

WILDLIFE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY MID-TERM REPORT

AUGUST 2022

The American Wildlife Conservation Partners have published a 4-year agenda for every Presidential election since 2000. Many of the issues in this agenda have become policies that improve stewardship of our nation's fish, wildlife, and habitats and enhance access to federal lands and waters for outdoor and wildlife-associated recreation.

This mid-term report evaluates the 10 recommendations from the 2020 report, Wildlife for the 21st Century: Volume 6, and what is still needed to accomplish these priorities.

READ W21 VOL. 6



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The following summarizes the progress that has been made on the latest “W2I” agenda—Wildlife for the 21st Century: Volume 6—and remaining steps to take.



1: Funding for Conservation

COMPLETED

The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) was enacted, including permanent, dedicated funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Making Public Lands Public initiative, and the Legacy Restoration Fund for deferred maintenance on federal public lands.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) was enacted, providing funding for numerous priorities, notably federal land management activities.

The America’s Conservation Enhancement Act included reauthorizations of funding programs for fish, wildlife, and other conservation efforts.

STILL TO ACCOMPLISH

The Recovering America’s Wildlife Act has passed the House (H.R. 2773) and is awaiting action in the Senate (S.2372).

Sustained funding for conservation efforts through the federal appropriations process, as well as administrative priorities like the big game migration corridor initiative and America the Beautiful, will address W2I recommendations.

2: Federal Land Access

COMPLETED

The GAOA and IIJA include significant funds for roads and trails on public land through the Federal Lands Transportation Program, Federal Lands Access Program, and funding for Making Public Lands Public.

The MAPLand Act (H.R. 3113) was enacted to improve digital mapping of easements and rights-of-way across private lands. It will encourage access with real-time information about boundaries, allowable uses and vehicles, and hunting or recreational shooting opportunities.

STILL TO ACCOMPLISH

Recent proposals to expand recreational access in National Wildlife Refuges intend to eliminate the use of lead ammunition and fishing tackle. We oppose this blanket approach. However, we continue to support expanded access within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and other federal land management agencies.

Recreational access for hunting and fishing was included in the America the Beautiful, however recreational shooting is missing from this list.

3: Big Game Migrations

COMPLETED

Big game migration corridors were explicitly supported within the America the Beautiful initiative.

The Department of the Interior reaffirmed its commitment to Secretarial Order 3362 and maintained the existing coordinator and regional liaisons. In addition, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), particularly through the Natural Resources Conservation Service, has become actively engaged. USDA is seeking to increase conservation efforts for big game migration corridors by leveraging funding made available in the 2018 Farm Bill.

The IIJA included a Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program funded at \$350 million.

STILL TO ACCOMPLISH

Although the IIJA included wildlife crossings as a pilot program, the grant program has not been established and projects have not yet been funded.

Funding for big game migration corridor conservation efforts has been limited in federal agency budget requests. A congressionally appropriated Wildlife Corridor Grant Program should be authorized to support the successful voluntary partnerships with private landowners, ranchers, and farmers.

4: Energy Development

COMPLETED

The America the Beautiful report recognized the need for “intentional planning” of renewable energy siting.

STILL TO ACCOMPLISH

Meeting the needs of fish and wildlife and their habitat in both traditional and renewable energy development is an ongoing, interagency need.

Agency policies and directives regarding wildlife must be reaffirmed for all energy development.

5: Private Land Conservation

COMPLETED

The Working Lands for Wildlife program of the Natural Resources Conservation Service has been continued and expanded.

Conservation programs authorized within the 2018 Farm Bill continue to show strong benefits to working lands, landowners, and wildlife.

STILL TO ACCOMPLISH

As the 2023 Farm Bill reauthorization begins to take shape, successful conservation efforts need to be expanded and improved.

Enact legislation to create a program dedicated to grassland conservation—the only major habitat type that does not have a focused conservation program at the federal level.

Provide mandatory funding for the Healthy Forests program and modify it to include two categories of eligible land: general forest land and forest land of special significance.

6: Active Management of Federal Lands

COMPLETED

\$14 billion was included in the IIJA to address 80 million acres of national forest in need of restoration and reforestation.

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) has created a strategic plan to manage federal forest lands more aggressively and engage in opportunities for Shared Stewardship.

STILL TO ACCOMPLISH

Despite the increased attention to forest management by the USFS and state and local communities, litigation is continuing to impact the implementation of large landscape projects.

A fix for the Cottonwood court ruling that has stopped numerous forest management projects across the West has been drafted for both Congressional (S. 2561) and Administrative enactment.

7: Species Conservation

COMPLETED

A national coordinator for the Conservation Without Conflict coalition has been hired to support collaborative conservation approaches.

The USFS has created a strategic plan that aims to address ESA issues on national forest lands.

STILL TO ACCOMPLISH

Increased funding for state- and Tribe-based conservation is in progress through House passage of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H.R. 2773/S.2372). The latest version includes financial support for the FWS.

FWS is revising regulations and proposing a rule to facilitate ESA conservation banking.

Many important aspects of the ESA program confuse areas of improvement such as objective, measurable, and transparent criteria for considering voluntary conservation actions that preclude the need to list species under ESA.

8: Big Game Diseases

COMPLETED

Increased funds have been appropriated to manage and research Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) since FY2017. These dollars are distributed through a grant program managed by the USDA – Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Congressional appropriators continue to direct the USFS and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to consider the effects of domestic sheep grazing on bighorn sheep.

STILL TO ACCOMPLISH

The Chronic Wasting Disease Research and Management Act (H.R. 5608) passed the House by a vote of 393-33 and a Senate companion bill with bipartisan co-sponsorship (S. 4111) was introduced in late April 2022. Enacting the legislation will authorize funding for states to help manage existing CWD outbreaks, conduct research to improve testing and disease containment mechanisms, and initiate a review of the Herd Certification Program.

The BLM has a massive backlog of grazing permit renewals to address, which is an opportunity to streamline the process and increase vigilance for pneumonia on federal lands, which is deadly to bighorn sheep.

9: Climate Change

COMPLETED

Funding for natural defenses and climate-smart conservation practices were included as part of the IIJA.

AWCP partners have directed habitat work toward carbon sequestration and have engaged in controlling methane emissions.

STILL TO ACCOMPLISH

A smart climate agenda is still developing. The value of forest management is still an undervalued approach as obstacles to it stand in the way of reducing emissions from fires and improving sequestration.

10: Hunting Heritage and the Future

COMPLETED

The Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Committee was re-chartered, though committee members have not been appointed yet and it is still not permanently authorized.

STILL TO ACCOMPLISH

The hunting community is engaged on many discussions surrounding the recruitment, retention, and reactivation of hunters. This is an ongoing priority for the community.

The Federal Lands Hunting, Fishing, and Shooting Sports Roundtable should be reassembled and actively engaged.

AWCP ORGANIZATIONS

AMERICAN WOODCOCK SOCIETY | ARCHERY TRADE ASSOCIATION | ASSOCIATION OF FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES | BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS | BEAR TRUST INTERNATIONAL | BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB | CALIFORNIA WATERFOWL ASSOCIATION | CAMP FIRE CLUB OF AMERICA | CATCH A DREAM FOUNDATION | CONGRESSIONAL SPORTSMEN'S FOUNDATION | CONSERVATION FORCE | COUNCIL TO ADVANCE HUNTING AND THE SHOOTING SPORTS | DALLAS SAFARI CLUB | DELTA WATERFOWL FOUNDATION | DUCKS UNLIMITED | HOUSTON SAFARI CLUB | INTERNATIONAL HUNTER EDUCATION ASSOCIATION - USA | IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA | MASTERS OF FOXHOUNDS ASSOCIATION | MULE DEER FOUNDATION | NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FOREST SERVICE RETIREES | NATIONAL BOBWHITE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE | NATIONAL DEER ASSOCIATION | NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION | NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS FOUNDATION | NATIONAL TRAPPERS ASSOCIATION | NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION | NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION | NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE ASSOCIATION | NORTH AMERICAN FALCONERS ASSOCIATION | NORTH AMERICAN GROUSE PARTNERSHIP | ORION – THE HUNTER'S INSTITUTE | PHEASANTS FOREVER/QUAIL FOREVER | POPE AND YOUNG CLUB | PROFESSIONAL OUTFITTERS AND GUIDES OF AMERICA | PUBLIC LANDS FOUNDATION | ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION | RUFFED GROUSE SOCIETY | SAFARI CLUB INTERNATIONAL | SHIKAR SAFARI CLUB | SPORTSMEN'S ALLIANCE | TEXAS WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION | THE CONSERVATION FUND | THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY | THEODORE ROOSEVELT CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP | TREAD LIGHTLY! | WHITETAILS UNLIMITED | WILD SHEEP FOUNDATION | WILDLIFE FOREVER | WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE | WILDLIFE MISSISSIPPI