



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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ADMINISTRATION'S PROPOSED BUDGET REFLECTS INCREASED COMMITMENT TO WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

President Clinton's proposed FY 95 budget for the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service contains a 4 percent funding increase, including additional funds for endangered species conservation, habitat conservation planning that allows economic development to continue while protecting threatened species, and major ecosystem initiatives along the Mexican border and in South Florida and the Pacific Northwest.

The proposed budget of \$1.2 billion reflects an increase of \$50.6 million. This includes \$2.9 million for ecosystem restoration activities in the Everglades and \$10.9 million for implementation of environmental protection programs in support of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The budget also provides \$21.3 million for the implementation of the Forest Plan for improved management of the Northwest forests to meet both economic and environmental needs, including \$10 million for the "Jobs in the Woods" initiative to provide employment opportunities for displaced workers.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency with responsibility for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats. The Service manages 496 National Wildlife Refuges, covering more than 91

million acres, and 78 National Fish Hatcheries. The agency also enforces federal wildlife laws, manages migratory bird populations, conserves and restores important wildlife habitat such as wetlands, administers the Endangered Species Act, and oversees the Federal Aid program that funnels Federal excise taxes on angling and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies.

"This Administration is moving boldly to meet the crisis facing our country's fish and wildlife resources while committing to work with other nations on conservation issues beyond our borders," said George T. Frampton, Jr., Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. "The first step is to address our most pressing conservation priorities. This budget does that with the Everglades, NAFTA, and Forest Plan initiatives."

"This budget places special emphasis on managing entire ecosystems rather than trying to solve a hundred different environmental problems independent of each other," Service Director Mollie Beattie said. "This is a far more efficient and effective way of using our limited financial resources."

Under the president's proposal, overall funding for endangered species conservation would climb 39 percent in FY 1995 to \$81.4 million. The budget includes an additional \$8 million to increase assistance to state and local communities and private citizens in developing habitat conservation plans that will allow development to continue while conserving species protected under the Endangered Species Act. The funding also will allow the Service to implement multi-species, ecosystem-wide planning and recovery actions for protected species.

In addition, the Service would participate with other Federal agencies in a comprehensive ecosystem-based program to restore fish and wildlife resources in South Florida, including speeding up recovery efforts for the region's 56 threatened or endangered species. This rich yet fragile ecosystem has been severely damaged by large-scale water projects, agricultural growth, and urban development.

The Service also would expand conservation of fish and wildlife resources in the area along the U.S.-Mexico border that could be affected by implementation of the NAFTA agreement. In cooperation with Mexico, the Service will increase law enforcement and wildlife inspection activities, expand endangered and trust species habitat conservation efforts in border areas, and improve management of Mexican border wildlife and fisheries.

Additionally, the Service will play an important role in support of the President's "Forest Plan for a Sustainable Economy and Sustainable Environment" in the Pacific Northwest. Service

activities will include key watershed and fishery restoration and conservation; endangered species listing, consultation and recovery work; and support of state monitoring efforts to ensure timber harvests do not interfere with the recovery of the northern spotted owl.

Under the budget, the Service will provide technical assistance to the U.S. Department of Agriculture to restore 7,000 acres of wetlands and other important habitat in voluntary partnership with private landowners. The budget also provides an increase of \$1.5 million to ensure fish and wildlife needs are given consideration in relicensing proceedings for hydropower projects. This funding also will allow the Service to undertake additional projects to improve fish and wildlife habitat in bays and estuaries.

The budget includes an increase of \$4.4 million for comprehensive planning and improved operation and maintenance of national wildlife refuges.

In addition, it earmarks \$86.2 million for land acquisition. This includes \$25 million for acquisition of lands in support of habitat conservation plans developed by the Service in cooperation with other Federal, state, and local governments and private landowners.

"Americans' willingness to respect and conserve our fish and wildlife resources is part of our national heritage," Beattie said. "The President's budget is an investment in the future of that heritage."