

**DEPARTMENTAL
HIGHLIGHTS**



It is time to build conservation partnerships between the Federal government and State governments, local communities, and private landowners.

George W. Bush, June 20, 2000

The United States has a long and proud history of State, local, and private stewardship. The 2002 budget for the Department of the Interior builds on this history by providing new resources and tools to States, communities, organizations, and individuals to take leadership roles in finding innovative ways to meet conservation needs in cooperation with the Federal government.

The 2002 budget proposes to revitalize the State portion of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, providing full funding for State grants and giving States greater flexibility in using LWCF funds. The budget proposes new landowner incentive and stewardship programs to help individuals protect imperiled species, enhance habitat, and conserve fragile land.

For the Federal portion of the LWCF, the budget proposes a new emphasis on input and participation by local, affected communities and stakeholders. Land purchases will be made from willing sellers and increased use will be made of innovative conservation tools, including conservation easements and purchase of development rights.

A FLEXIBLE LWCF STATE GRANT PROGRAM

The Land and Water Conservation Fund was created in 1965 to preserve, develop, and assure the revenues from a resource that belongs to all of the people of the United States to provide permanent recreation and conservation benefits.

The LWCF has made an outstanding contribution to protecting America's land heritage and providing recreational opportunities over the past three and one-half decades, but has fallen far short of its promise to provide substantial support to preser-

vation and recreation at the State and local level. The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act allows up to 60 percent of its annual \$900 million authorization to be granted to States. However, from 1965 to 1995, funding for State grants averaged only \$112 million a year. No funds were provided for State grants from 1996 through 1999.

As promised by President Bush, the 2002 budget proposes \$450.0 million for LWCF State grants, an increase of \$359.7 million from the \$90.3 million

Our initiatives give the Land and Water Conservation Fund greater flexibility to address conservation needs with a bottom-up approach, not top-down from Washington.

Secretary Gale A. Norton, March 14, 2001

appropriated in 2001. The budget further proposes to give States flexibility to go beyond traditional recreational land purchase and development projects. Under the Department's proposal, States will be able to use grant funds in 2002 for the benefit of wildlife and habitat; the conservation of endangered and threatened species; and the protection, enhancement, and restoration of wetland ecosystems and other habitats for migratory birds and other fish and wildlife.

This is a new comprehensive approach to funding a wide array of State recreation and conservation needs. It allows States greater flexibility to determine priorities and encourages program innovation, while achieving greater efficiencies in the delivery of funds by combining the objectives of several existing Interior grant programs under the LWCF umbrella. With full funding of the LWCF, States will receive increased levels for recreation and a wide range of conservation activities.

The proposal to fully fund the State grant program will provide significant resources for both America's outdoor recreational and conservation needs in a way that maximizes the ability of States to meet priorities. Conservation of wildlife and habitat has become a major component of conserving and enjoying our natural resources. While States can continue to use resources for traditional recreational venues such as ball fields and parks, they will also be able to address the great public

demand for projects that protect or enhance habitat for a vast array of fish and wildlife, including wetlands for migratory birds.

States will have the flexibility to utilize grant funding for the continued planning of State-wide recreational needs, for the development of lands which have already been acquired, and for acquisitions of easements and other innovative mechanisms to protect habitat. States can also enter into partnerships with non-governmental entities in ways that are consistent with LWCF Act requirements.

By providing States flexibility to use LWCF funds for a wide variety of purposes, the budget shifts priority setting to the State level. The 2002 budget proposes that the State LWCF grant program incorporate the purposes of narrow programs such as the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery program and Wildlife Conservation and Restoration program. The budget also proposes that States be allowed to use this new increased funding to supplement available Federal funding from the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund and North American Wetlands Conservation Fund program to meet local needs that are overlooked at the national level. In this way, States will no longer be constrained by Federal priorities that may not match State and local needs.

Of the total, \$157.5 million will be apportioned in equal amounts to the States. An additional \$273.5 million will be distributed to the States under a formula based 70 percent on population and 30 percent on land area. For the first time, Federally recognized Indian Tribes will receive \$10.0 million through a competitive grant program.

To make State compliance requirements less burdensome, the budget proposes to allow States initially to use appropriate existing plans and agreements to supplement comprehensive state-wide outdoor recreation plans. That is, plans and agreements developed to meet requirements of the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration program, Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, and North American Wetlands Conservation Fund will fulfill the plan requirements





for projects related to wildlife, endangered species, and wetlands conservation, respectively.

FACILITATING LOCAL AND PRIVATE CONSERVATION

Our Nation is full of conservation challenges and opportunities. For example, President Bush has proposed using landowner incentive programs, habitat enhancement tools, and financial rewards to foster win-win solutions benefiting landowners, endangered species, and our national treasures.

Secretary Gale A. Norton, March 14, 2001

The 2002 budget proposes to facilitate local and private conservation efforts with \$60.0 million for two new programs to provide landowner incentives and foster private stewardship.

The budget includes \$50.0 million in the Fish and Wildlife Service to establish a competitively-

awarded, cost-shared Landowner Incentive program for grants to States, the District of Columbia, Territories, and Tribes to establish or supplement landowner incentive programs. This program will provide technical and financial assistance to private landowners all across the country to help them protect and manage habitat, while continuing to engage in traditional land use practices.

This new program will provide resources to States for voluntary programs like the Texas Private Lands Enhancement program, which provides technical assistance to landowners who want to include wildlife management considerations in their land use practices. Species and habitat conservation in Texas can only succeed with cooperation from private landowners because 97 percent of Texas is privately owned. Texas wildlife biologists work one-on-one with private and public land managers to develop management plans for preserving or enhancing habitat for species like the lesser prairie chicken, ocelot, Attwater's prairie chicken, and the swift fox. Landowners who participate in this program play an important role in preserving species and their habitat, while continuing to use their land.

The budget also includes a new \$10.0 million Private Stewardship Grants program to support



Partnering to Conserve the Swift Fox in Texas

One Texas family is working to enhance about 1,200 acres of prairie on their 5,400 acre ranch. Their \$57,807 conservation project is funded mainly by Texas Parks and Wildlife and FWS's Partners program, but the family is also putting in several thousand dollars worth of cash and labor. The family is restoring and enhancing upland prairie springs and riparian habitat such as cottonwood bottoms along the Washita River, and removing undesirable exotic plant species such as salt cedar and Russian olive from river bottomlands. The main family businesses are cattle and oil and gas, but they also have a significant nature tourism operation involving hunting and birdwatching. By restoring native prairie, they are helping many species, including the swift fox. Efforts such as these will help ensure the long-term viability of the swift fox and other at-risk species obviating the need to list them as threatened or endangered.



Wetlands Conservation Fund; and \$30.9 million for the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program. These programs provide direct financial and technical assistance to States, conservation groups, local communities, and private landowners. Again, States will have the flexibility and authority to supplement these grant programs with funds from the expanded LWCF.

The request for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund of \$54.7 million reflects a balancing of local needs and national priorities for species and habitat preservation. States can address local priorities with their share of the \$450.0 million available through the NPS-administered LWCF State grant program and compete nationally for additional funding from the Endangered Species Conservation Fund. The budget proposes that \$21.0 million be allocated to Habitat Conservation Plan land acquisition grants to assist States, local governments, and landowners in protecting habitat within or near areas covered by HCPs. Habitat Conservation Plans provide for the issuance of permits for "taking" (killing, harming, harassing) listed

individuals and groups engaged in local, private, and voluntary land and wildlife conservation efforts. A diverse panel of representatives from State and Federal government, conservation organizations, agriculture and development interests, and the science community will assess applications and make grant recommendations to the Secretary.

species in the course of non-Federal activities where the taking is incidental to another lawful activity. The remaining \$33.7 million is allocated for grants to implement candidate conservation agreements, recovery actions, and other State initiatives to

CONTINUING WILDLIFE PARTNERSHIPS

To further facilitate Federal, State, local, and private conservation, the 2002 budget proposes \$100.5 million for three existing Fish and Wildlife Service grant and partnership programs: \$54.7 million for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund; \$14.9 million for the North American



State HCP Land Acquisition Grants

These grants make it possible for States to work with landowners and other citizens to complement local habitat conservation plans, setting aside vital habitat to benefit many threatened and endangered animals and plants. In 2001, these grants provided up to 75 percent of the cost of 15 land acquisitions in California, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Montana, North Carolina, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin. Non-Federal partners contribute at least 25 percent of the cost of each project. In one project in Montana, \$5 million will be used to acquire a conservation easement on Plum Creek Timber Company riverfront and bench lands within the Thompson and Fisher River basins as part of the Plum Creek Timber Habitat Conservation Plan. This easement will protect approximately seven miles of habitat for the threatened bull trout. Montana's Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Department and private landowners are providing the matching funds.

conserve candidate, proposed, and listed species, and program administration. States can, in turn, pass the funding on to municipalities and private landowners to enlist their support in species conservation efforts.

The \$14.9 million proposed for the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund will support wetlands and migratory bird conservation activities by providing matching grants to private landowners, States, non-governmental conservation organizations, Tribes, trusts, corporations, and other Federal agencies to acquire, restore, and enhance wetland habitat. These projects create jobs in local communities and increase migratory bird-related recreation. To date, nearly 1,500 partners have worked together on more than 900 projects in 48 States, the U.S. Virgin Islands, 10 Canadian provinces, and 21 Mexican states to protect, restore, or enhance nearly seven million acres of wetlands and associated uplands in the U.S. and Canada and vital habitat on millions of acres within Mexico's large biosphere reserves.

The budget request for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund is \$31.7 million

above the 2000 level of \$23.0 million and the Wetlands Fund is proposed at its 2000 level. In recognition of the new flexibility States will have to use LWCF State grants to meet the purposes of these programs, these amounts are \$50.0 million and \$25.0 million below 2001, respectively.

PRIORITIZING ALTERNATIVE AND INNOVATIVE CONSERVATION TOOLS

It's local people who see problems with their own eyes who often know the best solutions.

Secretary Gale A. Norton, March 8, 2001

The 2002 budget prioritizes Federal land acquisition funding for projects that use alternative and innovative conservation tools such as easements, purchases of development rights, and land exchanges, as well as projects that include the input and participation of the affected local communities and stakeholders. The \$259.1 million proposed for land acquisition by BLM, FWS, and NPS will support 111 projects in 39 States across the country. In order to minimize increasing Federal ownership of lands, particularly in the western States, Interior will emphasize use of easements as an alternative to more comprehensive ownership interests that remove lands from the State tax rolls.

For example, at the Lower Salmon River Area of Critical Environmental Concern, BLM requests \$2.0 million to acquire 788 acres of conservation easement interests and 110 acres of fee simple interests to protect outstanding scenic and recreational values on the river corridor. These proposed acquisitions will provide further public recreation opportunities and preclude subdivision and development that would be inconsistent with the natural character of the adjoining BLM land and the Lower Salmon River gorge. The BLM has numerous partners and supporters in this effort including the Friends of the Lower Salmon and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

The Interior Department will also seek land exchanges. Approximately 920 acres of private land in the area of Ghaul Basin, Flume Creek, and

Agency Creek, Idaho are part of a proposed exchange of 2,080 acres of public land. The private lands contain important public values associated with the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. They are located near Lemhi Pass which is the point at which Lewis and Clark first crossed the Continental Divide and left the Territory of the Louisiana Purchase. Journal descriptions and maps of the expedition's route through this area indicate that Captain Lewis' advance party traveled over Lemhi Pass on August 12, 1805, and spent their first night in Idaho in the Ghoul Basin area. The private parcels contain several springs, as well as streams with riparian habitat for Westslope cutthroat trout, a species petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act, rainbow trout, and numerous big game animals.



The Department is also undertaking significant

efforts to ensure that any acquisition has strong support from the local community. The NPS, for example, proposes to acquire 18,600 acres on the Southwest Rift Zone of Mauna Loa for Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. This property, between the 800 foot to 12,600 foot levels of this mountain mass, provides pristine habitat for threatened and endangered species such as the akepa and Hawaii creeper forest birds. Additionally because of the current isolation of this property, Native Hawaiian cultural resources dating back to 1200 AD or earlier are largely intact. In February, 2001, NPS held three days of public hearings on the acquisition and heard from 280 people who overwhelmingly supported the proposed acquisition. The owner is a willing seller who prefers to preserve the resources on the property through a sale to the NPS, rather than to sell the land for development.