providing bureau oversight to streamline the appraisal process.
- Developing and maintaining spatial and other tools that inform the decision-making process.
- Working collaboratively with Tribes, States, local governments, landowners, non-governmental organizations, and other land management agencies to acquire land for wildlife corridors and public recreation.
- Creating, maintaining, and updating geospatial data, and property records for FWS-managed lands.
- Preparing responses to information requests from a variety of sources.



In 2023, FWS accepted a donation of 19 acres for Erwin National Fish Hatchery. The acquisition allows for protection of the Hatchery's water resources as well as expansion of the public trail system. Credit: Alice Lawrence, USFWS.

Inholdings, Emergencies, and Hardships

FWS uses funding in this activity to support purchases of tracts of land from willing sellers for three categories: inholdings, emergencies, and hardships. In FY 2026 FWS will prioritize acquisition of high-priority inholdings that create a burden to the public. FWS defines any land within an approved acquisition boundary as an inholding. FWS frequently uses funding for inholdings to purchase lands that connect with private or State conserved lands, to create larger contiguous blocks of protected wildlife habitat, and to expand public recreational opportunities. FWS also uses funding for inholdings to acquire small tracts of land when doing so will improve refuge management effectiveness or efficiency, eliminate a costly management problem, or provide or expand public access to existing refuge lands for hunting, fishing, and other compatible wildlife-dependent recreation. This funding allows the Service to capitalize on emergent once-in-a-generation opportunities to conserve fish and wildlife habitat and to be a good neighbor to local landowners.

Use of Residual LWCF Funds

Federal land acquisition projects sometimes have small amounts of funds remaining after land has been acquired. These residual funds are insufficient to acquire additional land. FWS reallocates residual line-item project funds of less than \$50,000 to the Inholdings, Emergencies, and Hardships line item to be used to preserve other lands that do not have project funding.

Appropriation: Land Acquisition and Deferred Maintenance**LWCF Category: Federal Purposes****Activity: Deferred Maintenance***Dollars in Thousands (\$000) - Net Budgetary Authority*

	2024 Actual	2025 Notional	Budget Request¹
Deferred Maintenance	0	0	17,260

¹Bureau line-item funding amounts are Net Budget Authority, the amount available to execute after sequester and pop-up adjustments. All mandatory LWCF funding is subject to a sequestration reduction of -5.7% across all programs.

Program Overview

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was established by Congress in 1964 to support the protection of Federal public lands and waters – including national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and public lands recreation areas – and to provide recreation opportunities to all Americans. The Department of the Interior's 2026 budget proposes a new program for LWCF that supports investments in facilities and deferred maintenance to improve public access to recreation.

LWCF Deferred Maintenance Program

The LWCF Deferred Maintenance program will complement the GAOA National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) program established in 2021. LWCF funds will support investments in facilities and deferred maintenance that improve public access to recreation. With increasing visitation to public lands and tens of thousands of aging assets, funding to maintain the infrastructure that visitors, volunteers, and employees rely on to access and enjoy public lands is more important than ever. Interior looks forward to sharing program and project details at a later date, following the budget release.

Appropriation: Land Acquisition and Deferred Maintenance**LWCF Category: State and Local Grant Programs****Activity: Highlands Conservation Act***Dollars in Thousands (\$000) - Net Budgetary Authority*

LWCF Category/ Budget Activity	2024 Actual¹	2025 Notional^{1, 2}	2026 Request¹
Highlands Conservation Act	10,000	10,000	10,000

¹Bureau line-item funding amounts are Net Budget Authority, the amount available to execute after sequester and pop-up adjustments. All mandatory LWCF funding is subject to a sequestration reduction of -5.7% across all programs.

² Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Overview

The Highlands Conservation Act (H.R. 1964, 2004; 16 U.S.C. 3901) (HCA) authorizes a grant program to four States (Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania) to conserve land and protect natural

resources in the Highlands Region, a nationally-important landscape distinguished by Appalachian ridges, hills, and plateaus that provides nature-oriented recreational opportunities for millions of people living in and visiting the Northeast. Conservation land acquired under the program may only be held by a State conservation agency, a county, or a municipality.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the lead agency for administering [the HCA Grant Program](#)², and works in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, State Conservation Agencies, and the counties and municipalities of the Highlands Region. Since passage of the HCA in 2004, 19,230 acres of land have been protected under the program. Projects support key conservation objectives outlined in the HCA such as protecting high priority water, forest, wildlife, agriculture, recreational, and cultural resources.

² <https://www.fws.gov/program/highlands-conservation-act-grant>

Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund

Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund

Appropriations Language

Note.--This account is operating under the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (Division A of Public Law 119-4).

Authorizing Statutes

Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). Prohibits the import, export, or taking of fish and wildlife and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered species; provides for adding species to and removing them from the list of threatened and endangered species, and for preparing and implementing plans for their recovery; provides for interagency cooperation to avoid take of listed species and for issuing permits for otherwise prohibited activities; and implements the provisions of the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna* (CITES).

Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, as amended (16 U.S.C. 4601). Authorizes appropriations to the Fish and Wildlife Service to acquire land for national wildlife refuges as otherwise authorized by law.

Great American Outdoors Act (54 U.S.C. 2003). Establishes the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund to support deferred maintenance projects on Federal lands; requires deposits equal to 50% of all Federal revenues from the development of oil, gas, coal, or alternative or renewable energy on Federal lands and waters for fiscal years 2021-2025; and makes funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund permanent.

Appropriation: Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund*Dollars in Thousands (\$000)*

	2024 Actual	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Total (Current)	23,000	23,000	0

^{1/} Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Overview

The Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF; Section 6 of the ESA), administered by the Service's Ecological Services program, provides grant funding to States and Territories for the conservation of listed and at-risk species and habitats on non-Federal lands. Activities include habitat acquisition, conservation planning, habitat restoration, status surveys, captive propagation, reintroduction, research, and education.

The 2026 President's Budget does not request funding for this program. Discretionary funding for this program is duplicative; this program also receives mandatory funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Legacy Restoration Fund: GAOA

The National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF)

Appropriations Language

The National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) account does not require appropriations language because there is permanent authority, established August 4, 2020 (P.L. 116-152), to use the receipts in the account in the fiscal year following their collection.

Applicable Laws, Acts, and Orders

Great American Outdoors Act of 2020, now referred to as The Great American Outdoors Act, P.L. 116-152 (GAOA), provided a trust-based vehicle for applying a significant portion of revenues and receipts from energy development on Federal lands and waters to reduce the deferred maintenance (DM) backlog for specific Department of the Interior (Department) Bureaus, as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service. The legislation also authorizes permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at \$900 million per fiscal year. Absent reauthorization, FY 2025 will be the last year of full LRF funding for the DM section of GAOA.

Projects funded and delivered with GAOA funding fall under the Construction and Deferred Maintenance guidelines. FWS has the legal mandate and responsibility to ensure its inventory of assets, facilities, and infrastructure is safe and adequate to accomplish its conservation mission and that operations are conducted in compliance with applicable regulations.

Appropriation: Great American Outdoors Act – NPLLRF – FY 2026 Full Funding (Reauthorized)

	2024 Actual*	2025 Notional ¹ *	2026 Request
TOTAL, Great American Outdoors Act** (\$000)	98,634	108,400	95,000

* FY 2024 and FY 2025 LRF amounts includes earnings on investments.

** Totals are net of sequestration and sequestration pop-up.

¹/Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the “Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025” (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Overview

The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) is historic legislation that combines a financial commitment to conservation and recreation for future generations with a significant investment in the facilities needed to carry out Interior’s important missions, ranging from operating Bureau of Indian Education schools to the care and maintenance of America’s national treasures. This investment provides an unprecedented opportunity to address the Department of the Interior’s deferred maintenance backlog and restore deteriorating assets. To do so effectively requires prioritization, consistent with lifecycle investment plans and a sound program execution and management strategy.

The Department of the Interior is responsible for administering and implementing GAOA’s National

Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) program, which is shared with the U.S. Forest Service. For fiscal years 2021 through 2025, Congress authorized up to \$1.9 billion annually to be deposited in the LRF for projects that address priority deferred maintenance. The annual deposit is equal to 50 percent of energy development revenues, up to \$1.9 billion, from oil, gas, coal, alternative, or renewable energy on Federal land and water credited, covered, or deposited into the Treasury as miscellaneous receipts under Federal law in the preceding fiscal year. The annual funding is allocated to the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Education, and the U.S. Forest Service within the Department of Agriculture.

Across the initial five years of funding, GAOA LRF has had a transformative impact in addressing critical infrastructure needs and is expected to address roughly \$5.9 billion of deferred maintenance and repairs on nearly 4,000 Department of the Interior assets across the country. Yet much work remains, and the FWS strongly supports the reauthorization of the LRF as part of the 2026 President's Budget. The budget proposes to reauthorize the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund for an additional five years at the current funding level of 50 percent of qualified energy development revenues from the preceding fiscal year, up to \$1.9 billion annually. Reauthorization will allow the FWS to continue utilizing life-cycle efficient methods to address priority deferred maintenance needs through infrastructure repair, replacement, and divestiture. Infrastructure investments under a reauthorized fund will enhance operational efficiency and public safety, improve service delivery, reduce liabilities associated with deferred maintenance, and ensure that facilities on public lands meet the needs of visitors.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service GAOA LRF Statistics

As of March 31, 2025, FWS has obligated \$228 million of its \$378 million allocation, one of the highest obligation rates (60%) among all Department of the Interior GAOA Bureaus. The FWS FY 2021-2024 portfolio focused on 535 assets with the majority in the Operational Buildings and Water Infrastructure and Utilities sectors. From FY 2021-2024, the FWS has over 62% of funded projects in the Construction, Substantially Complete, or Completed phases with 20% of funded projects currently in the Solicitation phase. FWS has taken a holistic approach, prioritizing lifecycle investments at field stations in the Refuge System to strategically retire deferred maintenance. The Refuge System has over \$55.65 billion in 41,485 assets of taxpayer investments. Of these assets, approximately 45 percent of the infrastructure inventory is 40 years old or older and many have identified, but unfunded, DM work orders to address the deficiencies.

FY 2025 Accomplishments

Additional information and project data sheets are available at the Department's GAOA LRF website: <https://www.doi.gov/gaoa-project-data>.

*Wichita
Mountains
WR -*



*Completion and
Occupancy of the
Replacement
Administrative and
Maintenance Complex
Credit: FWS*



Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife Refuge Complex - GAOA Funded Maintenance Professionals Performing Lifecycle Repairs on Quarters Credit: FWS



Hanalei NWR – Replacement Water Conveyance Construction Project in Progress Credit: FWS

Reauthorization and 2026 Project List

The budget proposes to reauthorize the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund for an additional five years, maintaining the current funding level of 50 percent of qualified energy development revenues from the preceding fiscal year, up to \$1.9 billion annually. Investments made under this reauthorized fund will not only enhance operational efficiency and public safety but also improve service delivery, reduce liabilities associated with deferred maintenance, and ensure that facilities on public lands adequately serve both visitors and communities. Additionally, these investments will significantly benefit recreational assets and access, promoting a more enjoyable experience for all visitors. Interior looks forward to sharing the fiscal year 2026 LRF project list and project data sheets at a later date, following the budget release.

North American Wetlands Conservation Fund

North American Wetlands Conservation Fund

Appropriations Language

Note.-- This account is operating under the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (division A of Public Law 119-4).

Authorizing Statutes

The *North American Wetlands Conservation Act of 1989* (16 U.S.C. 4401-4414) authorizes appropriations to be used to encourage partnerships among public agencies and other interests to protect, enhance, restore, and manage wetland ecosystems and other habitats for migratory birds and other fish and wildlife; to maintain current or improved distributions of migratory bird populations; and to sustain an abundance of waterfowl and other migratory birds consistent with goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and international obligations. Section 4406 of the Act authorizes fines, penalties, and forfeitures from violations of the *Migratory Bird Treaty Act* to be made available for wetlands conservation projects. Section 4407 authorizes interest on excise taxes from the sale of hunting equipment to be deposited and used for wetlands conservation grants and costs for administering this grant program. Such amounts have been permanently appropriated as provided in P.L. 103-138.

The *Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act*, (16 U.S.C. 3951-3956) establishes the National Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Program within the Sport Fish Restoration Account for projects authorized by the North American Wetlands Conservation Act in coastal States.

The *Wallop-Breaux Amendment* to the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program established the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund, (26 U.S.C. 9504) and authorizes appropriations from the Sport Fish Restoration Account to carry out the *Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act*.

North American Wetlands Conservation Fund*Dollars in Thousands (\$000)*

Activity	2024 Actual	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request
North American Wetlands Conservation Fund Total	49,000	49,000	0

^{1/} Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Overview

The 2026 President's Budget does not request funding for this program. This program is duplicative of other funding in the Service, such as the proceeds of Duck Stamp sales, that are used to conserve wetland habitat.

Multinational Species Conservation Fund

Multinational Species Conservation Fund

Appropriations Language

Note.--This account is operating under the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (Division A of Public Law 119-4).

Authorizing Statutes

The *African Elephant Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 4201-4203, 4211-4214, 4221-4225, 4241-4246, 1538) authorizes funding for approved projects that enhance compliance with CITES, conservation, management, and protection of African elephants and their habitats, and combating ivory trafficking. The Act authorizes prohibitions against the sale, importation, and exportation of illegally obtained ivory derived from African elephants. The Act also authorizes three percent or \$100,000, whichever is greater, to pay necessary administrative expenses.

The *Asian Elephant Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 4261-4266, 1538) authorizes financial assistance for the conservation and protection of wild Asian elephants and their habitats. The Act also authorizes three percent or \$100,000, whichever is greater, to pay necessary administrative expenses.

The *Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 5301-5306, 1538) authorizes funding to assist in the conservation of tigers in Asia and rhinos in Asia and Africa, in combating trafficking of rhinoceros and tiger parts and in enforcing compliance with CITES. The Act prohibits the sale, importation, and exportation of products derived from any species of rhinoceros or tiger. The Act also authorizes three percent or \$100,000, whichever is greater, to pay necessary administrative expenses.

The *Great Ape Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 6301-6305, 1538) authorizes financial assistance for the conservation of great apes within their ranges in Africa and Asia. The Act also authorizes three percent or \$150,000, whichever is greater, to pay necessary administrative expenses.

The *Marine Turtle Conservation Act* (16 U.S.C. 6601-6607) authorizes financial assistance for the conservation of marine turtles, freshwater turtles, tortoises, and the habitats of marine turtles and tortoises in foreign countries and territories of the United States as amended by the *John D. Dingell, Jr.*

Conservation Management and Recreation Act of 2019 (P.L. 116-9), and addresses other threats to the survival of marine turtles, freshwater turtles, and tortoises, including habitat loss, poaching of turtles or their eggs, and wildlife trafficking. The Act also authorizes five percent or \$150,000, whichever is greater, to pay necessary administrative expenses.

The *Multinational Species Conservation Fund Semipostal Stamp Act* (39 U.S.C. 416), as amended, requires the United States Postal Service to issue and sell a Multinational Species Conservation Fund Semipostal Stamp. As of FY 2022, the U.S. Postal Service is required to sell all remaining copies of the Multinational Species Conservation Fund Semipostal Stamp, as authorized under the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-241) and reauthorized in the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Reauthorization Act of 2021 (P.L. 117-127). The Act

directs the proceeds to be divided equally among the existing Multinational Species Conservation Funds and administered by the Service.

Appropriation: Multinational Species Conservation Fund

Dollars in Thousands (\$000)

Activity/Subactivity	2024 Actual	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request
African Elephant Conservation Fund	4,682	4,682	0
Asian Elephant Conservation Fund	2,945	2,945	0
Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund	6,236	6,236	0
Great Ape Conservation Fund	3,711	3,711	0
Marine Turtle Conservation Fund	2,926	2,926	0
Activity Total	20,500	20,500	0

¹Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Overview

The 2026 President's Budget does not request funding for this program. The Budget transfers funding responsibility for international species conservation work back to other countries, reserving limited resources for domestic species

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Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund

Appropriations Language

Note.--This account is operating under the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (division A of Public Law 119-4).

Authorizing Statute

The *Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Improvement Act of 2006*, (16 U.S.C. 6101-6109) authorizes a competitive grant program for the conservation of Neotropical migratory birds in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund

Dollars in Thousands (\$000)

Activity	2024 Actual	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request
Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund Total	5,000	5,000	0

^{1/} Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Overview

The 2026 President's Budget does not request funding for this program. The Budget transfers funding responsibility for international species conservation work back to other countries, reserving limited resources for domestic species.

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State and Tribal Wildlife Grants

State and Tribal Wildlife Grant Program

Appropriations Language

Note.--This account is operating under the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (division A of Public Law 119-4).

Authorizing Statutes

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544) prohibits the import, export, or taking of fish and wildlife and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered species; provides for adding species to or removing them from the list of threatened and endangered species, and for preparing and implementing plans for their recovery; provides for interagency cooperation to avoid take of listed species and for issuing permits for otherwise prohibited activities; provides for cooperation with States, including authorization of financial assistance; and implements the provisions of the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna* (CITES).

The Fish and Wildlife Act (16 U.S.C. 742(a)-742j) establishes a comprehensive national fish and wildlife policy and authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to take steps required for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fisheries resources and wildlife resources through research, acquisition of refuge lands, development of existing facilities, and other means.

The Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661-666(e)) authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to provide assistance to, and cooperate with, Federal, State, and public or private agencies and organizations in the development, protection, rearing, and stocking of all species of wildlife, resources thereof, and their habitats, in controlling losses of the same from disease or other causes, in minimizing damages from overabundant species, and in providing public shooting and fishing areas, including easements across public lands for access thereto.

Appropriation: State and Tribal Wildlife Grants*Dollars in Thousands (\$000)*

Activity/Subactivity	2024 Actual	2025 Notional¹	2026 Request
State Wildlife Grants (Formula)	59,000	59,000	0
State Wildlife Grants (Competitive)	7,284	7,284	0
Tribal Wildlife Grants	6,100	6,100	0
State and Tribal Wildlife Grants	72,384	72,384	0

¹Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Overview

The 2026 President's Budget does not request funding for this program. The Budget eliminates grants to States and Tribes that come with strings attached on the types of species they should conserve. These eliminations will be complemented by FWS investments in partnerships with private landowners. FWS works with landowners to preserve working landscapes for the benefit of plants, wildlife, and agriculture, ranching, timber, and other traditional land uses.

National Wildlife Refuge Fund

National Wildlife Refuge Fund

Appropriations Language

Note.—This account is operating under the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (Division A of Public Law 119–4).

Authorizing Statutes

Refuge Revenue Sharing Act (16 U.S.C. 715s). Authorizes payments to be made to offset tax losses to counties in which Service fee and withdrawn public domain lands are located.

Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) Sections 1002 and 1008 (16 U.S.C. 3142 and 3148). Address the procedures for permitting oil and gas leases on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge coastal plain (Section 1002) and other non-North Slope Federal lands in Alaska (Section 1008).

Appropriation: National Wildlife Refuge Fund

Activity	2024 Actual	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request
National Wildlife Refuge Fund Total	13,228	13,228	0

^{1/} Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the “Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025” (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

Program Overview

The purpose of the Refuge Revenue Sharing Act is to share revenues derived from refuge lands with counties and other units of local government to compensate for lost tax revenues from Federal land acquisitions. The Act authorizes appropriations to be deposited into a special fund, the National Wildlife Refuge Fund (NWRF), and used for payments to counties in which lands are acquired in fee (fee land) or reserved from the public domain (reserved land) and managed by FWS for fish and wildlife purposes, minus any associated costs. The Act authorizes payments for FWS-managed fee lands based on a formula that entitles counties to whichever is the highest of the following amounts: 1) 25 percent of the net receipts; 2) 3/4 of 1 percent of the fair market value of the land; or 3) 75 cents per acre.

The refuge revenue sharing payments made on lands reserved from the public domain and administered by FWS are always 25 percent of the net receipts collected from the reserved land in the county. If no receipts are collected, there is no revenue sharing payment. However, the Department of the Interior makes Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) (31 U.S.C. 6901-6907) on all public domain lands, including FWS-reserved lands. FWS reports to the Department annually on all FWS reserved land acres and the revenue sharing amounts already paid on those acres. The Department then calculates the PILT amounts, subtracts the amounts the Service has already paid, and makes the PILT payments to the local

Discretionary Appropriations: The 2026 President’s Budget does not request funding for the discretionary portion of the National Wildlife Refuge Fund. This Fund was intended to compensate communities for lost tax revenue from Federal land acquisitions, but does not take into account the economic benefits refuges provide to communities.

Mandatory Receipts: The 2026 estimate for National Wildlife Refuge Fund revenue from activities, such as grazing leases and timber sales, is \$8,000,000. The table below shows how FWS derives the funding amount available for payments to counties and other units of local government.

National Wildlife Refuge Fund Estimates for Payments to Counties (Dollars in Thousands)

Category/Element	2024 Actual	2025 Estimate	2026 Estimate
Receipts Collected	7,540	8,000	8,000
Sequestration	-430	-456	-456
Recoveries	2	50	50
Expenses for Sales	-2,536	-2,539	-2,539
ANILCA Expenses	-25	-35	-35
Estimated User-Pay Cost Share	-31	-35	-35
Net Receipts -- Available during the following year	4,520	4,985	4,985
Receipts Available - collected previous year		4,520	4,985
Sequestration Restored		430	456
Appropriations		13,228	0
Total Available for Payments to Counties		18,178	5,441

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Appendix

Section 403 Compliance

This exhibit fulfills the statutory reporting requirements for directed in Section 403 Division E of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (P.L. 118-42) as shown below.

DISCLOSURE OF ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES

SEC. 403. The amount and basis of estimated overhead charges, deductions, reserves, or holdbacks, including working capital fund charges, from programs, projects, activities and subactivities to support government-wide, departmental, agency, or bureau administrative functions or headquarters, regional, or central operations shall be presented in annual budget justifications and subject to approval by the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Changes to such estimates shall be presented to the Committees on Appropriations for approval.

NATIONAL COMMON PROGRAM SERVICES: With the Administrative reorganization, the Service has unified all regional shared costs and national shared costs into a common program services charge. These charges account for specific administrative services for facilities management, procurement, human resources, financial and other services.

NON-RESOURCE MANAGEMENT USER-PAY COST SHARE: Non-Resource Management Programs continue to pay annually for the administrative services they consume. The funding received from Non-Resource Management Programs supplements central, regional and Servicewide support operations. Specifically, the Non-Resource Management Programs pay for their actual use of communication services and Workers' Compensation. Other costs, such as Washington and Regional office administration and Service-wide costs, such as Unemployment Compensation are measured through FTE usage.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION: The Service has historically paid workers' compensation costs centrally through the Servicewide bill paying account. As a result, programs were not aware of the costs that result from employee injuries. Since FY 2015, workers' compensation costs have been charged to the applicable programs. The Service made this change to address an audit finding and provide incentive for programs to participate in the Department's Return to Work initiative.

ENTERPRISE-WIDE SERVICES: In order to provide the necessary level of funding for Enterprisewide and Working Capital Fund Direct Bill services, the Service assesses its resource management programs for costs that can be directly tracked back to users. This includes software licenses, cell phone costs, personnel system costs, employee badges and the like.

RESERVES: The Service Director may manage a deferred allocation fund of up to one-half of one percent of the current year Resource Management appropriation for each subactivity in excess of three million dollars. These management reserve funds are used for unanticipated requirements.

Below shows administrative cost estimates for Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026:

	2025 Notional ¹
External Administrative Costs	
WCF Centralized Billings	\$34,553,860
WCF Direct Billings/Fee for Service	\$28,731,230
Program Assessments	
Holdbacks, Reserves, and Deductions	\$9,386,146
Bureau Administrative Costs	
National Common Program Services	\$40,150,000
Non-Resource Management User-Pay Cost Share	\$13,110,264
Workers' Compensation	\$4,830,100
Enterprise-Wide Services	\$38,500,000

¹Resource levels included are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

	2026 Estimate
External Administrative Costs	
WCF Centralized Billings	\$34,620,960
WCF Direct Billings/Fee for Service	\$28,247,340
Program Assessments	
Holdbacks, Reserves, and Deductions	\$6,190,635
Bureau Administrative Costs/Central and Regional Operations	
National Common Program Services	\$40,150,000
Non-Resource Management User-Pay Cost Share	\$11,000,000
Workers' Compensation	\$4,873,900
Enterprise-Wide Services	\$38,500,000

Good Accounting Obligation in Government Act

The Good Accounting Obligation in Government Act (GAO-IG Act, P.L. 115-414) enacted January 3, 2019, requires that Agencies report the status of each open audit recommendation issued more than one year prior to the submission of the Agency's annual budget justification to Congress. The Act requires Agencies to include the current target completion date, implementation status, and any discrepancies on closure determinations.

The Department of the Interior leadership takes audit follow-up very seriously and considers our external auditors, to include the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and Office of the Inspector General, valued partners in not only improving the Department's management and compliance obligations but also enhancing its programmatic and administrative operations. As stewards of taxpayer resources, the Department applies cost-benefit analysis and enterprise risk management principles in recommendation implementation decisions. The Department's GAO-IG Act Report will be available at the following link: <https://www.doi.gov/cj>

Implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

Implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

2026 Spend Plan

Account Name	Program Name	2026 Request
Resource Management	Klamath Basin	30,780
Resource Management	Fish Passage	38,000
Resource Management	Lake Tahoe	3,230
Resource Management	Administration	4,095
Office of the Inspector General	Directed Transfer	455
Resource Management	Delaware Basin	4,940
Resource Management	Sage-Steppe	9,500
FWS Total		91,000

Ecosystem - Klamath Basin

Funding provided will be allocated for habitat restoration and water right acquisition to help restore the Klamath ecosystem, as well as for enhanced hatchery production of listed Klamath species (Lost River and shortnose suckers). The Service's Klamath Basin Restoration Program will fund projects and activities identified through a collaborative, transparent and science-based process. The Service intends to use its science-based strategic conservation plans, coupled with input from Tribes and other conservation partners at annual stakeholder workshops to develop a strategy for project selection.

Ecosystem - Lake Tahoe

The program aligns with the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act Section 5(d)(2) which states: *The Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in coordination with the Assistant Secretary, the Planning Agency, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Nevada Department of Wildlife, shall deploy strategies consistent with the Lake Tahoe Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan to prevent the introduction or spread of aquatic invasive species in the Lake Tahoe region.*

Ecosystem - Sagebrush-Steppe

This program builds on an existing collaborative effort by the Service and our public and private partners to conserve the sagebrush ecosystem of the American West and the nationally significant biological, cultural and economic resources it supports. Working across 13 Western States and multiple jurisdictions, this partnership is using leading-edge science, including the Sagebrush Conservation Design, and a Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) approach to identify the most pressing threats to a sustainable sagebrush ecosystem, such as invasive species and wildfire, and investing in tangible, measurable actions to address those threats in the face of a changing climate.

Ecosystem - Delaware River Basin Conservation Act

The Delaware River Basin program provides competitive matching grants for habitat conservation to State and local governments, nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and other eligible entities in the Delaware River Basin in partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The Delaware River Watershed Conservation Collaborative includes more than 40 partner agencies and organizations.

Ecosystem - Fish Passage

The National Fish Passage Program (NFPP) is an existing program that relies on a network of Service biologists and engineers stationed throughout the country to provide technical expertise, financial assistance, and coordination support to complete aquatic ecosystem restoration projects. The Service works with Federal agencies, State governments, private landowners, Tribes, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), partnership groups (e.g., Fish Habitat Partnerships), community organizations, and other willing partners to restore fish passage and aquatic connectivity by removing or bypassing barriers. Projects range in size from large-scale dam removals to the reconnection of floodplain, wetlands and tidal areas, to the repair or removal of culverts at road-stream crossings, to the installation of fish screens at agricultural water diversions. The NFPP has reopened access to thousands of miles of habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms. Under the IIJA, NFPP has adapted project selection processes to maximize transparency and to clearly demonstrate program alignment with climate resilience and environmental justice priorities. NFPP also improved the way the program prioritizes projects that leverage watershed-scale restoration with coordinated investments from other agencies.