

### **NWF National Policy Agenda**

The National Wildlife Federation, America's largest conservation organization, works across the country to unite Americans from all walks of life in giving wildlife a voice. The National Wildlife Federation has been working for more than eight decades to conserve our wildlife and cherished natural resources for future generations—and to unite all Americans to ensure wildlife thrive in a rapidly changing world.

The National Wildlife Federation has worked to strengthen wildlife and natural resources conservation through public policy dating back to its founding after the seminal 1936 North America Wildlife Conference. Working with policymakers in Washington, D.C. and in statehouses across the country is one of the most important ways the National Wildlife Federation protects and enhances wildlife habitat, wildlife conservation practices, and the responsible stewardship of our shared natural heritage. Regardless of which party occupies the White House or controls Congress or the statehouses, the National Wildlife Federation works to find bipartisan, collaborative and science-based solutions to the challenges facing wildlife and humanity alike.

The National Wildlife Federation's work stems from its comprehensive Strategic Plan, which has three main pillars:

- Protect, Restore, and Connect Wildlife Habitat
- Transform Wildlife Conservation
- Connect Americans with Wildlife

These pillars inform our 2019-2020 policy priorities and encapsulate the work that the National Wildlife Federation does every day. We remain committed to pursuing bipartisan, common sense solutions that will protect and restore our lands and waters, meaningfully address the looming wildlife crisis, and rekindle America's love of nature, rebuilding our national conservation ethic. Our children and grandchildren deserve the opportunity to experience, as we have, the full wonder of America's great outdoors.

# "Plans to protect air and water, wilderness and wildlife are in fact plans to protect man."

- Former Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall



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# Improving America's Infrastructure While Safeguarding the Future

nvestment in our nation's infrastructure is long overdue.

Aging roads, bridges, and railways pose safety risks;
inefficient buildings and industrial processes are wasting
energy; many rural areas still lack effective internet access and
the U.S. electric grid is largely ill-equipped to handle modern
energy needs. These challenges require concerted policy attention. In
addition, degraded natural resources such as protective wetlands are
leaving local communities and the economy more vulnerable to extreme
weather and the effects of climate change.

Congress and the Administration must seize on this moment to invest in upgrades to our nation's energy, transportation, and natural infrastructure systems in order to increase community safety and resilience, protect and recover wildlife, boost local economies and family-sustaining jobs, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The National Wildlife Federation believes that the following components are critical to a comprehensive investment in America's 21st century infrastructure.

### **Deploying Natural Defenses to Increase Resilience**

A significant investment in natural infrastructure—healthy and resilient natural systems, such as forests, wetlands, rivers, floodplains, working lands and other open spaces—can protect and restore communities and decrease carbon pollution. A focus on natural infrastructure ensures cleaner water, opportunities for workers, increased outdoor recreation, and secures the protection of fish and wildlife habitat. Investing in a combination of natural infrastructure and built infrastructure will maximize job creation in all corners of the nation, bolstering local economies and improving community resilience.

Natural infrastructure measures are cost-effective, and can make a valuable difference in minimizing or avoiding the risk of catastrophic storm and flooding damages in at-risk areas. During Hurricane Sandy for example, natural infrastructure prevented \$625 million in flood damages in 12 coastal states and reduced damages by 20 to 30% in the four states with the greatest wetland coverage. Similarly, natural infrastructure reduced Hurricane Katrina's storm surge in some areas near New Orleans, and levees protected by wetland buffers had a much greater chance of surviving than levees without natural safeguards.



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### **Ensuring Clean Water for All**

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Congress and the Administration should also increase funding levels for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs). States use the SRFs to provide low-interest loans to communities to finance projects that improve drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure. Increased funding—including natural infrastructure options—should prioritize resources for communities that need it most to ensure safe, reliable, affordable drinking water and resilient protections from flooding.

### **Connecting Wildlife Habitats**

Infrastructure investment also has the ability to protect and restore wildlife populations. Wildlife move both daily and seasonally to survive, and the habitats animals rely on continue to be fragmented by housing, roads, fences, energy facilities, and other manmade barriers. As a result, animals are far too often cut off from food, water, shelter, and breeding sites. And dangerous and costly wildlife collisions on America's roads are far too common. Congress can improve safety and habitat connectivity by providing funding for road crossings, retrofitting under-road culverts, installing protective fencing, and removing barriers such as outdated dams, locks, and other in-stream structures that block fish passage. These important projects should be part of any infrastructure package in order to ensure that our shared wildlife heritage can thrive in a rapidly changing world.

### **Supporting the Land and Water Conservation Fund**

For over 50 years, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has provided the resources to preserve and protect local, state and national parks, hiking and biking trails, historic sites, local recreation centers, and other open spaces, to the benefit of millions of Americans. The National Wildlife Federation strongly supports the permanent reauthorization and full funding for this critical program, which has broad-bipartisan support and has touched every county in America.

### Restoring Our National Parks, Forests, Wildlife Refuges and Public Lands

Our beloved national parks, forests, refuges and public lands are in desperate need of repairs and maintenance. Crumbling roads and walkways and broken utility systems are the direct result of increased visitation and decreased funding. Our American system of lands that belong to us all is the envy of the world, and we must ensure a that a world-class visitor experience is preserved for generations to come.



### A Clean Grid: Down Payment on a Clean Energy Economy

In the energy sector, low and zero-carbon sources of power should be scaled up quickly and responsibly, and combined with energy storage and smart grid technology to create a more resilient grid. Enhanced energy efficiency measures for power plants, industry, and residential and commercial buildings can dramatically reduce emissions and save money. Additionally, investment in research and development for carbon capture, use, and storage technologies will help ensure such solutions are deployable when urgently needed to stabilize the climate.

### **Supporting the Transition to Smart Transportation**

The transportation sector currently makes up roughly one-third of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, consuming 14 million barrels of oil per day, according to the Energy Information Administration. Supporting smart, forward-looking planning that promotes increased use of mass transit, and electrification of cars, buses, and other transport will not only cut emissions and oil dependency, but will allow for more efficient movement of people and commerce. This requires investment in battery charging infrastructure, electric vehicle purchasing, and greater support for states and localities wishing to get people out of cars and into shared transportation, as well as higher energy efficiency for e-commerce and other shipping and freight transport infrastructure. All of these priorities provide an opportunity for the United States to lead in clean energy technology and job creation.







While significant investment is needed to build needed infrastructure, the National Wildlife Federation will oppose any legislation that undercuts or impairs our foundational environmental laws, which provide for robust public input and protection for communities and wildlife alike.

Ensuring that Wildlife
Thrive in a Changing World

ur nation has been blessed with a diverse array of wildlife and fish.

While some of these species are thriving, many more are facing increasing challenges and are in steep decline. More than one-third of all species are at-risk or vulnerable to potential extinction in the decades ahead. Wildlife support the \$887 billion outdoor economy, sustain Americans and our outdoor traditions, and help us develop meaningful bonds with our natural world. Ending the wildlife crisis must be a top priority for the nation.

Reversing wildlife population declines will require investment in proactive conservation policies by states, federal agencies, and tribes that will help wildlife thrive. Habitat loss and degradation, invasive species, and wildlife disease pose serious threats and to address these challenges we must also invest in strategic conservation and restoration of critical terrestrial and aquatic habitats—including rivers, floodplains, streams, and wetlands—that support diverse wildlife populations.

One of the most important actions Congress can take to address the crisis facing our nation's fish and wildlife is to pass the **Recovering America's Wildlife Act.**This bill—a bipartisan priority supported by a diverse group of partners including state wildlife agencies, sportsmen and sportswomen, and many others—would dedicate \$1.3 billion annually to state fish and wildlife agencies and tribes for proactive, on-the-ground conservation projects to sustain and restore our treasured American wildlife heritage. These resources can help prevent species from becoming endangered, and will represent the largest investment made in wildlife conservation in more than a generation.

Wildlife also needs room to roam. Maintaining wildlife corridors, and ensuring habitat connectivity in general, are critical conservation tools we can employ to ensure wildlife continue to have access to the resources they need. Congress can promote habitat connectivity by supporting the **Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act**, and by advocating for wildlife crossings and associated infrastructure as part of any infrastructure legislation.

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There are many other actions that Congress can take to address the challenges faced by wildlife, including providing robust funding for wildlife programs; funding, defending, and strengthening the Endangered Species Act; strengthening the Migratory Bird Treaty Act by creating a general permit system to cover incidental take; confronting the threat of wildlife disease by supporting the Wildlife Disease Emergency Act and the Chronic Wasting Disease Management and Support for States Acts, and supporting the Invasive Fish and Wildlife Prevention Act.

Fostering Resilient Waters, Coasts, and Communities

lean water is central to healthy ecosystems. To protect clean water for wildlife and communities, Congress should ensure that the 2015 Clean Water Rule is not eroded legislatively or through the Administration's proposed replacement. In redefining the Waters of the United States, the Administration's proposal would remove pollution protections for at least half of America's wetlands and for many streams that do not flow year round—threatening the drinking water of millions of Americans and leaving critical fish and wildlife habitat at risk of pollution and destruction. Congress should also undertake strong oversight of Administration efforts to weaken CWA protections by eliminating Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s CWA 404(c) authority to veto the most environmentally destructive projects, and to weaken water resource mitigation and state assumption requirements.

Communities also need reliable resources to address increasing water quality challenges on a local and watershed-wide scale. To support their efforts, Congress should ensure robust appropriations for Clean Water Act permitting, clean up plans, and programs to strengthen and target Clean Water Act nutrient pollution reduction efforts.

To help wildlife and communities thrive in the face of more intense and frequent storms and droughts, Congress should provide strong oversight of the Army Corps of Engineers' implementation of **Water Resources Development Act (WRDA)** provisions that advance the protection, restoration, and mitigation of damage to natural infrastructure, including healthy rivers, streams, and wetlands.

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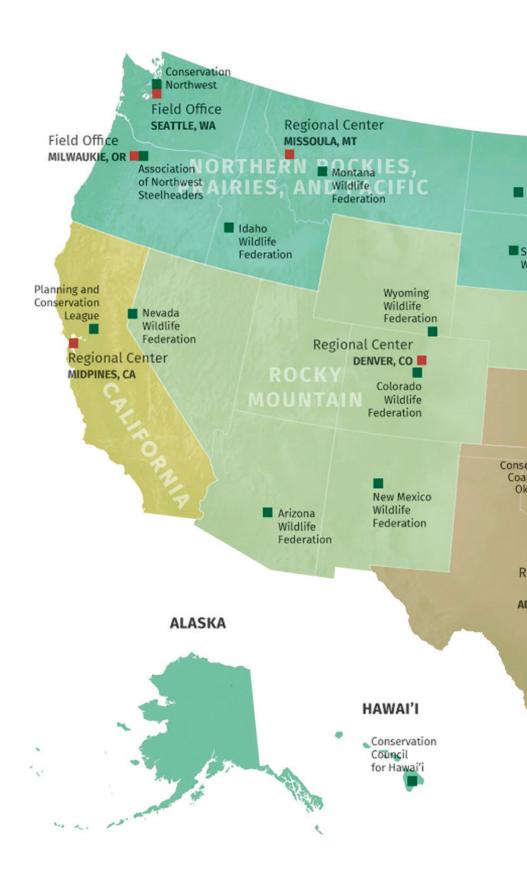
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Congress should also ensure meaningful evaluation of natural infrastructure solutions including through utilization of independent external peer review panel findings, and by removing the holdover appropriations rider that prohibits the Corps from utilizing the modern planning principles and requirements that apply to all other agencies constructing water resources projects. Looking ahead, Congress should take additional steps to increase protection and use of natural infrastructure solutions by ensuring that the next WRDA modernizes the Corps' management of existing projects, preparation of benefit-cost analyses, and development of agency budgets.

America's Great Waters help define us as a nation and they need more attention than ever in the face of a changing climate. Congress should maintain robust federal funding levels for critical EPA and Army Corps ecosystem restoration and pollution reduction programs that support clean drinkable, fishable, and swimmable waters across the country, including the Great Lakes, Mississippi River Delta, Chesapeake Bay, Long Island Sound, and Delaware River Basin. Additionally, the federal government must fully fund Everglades restoration po

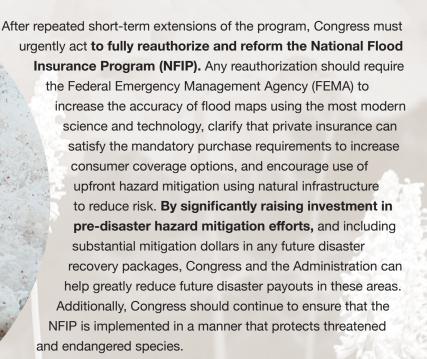
the federal government must fully fund Everglades restoration projects at \$200 million annually to honor its long-overdue commitment to advance the progress made in restoring this American treasure.

Along the Gulf coast, an unprecedented restoration effort is underway with the funds from the BP oil spill settlement. It is critical that the federal agencies, including the Army Corps, Department of the Interior (DOI), US Department of Agriculture (USDA), EPA, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) work together with the Gulf Coast States to advance strategic, science-driven, and

large-scale restoration investments in watersheds from Texas to Florida. In the Mississippi River Delta, federal and state agencies must collaborate to ensure swift implementation of sediment diversion projects—an indispensable tool for restoring Louisiana's nationally-significant wetlands.



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After repeated shortterm extensions of the program, Congress must urgently act to fully reauthorize and reform the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

Over many years the National Wildlife Federation has worked with Congress to accelerate available funding in the Abandoned Mine Reclamation (AML) Fund to revitalize communities hit hardest by a declining coal industry. Passing the bipartisan RECLAIM (Revitalizing the Economy of Coal Communities by Leveraging Local Activities and Investing More) Act, will ensure reclamation of the nation's remaining six million acres of abandoned mine land, while also enabling community economic development and job training.

# Addressing Climate Change and Catalyzing Clean Energy

he 116th Congress will have the opportunity to take proactive action to address climate change and limit climate pollution.

Congress should advance policies that develop and deploy clean energy at the pace and scale needed to avoid catastrophic warming, while protecting wildlife. This includes funding research, development, and deployment of responsibly sited onshore and offshore wind and solar power generation, plus other technologies that reduce energy and industrial sector emissions, such as in carbon capture, utilization, and storage. Meanwhile, Congress must play an important role in maintaining existing pollution standards, such as the Environmental Protection Agency's oil and gas sector methane rule and Mercury and Air Toxics Standards.



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We also believe that Congress should promote market based policies that will shift the costs of carbon pollution to major emitters and will result in carbon reduction across all sectors, such as the Market Choice Act. These pieces of legislation require major emitters to pay a set price for every ton of carbon emitted over time, and direct the revenues to address other needs, such as funding infrastructure, clean energy research and development, or offsetting household costs. These approaches provide long-range certainty about the cost of using carbon-based fuels, and will spur investment in low- or no-carbon energy, processes, technologies and products.

While establishing a goal of powering the transportation sector with renewable electricity, Congress and the Administration must also begin to phase in cleaner liquid alternatives in the interim. Continuing to advance relatively dirty first generation biofuels—those primarily made from corn and soy—will only lock in the

infrastructure for fuels that compete with food for land, consume wildlife habitat, foul waterways with industrial agricultural pollution, and contribute to climate change rather than reversing it. We will work with Congress to reform the Renewable Fuel Standard to favor cleaner, next generation alternatives while putting in place the necessary incentives and infrastructure for electrification.

Natural lands, such as our parks and forests, and working lands, such as farms and ranches, have the potential to store and sequester vast amounts of carbon across the American landscape. The National Wildlife Federation encourages Congress to move forward policies that will maintain and enhance existing carbon sinks and limit carbon emissions, increase carbon sequestration in soils and biomass, improve resilience to the impacts of climate change for people and wildlife, restore wildlife habitat and connectivity, and ensure sustainable local economies for the farming, ranching, timber, and outdoor recreation industries.

There is an important opportunity to increase the pace and scale of restoration and reforestation on America's National Forest System, consistent with forest resilience and the forests' contributions to natural climate change solutions, and protection of wildlife and natural resources. Congress passed a "wildfire funding fix" in 2018 to cover the increasing costs of fighting forest fires and ensure that the Forest Service can fully implement strategic policy options for restoring and managing the public's forests. Congress should build on that success by providing funding for restoration-specific programs such as the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP), and for the critical task of updating national forest plans.

Congressional oversight will also be needed to ensure the Forest Service conducts ecologically appropriate, climate informed restoration of national forest ecosystems driven by acres restored not timber targets. Any new legislative forest management tools should require consideration of carbon and forest resilience, and maintain appropriate environmental safeguards.

# Supporting and Protecting Working Lands

he Farm Bill is the largest source of federal funding for conservation. Protecting and restoring habitat for wildlife on working landscapes is critically important. With the 2018 Farm Bill now signed into law, it is crucial that Congress ensure full funding for Farm Bill conservation programs by not cutting them during the appropriations process. NWF will work over the coming years with USDA to ensure that the new Farm Bill is implemented in a way that maximizes the benefits to soil, water, and wildlife. This includes making sure that wetland conservation compliance provisions are not undermined or weakened.

# Protecting Our Shared Conservation Heritage

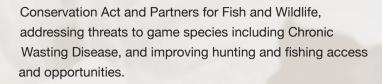
he National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) evaluates project impacts to ensure better protection of public health, public safety, wildlife, and the environment. NEPA also gives the public the critical opportunity to provide input into federal actions, and is often the only forum for members of the public, outside experts, states, tribes, and public interest organizations to have a voice in federal actions that can have profound impacts on their lives and livelihoods.

Defending these critical NEPA safeguards from any Administrative or Congressional attacks is essential for protecting fish and wildlife. Congress must also guard against efforts undermine the integrity of other bedrock environmental laws, including the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act.

Hunters and anglers are among America's foremost conservation leaders, with deep traditions of conserving, respecting, and enjoying our nation's wildlife and outdoors. The National Wildlife Federation encourages Congress to focus its continued efforts on legislation to enhance the natural resources, programs, and outdoor recreation opportunities that hunters and anglers depend on. These opportunities include reauthorizing important conservation programs like the North American Wetlands



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To help settle the West and protect mining rights, in the 19th

century, Congress passed the infamous **1872 Mining Law.**Still in effect today, this antiquated law makes hard rocking mining claims the "highest and best use" of America's public lands over other uses and protections. It virtually gives away publicly owned hard rock minerals for free; relies on a weak patchwork of other laws to limit mining impacts or compel reclamation; and provides no funded program or means to reclaim the more than 500,000 abandoned mine sites that have plagued the west for over a century many with serious long-term water pollution problems. 1872 Mining Law Reform is long overdue and the National Wildlife Federation will work with Congress to update this law.

### **Restoring National Monuments**

The Trump administration's decimation of the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments was the largest single attack in history on our nation's conservation heritage. The National Wildlife Federation stands with the Navajo, Hopi, Ute, Ute Mountain and Zuni tribes in opposition to this action. By removing these important protections, the administration put mining, oil and gas interests ahead of sacred land, ancient cultural sites and iconic wildlife. NWF supports litigation to overturn the administration's action and will support legislation to re-establish the monuments to their original size.

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### **Protecting Sage Grouse Habitat**

In 2015, an historic agreement was reached by Western governors, ranchers, oil and gas developers, conservationists and local officials to protect the imperiled sage grouse and 350 other plant and wildlife species that depend on a healthy sagebrush system. Now the Department of Interior wants to undo that historic work by opening more public lands for leasing and allowing waivers for oil and gas drilling. The new plan also eliminates requirements on the oil and gas companies to compensate for damages to this critical habitat. Not only do these actions have dire consequences for the animals that call this habitat home, it will have a direct impact on those who use

these lands for hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation. Sportsmen and women and wildlife advocates understand that the health of the sage grouse is a barometer of the overall health of the sagebrush steppe and the many species—including mule deer, pronghorn and golden eagles—that live there. If this new plan is allowed to go forward, some of the West's most critical habitats will be compromised for generations to come.

## Supporting Education and Sound Science

n order to prepare and inspire the next generation of conservationists and environmental leaders, it is crucial that we value environmental education. The National Wildlife Federation supports robust funding for existing environmental education and literacy programs at the EPA, NOAA, and other federal agencies - along with funding for the environmental education programs in Title IV of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). America must also strengthen environmental and green STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education through our nation's K-16 school system. As part of this belief, the National Wildlife Federation supports the Climate Change Education Act, which would create a NOAA grant program to help Americans understand the connection between climate change and our economy, helping foster the next generation of climate problem solvers.



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