



## FUNDING FROM THE RECOVERING AMERICA'S WILDLIFE ACT WILL BOOST TOURISM

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act offers an incredible opportunity to protect fish and wildlife and the habitats on which they depend, in Texas and throughout the country. This legislation will provide \$1.3 billion per year from existing federal revenue to fund state-based wildlife conservation.

The Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish & Wildlife Resources

recommended that a portion of the existing royalties from energy production on federal lands and waters be directed to the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program, established in 2000, to fund the Wildlife Action Plans adopted by each state.

Wildlife Action Plans are designed to help stabilize and recover species in decline, keeping them off the endangered species list. This legislation would provide the funding to implement these plans, providing a significant boost to nature tourism and the economic activity tourism generates.

### WHAT'S AT STAKE

Our natural world provides innumerable benefits to human health and economic prosperity. As species disappear, these benefits are compromised. Fish and wildlife agencies across the nation have identified more than 12,000 wildlife species as *Species of Greatest Conservation Need* (SGCN), some of which are already listed as threatened or endangered. Of these SGCN species, 1,310 occur in Texas.



**The Problem:** America lacks a dedicated funding stream to conserve at-risk fish and wildlife species. We are in danger of losing the ecological and economic benefits of these species and having them become threatened or endangered.

**The Solution:** The Recovering America's Wildlife Act, to be introduced by Congress Members Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE) and Deborah Dingell (D-MI), will provide permanent funding to each state to prevent fish and wildlife from becoming endangered.

The bill is supported by a wide range of business, energy industry, and conservation interests.

An active approach to species protection avoids the high cost of recovery, increases recreational opportunities, provides ecological benefits, and boost tourism throughout the state.



## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR TEXAS?

Texas will receive more than \$60 million per year in federal funds to implement the Texas Conservation Action Plan, which is designed to keep at-risk fish and wildlife populations off the threatened and endangered species list. Stabilizing these species now will provide a wide range of conservation benefits for the future.

Coupled with a 25% non-federal match, this funding translates into new jobs, additional recreational opportunities, increased habitat restoration and conservation, and more tourist dollars, for the benefit of Texas fish and wildlife, the business community, and future Texans.



## BENEFITS TO THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

- Tourism is Texas' third largest industry, and nature-based tourism is the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry. Studies estimate that over a million Texans and out-of-state visitors participate in wildlife watching or photography each year. In 2001, these travelers spent \$229 million on travel-related expenses and \$1.28 billion on equipment and services related to wildlife watching in Texas. These numbers have increased steadily in the intervening years.
- More than half of all Texans engage in some sort of outdoor activity each year. These activities frequently involve overnight travel, retail sales of equipment and clothing, and purchasing food, fuel, and supplies.
- Rare species, such as *Species of Greatest Conservation Need*, can be a big tourist draw. For example, the yellow-green vireo, a bird local to the Rio Grande Valley, is estimated to have generated more than \$100,000 in local spending in a single year.
- A recent study by the City of Corpus Christi illustrates the importance of nature tourism to many Texas communities. Nature tourism now accounts for 47 percent of all visitor -trips, and spending by nature-oriented visitors represents more than 50 percent of overall visitor spending. The total economic impact of nature tourism in the Corpus Christi area is estimated at \$987 million in business revenues, \$549 million in value-added activity, and 12,914 jobs.



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