



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

### Fish and Wildlife Service

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#### ADMINISTRATION'S PROPOSED BUDGET CONTINUES STRONG COMMITMENT TO WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

President Clinton's proposed FY 96 budget for the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service remained essentially stable, with increased funding for recreational fisheries management, efforts to balance endangered species conservation with economic development, and restoration and conservation of coastal wetlands and other vital wildlife habitat.

The proposed budget of \$1.24 billion shows an overall decrease of \$33.9 million, or 3 percent, from FY 1995. This is primarily due to reductions in permanent revenue sources overseen by the Service.\* The Service's resource management budget would increase \$22.2 million, or 4 percent, to \$535.0 million under the President's proposal.

The budget increases the Service's fisheries management funding by \$6.1 million, or 39 percent, including \$4 million to conserve and restore interjurisdictional recreational fisheries of national significance. The budget includes an additional \$3.2 million for fishing, hunting, and environmental education programs and improved habitat management on national wildlife refuges.

"This Administration is making a commitment to anglers, hunters, and other Americans who enjoy the great outdoors that, even as the government downsizes, we will continue to be good stewards of the wildlife resources they treasure," said Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt.

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 504 national wildlife refuges covering more than 92 million acres and 74 national fish hatcheries.

The agency also enforces Federal wildlife laws, manages migratory bird populations, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, administers the Endangered Species Act, and oversees the Federal Aid program that manages Federal excise taxes on angling and hunting equipment to support state fish and wildlife agencies.

The President's budget also seeks to take advantage of the flexibility built into the Endangered Species Act to reduce conflicts between economic development and species conservation. The budget includes an increase of \$27.3 million in grants to states to assist local governments and citizens in developing habitat conservation plans that allow economic development to continue while providing for the protection of threatened species. The Service, working in partnership with states, has reached agreement with private landowners on 40 of these plans and more than 150 currently are being developed.

"The act provides the flexibility to avoid conflict between wildlife conservation and the economy--it's largely a matter of working in partnership with states and private landowners to take advantage of it," said Service Director Mollie Beattie.

The Endangered Species budget increases \$6.3 million, or 9 percent, to \$77.7 million under the President's proposal. The Service will increasingly undertake a multi-species approach to endangered species conservation. Resources for species protection and recovery will be focused in geographic areas with large numbers of candidate and listed species. If successful, this approach will speed recovery efforts and reduce the number of new listings. Again, partnerships with states, corporations, conservation groups, and private landowners will be at the heart of these efforts.

The President's budget also calls for \$1 million for conservation and restoration of the Everglades and coastal wetlands. In partnership with other Federal and state agencies, the Service will restore approximately 3,700 acres of Everglades wetlands, including native mangrove swamps. The Service also will work with partners to restore tidal marshes in San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

In addition, the budget includes \$1.6 million for a multi-faceted initiative to conserve and restore ecological systems in the Connecticut River basin, with a special focus on the recovery of Atlantic salmon and other anadromous fish. The Silvio Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge will coordinate broad partnerships and cooperative projects that include four New England states, other Federal agencies, conservation groups, educational institutions, and utilities.

Meanwhile, the budget proposes to transfer 11 of the Service's 74 national fish hatcheries to the states. To ease the financial burden on the states, the Service will provide transitional funding for 3 years to these hatcheries, which mainly stock state waters rather than Federal or interjurisdictional waters.

The budget also reflects decreases in the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (Pittman-Robertson) Fund, down \$26 million, or 11 percent, due to declines in Federal excise taxes collected on firearms and ammunition, and Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration (Wallop-Breaux) Fund, down \$8.4 million, or 3.6 percent, due primarily to the Coast Guard's request for additional funds for its boating safety grant program, which is funded from the Sport Fish Restoration Fund.

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- \* The projection for receipts available from the Exxon settlement and other natural resource damage settlements is \$30 million less than the estimated 1995 collections.

In addition, receipts collected in 1995 and available in 1996 from the Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration programs are \$34.4 million less than the previous year.



## FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

# Facts

U.S. Department of the Interior

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President Clinton's proposed FY 1996 budget for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service includes a moderate overall increase in resource management.

The highlights of the proposed budget include:

- o A \$27.3 million increase in grants to local governments and citizens to assist in the development of habitat conservation plans that allow economic development to continue while providing for the protection of threatened species. The Service, working in partnership with states, has reached agreement with private landowners on 40 of these plans and more than 150 currently are being developed. Endangered species funding also increases 9 percent to \$77.7 million. This includes increases of 1 percent for prelisting activities to protect candidate species and preclude the need for listings, 8 percent for consultations, and 12 percent for recovery efforts.
- o Increasing habitat conservation programs 2 percent to \$59.7 million. Special emphasis will be on coastal ecosystems, Everglades restoration, and voluntary wetlands restoration on private lands. The Service will continue to increase the "Jobs-in-the-Woods" program designed to employ displaced logging industry workers on projects involving Pacific Northwest ecosystem restoration.
- o Increasing total fisheries funding 2 percent to \$69 million. This includes a 39-percent increase in fishery management activities, with an emphasis on recreational fisheries and aquatic ecosystems in areas where there is a Federal interest, including interjurisdictional waters and areas where native fish populations are in decline.
- o The budget also proposes to transfer to the states 11 national fish hatcheries that primarily stock state waters. States would receive 3 years of transitional funding to operate these hatcheries. These include Carbon Hill National Fish Hatchery in Alabama; Bo Ginn National Fish Hatchery and Chattahoochee National Fish Hatchery in Georgia; Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery in Kentucky; Meridian National Fish Hatchery in Mississippi; Mescalero National Fish Hatchery in New Mexico; McKinney Lake National Fish Hatchery in North Carolina; Valley City National Fish Hatchery in North Dakota; Walhalla National Fish Hatchery in South Carolina; Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery in Texas; and Bowden National Fish Hatchery in West Virginia.

- o Funding of \$1.6 million for conservation initiatives in the 410-mile-long Connecticut River Basin, which is internationally recognized as a significant ecological area. With extensive input from state, local, and private entities as well as the general public, the Service is in the process of completing a comprehensive conservation blueprint for the basin. Recovery of depleted Atlantic salmon runs will be one of the central focuses of the initiative.
- o Increasing overall funding for refuge operations 4 percent to \$149.3 million, offset by reducing refuge maintenance by \$7 million and delaying low-priority maintenance. The Service will increase opportunities for environmental education and fishing and hunting on refuges in order to promote the conservation of fish and wildlife.
- o Decreasing funding for law enforcement less than 1 percent to \$35.3 million. Nearly all of the decrease is related to cutbacks in import inspection activities at ports of entry in Philadelphia and in the Pacific. An increase of \$213,000 will support investigation of illegal hunting of wintering waterfowl and protection of listed salmon stocks in the Pacific Northwest.

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