



John Spratt,
Chairman

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

207 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515 (202) 226-7200 ★ www.budget.house.gov

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The Democratic Budget: Preserving Our Planet

Overview — After six years of cutting environmental programs and failing to reduce our dependency on foreign oil, the budget provides funding to make improvements in our environment and makes a real commitment to renewable energy.

Budget Begins Rebuilding Our Natural Resources and Environment Programs — The Democratic budget rejects the President's cuts and instead supports valuable natural resource conservation and environmental protection programs that both preserve our planet and enhance our quality of life. In 2008, it makes a down payment on reinvesting in our conservation and environmental protection infrastructure by providing substantially more funding than the President's budget to address a number of priority needs.

Budget Rejects Harmful Administration Cuts to Core Environmental Programs — Our budget rejects the Administration's proposed cuts to core environmental programs, such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Fish and Wildlife Service's wildlife refuge system, and EPA's grants to states and tribes to address water quality, air quality, and brownfield redevelopment concerns.

Budget Addresses Renewable Energy Research Needs — The budget provides funding above the President's recommended level for civilian energy and environmental programs in the Department of Energy that make important contributions to U.S. energy security, independence, and efficiency. This increased funding could be used for important research, development, and deployment of renewable and alternative energy technology and resources. This budget also recognizes and approves of the role that other federal agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture, could take in developing new energy sources such as cellulosic ethanol.

Budget Supports Increased Funding for Energy Alternatives — The budget establishes a reserve fund to accommodate the development of energy conservation and efficiency technologies, clean domestic renewable energy resources, and alternative fuels that will reduce our reliance on foreign oil.

Budget Accommodates Increase in Agricultural Conservation Funding — The budget provides a deficit-neutral reserve fund for the reauthorization of the farm bill. In order to improve not only the safety nets for our farmers and ranchers, but also the safety nets for our natural resources, rural communities, and low-income citizens, the budget would allow for a \$20 billion increase in mandatory agriculture funding between 2008 and 2012 for a reauthorized farm bill. Increased funding in the farm bill for the Department of Agriculture's natural resource conservation programs can help agricultural producers better comply with environmental regulations while also providing valuable natural resource benefits for the public, such as cleaner water and more abundant wildlife.

Under the Bush Administration's Leadership, Funding for Natural Resources and Environment Programs Has Been Cut in Real Terms — Since 2001, the Bush Administration and the Republican-led Congress have chronically underfunded the natural resources conservation and environmental protection programs that are important for preserving our planet and protecting our quality of life.

Over eight years (2001 through 2008), total funding for Function 300 programs has fallen by 16 percent since 2001 (in constant 2006 dollars).

The President's Budget Continues to Cut Environmental Programs — The Administration continues to tout its commitment to environmental protection and conservation, but reality does not match the rhetoric. For 2008, the President's budget once again significantly cuts funding for programs that protect public health and the environment. It includes \$28.7 billion in discretionary funding for these programs, which is \$1.7 billion (5.4 percent) below the 2007 level, and is \$2.5 billion (8.0 percent) below the level needed to maintain current services. These substantial cuts undermine the ability to meet critical environmental needs, and jeopardize our nation's treasured resources.

Department of Interior and EPA Budgets Underscore the Administration's Misguided Spending Cuts — Two agencies in particular – the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – highlight how the President's budget priorities have fallen short of the Administration's rhetoric to conserve our natural heritage and enhance the environment. Since 2001, DOI's budget has been cut by 12 percent (from about \$11.7 billion to \$10.2 billion) in constant 2006 dollar terms. Similarly for EPA, since 2001 the agency's budget has tumbled by 22 percent (from about \$8.9 billion to \$6.9 billion) in constant 2006 dollar terms.

The President's Environmental Cuts Hurt Local Communities — The Administration's cuts to core environmental programs impacts states and local communities. For example:

- ***EPA Cuts*** – Despite the fact that states and local governments are important partners with EPA to monitor environmental quality and protect public health, cuts to EPA's state and tribal grants programs may force local agencies to lay off staff or shut down their existing programs.
- ***Clean Water Infrastructure Funding*** — An EPA analysis shows that there is a \$122 billion shortfall in capital infrastructure investment just to maintain current water quality standards. Despite the agency's own analysis of the critical need for water quality infrastructure, the Administration has continued to cut funding for grants to states to address this gap. The President's 2008 budget cuts the Clean Water State Revolving Fund to \$688 million, a cut of \$396 million (or 36.5 percent) below the 2007 level. In inflation adjusted dollar terms, this funding level is \$922 million below the historical average and is the lowest level of funding in at least 20 years.
- ***Land and Water Conservation Fund*** — According to a recent U.S. Forest Service report, the U.S. loses about 6,000 acres of open space every day, or a rate of four acres every minute. The loss of open space poses a threat to the health and sustainability of ecosystems and the character of rural, suburban, and urban communities. Land acquisition programs funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) are valuable tools for addressing the increasingly significant loss of open space, forests, and wildlife habitat. The President once again not only fails to fund the LWCF at the authorized level of \$900 million, but provides only \$59 million for 2008 for the intended LWCF purposes of preserving parks, forest, wildlife refuges, and open space. Since 2001, this Administration has cut land acquisition funding from the LWCF by \$394 million (or 87 percent).