

ESTABLISH FEDERAL BUDGET PRIORITIES THAT WILL RESTORE WILDLIFE FUNDING TO THE 1980 LEVEL

After a decade or more of increased funding for natural resources and environmental programs that followed passage of the 1972 Clean Water Act, Function 300 (Natural Resources and Environment) of the federal budget took a nose-dive. Funding has not recovered from the drop that occurred primarily between 1980 and

1984. In fact, funding in real dollars is programmed to continue to decline through 2003 based on the Balanced Budget Agreement. Federal funding for natural resources and environment, as a proportion of total federal funding, is now 40% below the 1980 level. Ongoing efforts such as the Public Lands Funding Initiative and the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement have had some success during recent budget cycles at increasing authorizations and appropriations for public lands and wildlife accounts, but have not reversed the broader downward trend.

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration should establish a budget plan that would return Function 300 allocations to the 1980 level of 2.6% of total federal funding.

In the absence of adequate funding for federal land management agencies and other agencies responsible for environmental health, the future condition of fish and wildlife and the habitats on which they depend are certain to be diminished. A fundamental reassessment of agency funding priorities with emphasis on performance quality and incentive based professional management, and full funding of stewardship needs is essential. ■

