



DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE FACT SHEET

THE BUSH BUDGET SACRIFICING TOMORROW FOR TODAY

In early February, President Bush submitted his budget for 2006 to Congress and the American people. As in past years, the president has used his budget to shortchange key conservation programs both through funding cuts and budgetary gimmicks, jeopardizing our wildlife and public lands. Below is Defenders' analysis of several key conservation programs and how the president's cuts will undermine the conservation legacy we leave to our children.

OVERALL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES FUNDING

The president's budget would cut funding for natural resources and the environment by more than 11% below 2005 and 12% below the amount needed to keep up with inflation.

Most of the federal funding for environmental protection and resource conservation falls within the environment and natural resources budget category. The total that the president has allocated for this important line item is \$28.6 billion, just over 1% of the massive \$2.5 trillion federal budget. This represents a cut of \$3.6 billion, or 11.2 percent, below 2005 funding levels. Moreover, to keep up with inflation or current services as estimated by President Bush's own Office of Management and Budget, the number for 2006 would have to be \$32.5 billion. The president's budget falls \$3.9 billion, or 12 percent, below that mark, meaning that at a time when conservation programs are already severely under funded, the president has proposed what amounts to a 12 percent cut in terms of real dollars. Appropriated dollars for natural resources and the environment would be cut by \$3.3 billion or 10.4 percent.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

The President's budget cuts Fish and Wildlife Service funding for recovery of endangered and threatened species by 10% below 2005 levels.

The Endangered Species Act is a safety net for wildlife, plants and fish that are on the brink of extinction. Even more than that, however, the Endangered Species Act benefits people by maintaining healthy natural systems that provide clean air and water, food, medicines and other

products needed by humans. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to be good stewards of the environment and leave behind a legacy of protecting endangered species and the special places they call home.

The Bush administration cries poverty when it comes to implementation of the Endangered Species Act. Yet it is trying to transform this statement into a self-fulfilling prophecy by refusing to request the amount needed to carry out its legal responsibilities to protect imperiled wildlife.

Despite the fact that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) biologists have estimated that about 200 currently listed species are on the verge of extinction primarily because not enough funding is available for recovery activities, the president's budget once again cuts FWS recovery – this time by a whopping \$6 million, or nearly 10 percent, below 2005 levels. This includes a reduction of \$1.2 million for wolf recovery programs in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming. Instead of decreases, experts estimate an increase of at least \$46 million for recovery programs is needed. The total budget for Endangered Species Act implementation is cut by \$3 million, or 2 percent, below 2005 levels.

The president's budget does include a sorely needed \$2 million increase for programs that list new species as endangered or threatened and designate critical habitat, but it is offset by the cuts to the other endangered species accounts. And even the increase will not begin to cover the \$153 million listing backlog, which includes 286 candidate species likely in need of protection, some of which have been awaiting listing for years.

The Department of the Interior again says it will address the shortfall to the endangered species program by funding actions to benefit listed species through existing grant programs. While these are important, they cannot substitute for mandated FWS obligations under the Endangered Species Act. The core FWS endangered species program is the backbone on which a healthy body of effective protection of imperiled species must be built.

CONSERVATION TRUST FUND

The Bush budget cuts the landmark Conservation Trust Fund by nearly \$1 billion below its \$1.8 billion dedicated level for 2006

In 2000, numerous members of Congress, the Clinton administration and thousands of conservation, environmental and recreation interests across the country worked together to pass the greatest piece of conservation funding legislation enacted in our lifetimes. This historic, bipartisan deal set aside a total of \$12 billion in dedicated funding over a six year period, from 2001 to 2006, for an array of important programs – including the Land and Water Conservation Fund – that protect open space, wildlife, habitat, wild lands and fragile ocean and coastal areas (see below). Yet since the Bush administration took office, the president's budgets have slashed funding for this important initiative each and every year, and 2006 is no different. Indeed, estimates show that the president's budget for 2006 cuts support for the public lands and wildlife portion of the Conservation Trust Fund by nearly a billion dollars or 52% below the dedicated level of \$1.8 billion.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

The president's budget eviscerates the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), cutting it by \$124 million below 2005 and uses budget gimmicks to mask the true impacts.

The LWCF, established in 1964, is one of the greatest tools we have to address the increasingly severe problem of loss of open space, forests and wildlife habitat by providing funding for acquisition of lands for our national wildlife refuges, parks and forests and for state purchase of open space. The Natural Resources Inventory estimates 2.2 million acres are lost to development each year – once these lands are lost they can never be recovered.

On the campaign trail in 2000, the president vowed to fully fund the LWCF. In fact, it was one of the only environmental promises made by then candidate Bush. Since that time, he has lived up to that promise only through the use of accounting gimmicks, “robbing Peter to pay Paul.” For 2006, the Administration has dispensed with even the appearance of fully funding LWCF at its \$900 million level and is finally showing its true intention of eviscerating the Fund. While the president says he is funding the LWCF at \$680 million, in reality, the total budgeted for true LWCF purposes is \$132 million, 85 percent below the authorized level, just a little more than half the 2005 level and less than one quarter the level funded in 2002. The president is playing a bait and switch game by counting 15 other important, but non-LWCF, programs towards the LWCF total. The budget also proposes to eliminate the portion of the LWCF that provides grants to states for acquisition of open space.

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM

The president's touted increase for National Wildlife Refuges fails even to meet fixed costs which total \$16 million.

The National Wildlife Refuge System is our only public lands system dedicated to wildlife conservation. A key to protecting the web of life is setting aside lands where wildlife protection takes priority – the Refuge System, with its more than 540 refuges across the country, serves as our nation's anchor for protecting this fragile web. There is a wildlife refuge within a one hour drive of most major cities. The 40 million people that visit refuges every year show that public support for refuges is high and continues to grow – increased by 10 million since 1996.

The president's requested \$13 million increase for the Refuge System looks a lot better than it is. Upon closer inspection, \$5 million of the increase would merely restore last year's cuts and \$7 million would go to fund the Secretary's “Cooperative Conservation Initiative” which is administered at the Departmental level and does not address the System's most pressing needs. The increase falls short of even meeting fixed costs which total \$16 million. The request fails to take a real step in addressing the \$2.9 billion operations and maintenance backlog which includes a critical shortage of staffing – nearly 200 refuges have no staff on site.

STATE AND TRIBAL WILDLIFE GRANTS

The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program, which would receive a \$5 million increase, would still be funded at more than \$10 million below 2002 and more than \$25 million below 2001.

State and Tribal Wildlife Grants (SWGP) and some other important wildlife-related grant programs do get sorely needed increases over FY 2005 in the president's budget. However, if the commitment to the Conservation Trust Fund had been maintained, most of these programs would be receiving far higher levels of funding. The SWGP is a critically important and innovative program that, for the first time, provides states with funding to strategically conserve species and their habitats before protection under the Endangered Species Act is necessary. Without proactive efforts such as SWGP to reverse species declines, scientists estimate that more than 5,000 new wildlife and plant species may need to be protected under the Endangered Species Act. The 2006 budget will be critical given that statewide wildlife and habitat conservation strategies will be completed and ready for implementation. While SWGP would get a \$5 million increase over the FY 2005 level, ground has still been lost – this level is still more than \$10 million below 2002 and more than \$25 million below 2001.

MULTINATIONAL SPECIES CONSERVATION FUND

The president's budget cuts the small but effective Multinational Species Conservation Fund by 25% below 2005.

The Bush Administration's 2006 budget slashes already limited funding for the Multinational Species Conservation Fund, a small but highly successful program aimed at providing resources for on the ground conservation of endangered wildlife in foreign countries. Species like African elephants in the Serengeti, gorillas in Uganda, tigers in the forests of India, and sea turtles from Mexico to Indonesia have all benefited from critical conservation funding provided under this groundbreaking program. The Multinational Species Conservation Fund uses small amounts of money appropriated by Congress to leverage private dollars for on the ground wildlife conservation. On average, every government dollar contributed to these programs has been matched 3 to 1 by private donations. These dollars have funded anti-poaching patrols for rhinos in Indonesia, rebuilt wildlife reserves destroyed by war in the Congo, and helped foster community education programs to protect Asia's disappearing orangutans.

Despite this tremendous success and the already meager funding for these programs, however, the Bush Administration has proposed cutting the Fund by \$1.4 million, a whopping 25 percent reduction from last year. Instead of cutting dollars for international conservation, the Bush Administration and Congress should fully fund the Multinational Species Conservation Fund at its \$30 million authorized level and should consider expanding the scope of the Fund to include some of the most endangered great cats and rare canines in the world like snow leopards, Ethiopian wolves, cheetahs and African wild dogs.

ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The president's budget proposes opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to energy development.

The president's budget proposal calls for leasing the National Arctic Wildlife Refuge's coastal plain – the biological heart of the Refuge – for oil and gas drilling. Using wildly speculative calculations, the President's proposal claims that lease sales in the Refuge will generate \$2.4 billion. Generating this much money would only happen if oil companies paid more than 10 times per acre what they've been willing to pay for any lease on Alaska's North Slope in the last 15 years! Moreover, the estimates of recoverable reserves represent just a drop in the bucket of our oil consumption - at most, a few months' supply of oil. Finally, the President's budget proposal uses an accounting gimmick to claim that the oil drilling development would be limited to a small area of the Refuge's coastal plain. This accounting includes only the area where oil production facilities actually touch the ground - it does not include the gravel mines, roads, and pipelines that would be necessary to produce oil in this vast area. Neither does the President's calculation include destructive seismic or other exploration operations that would occur across the 1.5 million acre area. The fact is that the development footprint would be enormous, and would devastate wildlife populations. Defenders of Wildlife urges Members of Congress to amend the President's proposal to drill for oil in the Arctic Refuge on the grounds that the revenue and oil supply projections are highly speculative and the damage to America's most pristine wilderness area would be devastating.

ENERGY AND PUBLIC LANDS

While requesting critically needed funding for sage grouse conservation on Bureau of Land Management Lands, the president's budget requests increases for some of the very activities contributing to its decline.

Despite the fact that the president's budget for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) touts increases for conservation of the sage grouse – an issue of critical concern throughout 11 western states – it continues to provide increased funding for some of the very activities that have caused its decline. In January 2005, the Fish and Wildlife Service determined that sage-grouse, while a species of significant concern, did not warrant listing under the Endangered Species Act. The BLM manages half of the sage-grouse habitat remaining in the U.S., about 57 million acres. Industrial multiple-use activities on these lands, such as increased energy development, threaten sage-grouse habitat. The 2006 budget includes an increase of \$7.0 million for sage grouse conservation. Yet the budget continues to give high-priority to development of energy resources on federal lands in the western United States, including many lands inhabited by the sage grouse. The budget increases funds available for the processing of drilling permits by \$9.0 million over the 2005 amount by assessment of additional user fees, increasing the already record number of permits issued under the Bush Administration, while cutting funds for management and oversight of oil and gas activities on federal lands by \$690,000

FARM BILL CONSERVATION

While heralding increases for Farm Bill conservation programs over last year's level, the president's budget still fails to provide the mandatory levels promised in the 2002 Farm Bill.

The 2002 Farm Bill made an unprecedented commitment to helping farmers and ranchers protect wildlife habitat, improve water quality, and ensure good environmental stewardship. Unfortunately, in every year since passage of the farm bill, the promise to fully fund these programs has been broken, and this year is no exception. The 2002 Farm Bill promised mandatory conservation funding in FY 2006 of \$2.4 billion. Yet, the total amount in the president's FY 2006 budget request for all programs is \$1.7 billion, \$700 million less than was promised and is needed. The largest cut falls on the Conservation Security Program. CSP, which was intended to reward good stewardship practices on farms throughout the country, takes a 58% cut, leaving enough money to offer the program to only a small fraction of the nation's farmers. The Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, which provides cost-share assistance to producers to improve and protect wildlife habitat, is funded at 29% below promised Farm Bill levels. Other cuts include a 17% cut to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP); a 16% cut to the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program; and a 20% cut to the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).

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