

# REINFORCE STATE AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT -FUNDING ISSUES

State fish and wildlife agencies perform a variety of critical tasks, including the establishment and enforcement of hunting and fishing regulations, inventory and monitoring of fish and wildlife populations, public education and information, proactive management of designated wildlife habitat areas, and biological research. State fish and wildlife agencies have been exceptionally effective in fulfilling their

wide-ranging responsibilities. Surveys reveal that the public generally believes its state fish and wildlife agencies spend their money in a wise and efficient manner and do a very effective job overall.

In recent years there has been increasing pressure for state agencies to take on a greater role in conserving wildlife species, particularly those that are imperiled or at risk of becoming so. This is a serious

## RECOMMENDATION

**The Administration should support efforts to secure the intent of CARA – Title III in legislation, in the 107th Congress.**

problem for most states since hunter license fees and excise taxes pay for most or all wildlife management and these sources are increasingly inadequate. Since most states provide little or no general fund support for wildlife, there is a growing need for increased state government financial support for these programs. The International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) estimates that unmet fish and wildlife needs amount to approximately \$1 billion annually nationwide. Unfortunately, there is no dedicated funding source for conserving the full array of wildlife.

The number of species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) has increased significantly in the past decade. From August 1992 to August 1999 the number of species on the list increased from 728 to 1,187. As more species are listed under the ESA, or proposed for listing, the authority and credibility of state wildlife management is eroded.

To address the continuing shortfalls in the funding of state resource agency wildlife programs, House and Senate versions (H.R. 701/S.25) of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) of 1999, were introduced in Congress early in 2000. A drastically scaled-back version of CARA was passed, leaving wildlife seriously under funded.

Both versions would have dedicated 50% or more of the annual federal income from off-shore oil and gas leases, which averages about \$4.6 billion per year, primarily into three separate funds. The distribution of these funds was outlined in the three titles of these bills:

- Title I – Outer Continental Shelf Impact Assistance;
- Title II – State, Local, and Urban Conservation and Recreation; and
- Title III – Wildlife Conservation and Restoration.

The first purpose of Title III was “to extend financial and technical assistance to the states under the Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson Act) for the benefit of a diverse array of wildlife and associated habitats, including species that are not hunted or fished, to fulfill unmet needs of wildlife within the states in recognition of the primary role of the states to conserve all wildlife”. Title III dedicated about \$350 million to states annually for wildlife conservation and related recreation and education programs. ■

