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*The Montana
Wildlife Future Group*

***Sustaining and Advancing
Wildlife Management
And Public Access in Montana***

Executive Summary

Sustaining and Advancing Wildlife Management And Public Access in Montana

Executive Summary

Montanans love our wildlife and the wide open spaces, prairies, mountain ranges, rivers and lakes that provide both habitat and room for both people and wildlife to thrive under the Big Sky. Like no other Lower 48 State, *Montana guards a treasure, a treasure Montanans want to keep.*

Montana guards a treasure, a treasure Montanans want to keep.

Montanans owe an enormous debt of gratitude to previous generations who restored the state's wildlife legacy after the decades of loss that followed European settlement and prior to the establishment of wildlife conservation laws. But no generation, it seems, can escape its own challenges. Montana's wildlife legacy sits now on the cusp of new era marked by climate change, invasive species, wildlife diseases, and fast-growing urban and suburban development. To protect what our forbearers so carefully restored, all Montanans today need to invest in our wild future for the next generation.

It is with the intent of protecting this legacy that the *Montana Wildlife Future Group* formed in 2016. The *Group*, consisting of wildlife advocates from across the state, met over a two-year period to discuss the oncoming challenges of wildlife management in Montana.

The Group documented several key findings, including:

- Montana has a trust responsibility to manage all wildlife species, including game and non-game species
- Montana's current wildlife management program focuses largely on game species, and the majority of wildlife conservation funding originates from hunting and fishing-derived dollars, even though all Montanans benefit from wildlife conservation
- Hunting and fishing license dollars alone don't meet current or future management needs
- New challenges threaten the state's wildlife legacy
- New funding sources for wildlife conservation are needed at both the state and federal level
- Many other states are successfully grappling with the management and funding challenges
- Montana can meet these challenges as well

The Montana Wildlife Future Group identified five areas of focus:

- Terrestrial Habitat Protection
- Aquatic Habitat Protection
- Human-Wildlife Conflict Resolution
- Species Conservation Through Research, Recovery and Management
- Wildlife Conservation, Education and Recreation

This document contains three additional sections, "*The Montana Wildlife Future Group Value Statement*," "*White Paper - Sustaining and Advancing Wildlife Management and Public Access in Montana*," and "*Priority Opportunities to Conserve Montana's At-Risk Species*," which present our rationale and explanation of the priorities and funding needs for the future of wildlife management in Montana.

Our *Group* looks forward to stimulating a Montana-wide conversation that affirms the scientific management of wildlife, and the conservation of our treasured wildlife legacy.

Presented by ***The Montana Wildlife Future Group***¹

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MWFG Value Statement

Montana's amazing wildlife legacy came by no accident. Once depleted by frontier and market hunting and, in some cases, environmental degradation, Montanans worked diligently and intelligently to restore populations of big game species, native fish, and other wildlife. Hunters and anglers carried a significant portion of the financial burden of this wildlife recovery success story by voluntarily taxing themselves when purchasing firearms, ammunition, angling gear, and other equipment, and through the purchase of hunting and fishing licenses. Other sources of revenue from the Land and Water Conservation Fund helped restore or protect millions of acres of prime habitat and provided access to public lands and water across Montana. Additionally, Montana's wildlife greatly benefits from habitat on the 30 percent of Montana that is federal public land, as well as the federal investment made in managing and conserving those lands. However, today, as the hunter and angler population ages, federal revenue decline, license fee increase, and new challenges emerge, advocates for scientific management of Montana's wildlife and outdoor access and recreation must secure new sources of revenue to ensure the future of Montana's nationally significant wildlife.

Hunters and anglers have long carried most of the financial burden of this wildlife recovery success story, in Montana and across the nation.

We, the *Montana Wildlife Future Group*, constitute a diverse cross-section of Montanans who care deeply about Montana's wildlife and the responsibility to pass to our children and grandchildren a legacy befitting of our great state.

We think Montana's wildlife represents an irreplaceable legacy that must be wisely stewarded to protect the significant public investment made in its historic recovery.

We recognize that Montana's wildlife and relatively intact habitat sets our state apart from others for its diversity, completeness and health of its populations.

We support the scientific and cultural management of wildlife for all species indigenous to the state of Montana.

We see Montana's wildlife as part of a "clean and healthful environment" protected by the Montana State Constitution.

We understand that Montana's wildlife are part of the public trust, to be preserved for future generations of Montanans and all Americans.

We think public recreation and access to Montana's lakes, rivers, and public lands must be sustained to ensure Montanans remain engaged in wildlife management.

We recognize the need to provide sustained and sufficient funding to ensure that Montana's wildlife is managed scientifically and in culturally appropriate ways.

We think that all Montanans should contribute to sustaining the state's wildlife heritage, as all Montanans benefit from the enjoyment of this resource.

We think the Montana public will support an effort to secure sustained funding for the state's wildlife.

We, the *Montana Wildlife Future Group*, commit to working cooperatively and in the spirit of consensus to find a fair, equitable, and efficient means to sustain wildlife management, habitat conservation, outdoor education and access across Montana.

Adopted by the Montana Wildlife Future Group on 11/29/2018

White Paper – Sustaining and Advancing Wildlife Management and Public Access in Montana

Background: a Legacy of Success in Funding Wildlife Management

Montana enjoys a well-deserved international reputation for its wildlife legacy that is unrivaled in the nation for its variety and completeness of native species. From big game like elk, bighorn sheep, moose, and mountain goats, to predators like grizzly bears, black bears, mountain lions, wolves, and the diversity of native mammals, and the abundance of resident and migratory birds, Montana enjoys a wildlife richness unmatched in many places around the world. This legacy did not happen by accident.

Today, Montanans must rise to the challenge – as they always have – to conserve what our predecessors so laboriously and generously bequeathed to us.

Montana's wildlife was once depleted by frontier and market hunting and environmental degradation. But Montanans worked diligently and intelligently over decades and into the present to restore populations of big game species, native fish, and other wildlife. Today, the world comes to Montana

in large part to experience its wildlife and the spectacular landscapes that provide the habitat for this abundance.

Hunters and anglers have long carried most of the financial burden of this wildlife recovery success story, in Montana and across the nation. Wildlife management in the United States is implemented primarily at the state level through agencies like the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). Most fish and wildlife agencies across the U.S. are funded primarily by hunters and anglers through state hunting and fishing license fees and an excise taxes on hunting and fishing gear.

Montana Wildlife Management Funding: At the state-level, funding for wildlife management is generated primarily through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. In 2017, FWP depended on about 77 percent of its revenue for fish and wildlife management from this revenue stream.

Federal Wildlife Management Funding: State license fees are supplemented by federal funds under the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937 and the Dingell-Johnson Sportfish Restoration Act of 1950. These programs are funded by the Pittman-Robertson federal excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment, and Dingell-Johnson excise tax on fishing tackle, boating equipment, and boating fuel. Excise tax receipts are placed into trust funds and allocated by formula to state wildlife agencies. FWP receives about \$23 million or 23 percent of their total budget from these federal funds in 2017.

While the survival of fish and wildlife depends on other conservation funding – such as federal tax dollars for federal land management and federal offshore oil and gas revenue for land acquisition – the core, state-level, wildlife management activities have always depended on the above two streams of license and federal funding.

Over time, this system of funding wildlife management with state and federal revenue from hunters and anglers has come to be called the “user-pays” system, because the revenue comes from the hunters and anglers who are often identified as the most tangible “users” of fish and wildlife resources. For almost a century, hunters and anglers have proudly supported this system and fought against any

efforts to divert hunting and fishing license fees or federal excise taxes to other government spending purposes.

However, wildlife conservation and public access to Montana's outdoor heritage is in a state of flux and challenge. Today, Montanans must rise to the challenge – as they always have – to conserve what our predecessors so laboriously and generously bequeathed to us.

Today's Context: New Challenges to the Traditional Funding Model

While current user-pays sources of funding will remain vital to future wildlife management, several long-term trends clearly show the need for additional, broader funding for FWP.

First, the threats facing wildlife are growing in complexity and extent. In the last century, over-harvest and habitat loss posed the greatest threat. Today, a broader array of issues threaten wildlife. The spread of wildlife diseases (such as Chronic Wasting Disease), invasive species, climate change, pollution and contamination, and increasing wildlife-human conflicts demand long-term dedication of funding and new conservation strategies.

Most Montanans don't know that their tax dollars do not support wildlife management or habitat acquisition and access improvements.

Invasive species, particularly aquatic invasive species (AIS), pose a real threat to maintaining Montana's treasured lakes and rivers. The Montana Legislature raised license fees and enacted a new tax on hydropower. The legislature only provide funding for the 2017-18 biennium. A long-term funding need remains.

The hunter and angler population – highly correlated with the Baby Boomer generation – is aging and declining. While the level of participation in hunting and fishing remains high, this population is projected to be unable to fully fund wildlife management in the future. In black and white terms, this means fewer sportsmen to buy hunting and fishing licenses and sporting equipment, and support other revenue streams that fund Montana's wildlife agency. Federal excise tax funds will also decrease as purchases of firearms and fishing equipment decrease.

The growing segment of citizens not purchasing hunting or fishing licenses also hold an allegiance to wildlife, and a majority of this segment is increasingly urban. Thus, the burden of the financial responsibility for fish and wildlife management is falling on a smaller segment of Montanans, and Montana is falling behind in its responsibility to manage all and sustain all wildlife.

Public attitudes about wildlife are expanding beyond the historic, utilitarian view to encompass a more aesthetic and amenity view. While Montana's hunting heritage remains strong, many Montanans now also 'consume' wildlife as an amenity to be viewed as part of outdoor activities and adventures. In addition to access to the outdoors for hunting and fishing, Montana's growing population also requires access infrastructure for other wildlife-based recreation to keep it connected to nature, including state parks, trail access to public lands and waters, and educational resources to provide accurate and timely information needed by an informed and democratic society.

Most Montanans don't know that their tax dollars *do not* support wildlife management or habitat acquisition and access improvements. All Montanans love wildlife and the state's wide-open spaces, and they assume their dollars support these important public resources. This situation results in three outcomes: (1) It leaves hunters and anglers bearing much of the cost, (2) the management of fish and wildlife is falling behind the need, and (3) it deprives all Montanans from meaningfully and responsibly contributing to wildlife management, land conservation, and access improvement.

The need to further diversify and broaden dollars for wildlife management, public recreation and access is coming into sharper focus. As available dollars shrink, fiscal reality has started bumping up against the real need to responsibly manage all of Montana's wildlife and recreational needs. Somehow and in some fashion, *all Montanans* will have to make up the difference.

Options for Expanded State-level Funding for Wildlife Management

Montana is far from the first state to encounter the need to expand funding for wildlife management. In fact, several states have already expanded funding beyond the user pays model and secure revenue from a broader base of the public.

In 1976, the voters of Missouri voted to set aside 1/8 of one percent of the state sales tax to fund the Missouri Department of Conservation, which is the state's fish and wildlife management agency. These funds provide nearly two-thirds of the agency's budget, supporting traditional wildlife management programs alongside non-game and endangered species conservation.

Arkansas uses a similar sales tax model to fund wildlife management, with 1/8 of one percent of the state sales tax split among four agencies, including the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.

The Arizona Heritage Fund earmarks \$10 million/year in funds from the state lottery program for the Arizona Game and Fish Department to implement habitat protection and wildlife programs.

The Great Outdoors Colorado program generated \$64 million in 2017 for non-game conservation, watchable wildlife, wildlife education, and parks programs of the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife.

In 2018, Georgia voters enacted "Amendment #1" by a vote of 83% to 17%. This constitutional amendment would dedicate up to 80% of existing sales tax collected by sporting goods stores to the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund.

Montana is far from the first state to encounter the need to expand funding for wildlife management.

These are just five of the larger examples of how states have broadened wildlife management funding beyond traditional user groups. Dozens of other approaches have been adopted that range from small-scale tax checkoff programs, to license

plate sales, to mineral severance taxes. In addition, some states have experimented with sales tax set-asides for wildlife that are not automatically allocated (such as Texas and Virginia's sporting goods sales taxes). Many wildlife funding measures have been accompanied by increased funding for land protection, parks, and other conservation initiatives.

Options for Expanded Federal Funding for Wildlife Management

For more than 20 years, Congress has occasionally considered proposals to provide funding for non-game conservation through the existing Pittman-Robertson/Dingell Johnson structure.

In 2000, Congress authorized the creation of a Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program (WCRP) within Pittman-Robertson that would provide funds to state wildlife agencies specifically targeted at species of greatest conservation need. Unlike traditional P-R, this new program was not set up with an automatic funding source. Over the last 15 years, Congress has demonstrated the efficacy of WCRP through annually appropriated State Wildlife Grants, which provide funding to state wildlife agencies for the same fish and wildlife conservation activities.

The allocation for Montana under the Recovering America's Wildlife Act could equal \$29 million per annum.

In 2017, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA, HR 4647) was introduced to provide \$1.3 billion in dedicated funding for the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program. Funds would be allocated from existing federal energy receipts, alongside existing allocations for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and other set-asides. Funds would be allocated on a formula basis to Montana and other states. The bill has more than 100 cosponsors, both Republican and Democratic.

The allocation for Montana under the Recovering America's Wildlife Act could equal \$29 million per annum. Like traditional P-R funds, Montana would need to make a 25 percent match to the new federal dollars. Currently, Montana license sales would be insufficient to take advantage of this potential new source of funding. New state funds would be required to match federal funds.

Even if enacted, RAWA would not necessarily fund other wildlife education and access needs. If RAWA were to pass, a new source of state funds would be needed to provide the matching dollars. If RAWA does not become law, then a new state fund could be established that could address the needs as outlined here.

In preparation for the potential enactment of RAWA, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has delineated six priority areas for the allocation of additional funding. These include:

- Large scale habitat conservation and restoration projects that provide long term benefits to habitat, wildlife, and people

- Smaller scale geographic areas in greatest need of conservation

- Focal species of greatest need through broad-scale and fine-scale action

- Short-term inventory efforts to determine species status and need

- Fostering interest and involvement in the resources of FWP through public outreach and education.

- Providing diverse opportunities for people to connect with Montana's outdoors, and retaining, recruiting, and reactivating participants in hunting, angling, state parks, and other outdoor recreation

These priority areas can form the basis for determining actual funding needs that would then inform the appropriate funding mechanism.

Recent Discussions of Expanded Wildlife Funding In Montana

Over the years, Montana has periodically considered the need for broadened wildlife management funding.

License and Funding Advisory Council (2013-2014)

In 2013-2014, the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks convened a License and Funding Advisory Council to help the agency review the structure and pricing of the state's hunting and fishing licenses. This Council recommended a slate of changes to simplify the license fee system and increase revenue that was ultimately enacted by the Legislature in 2015 (HB 140).

Over the years, Montana has periodically considered the need for broadened wildlife management funding.

In addition to making recommendations to revise the license system, the License and Funding Advisory Council acknowledged the need for funding beyond just hunting and fishing licenses. Specifically, the group recognized that all Montanans

benefit from wildlife management, not just hunters and anglers, and that "FWP and the legislature need to develop/provide mechanisms in addition to license dollars to fund the management and maintenance of the resources that provide these benefits."

Wolf Conservation Stamp (2014) / Wildlife Heritage Stamp (2017)

In 2014, the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks considered a citizen-developed proposal to create a voluntary conservation stamp that would provide funding for wolf management, outreach, law enforcement, and habitat protection. The proposal was intended to provide a mechanism for non-license buyers to contribute funding to support FWP's wolf management programs, with an emphasis on non-lethal management activities. The proposal garnered significant public support from across Montana and nationwide, but it also attracted vocal opposition and was ultimately tabled by the Department. Since 2014 FWP and stakeholders have developed a Montana wildlife heritage stamp program to test the potential for voluntary public contributions.

Finding Common Ground (2016)

Following in part from the Wolf Conservation Stamp controversy, FWP convened a "Finding Common Ground" committee in 2016 to convene wildlife management stakeholders and discuss the agency's activities and funding. The committee released a report that discussed a range of non-license additional funding options. These included:

Mandatory Funding Mechanisms

- Establish a natural resource trust fund
- Establish a state tax on resource extraction and/or energy production
- Establish a boat launch / Fishing Access Site (FAS) user fee
- Expand use of the existing conservation license
- Establish a recreation license
- A new state-wide tax

Voluntary Funding Mechanism

- Offer a single-species voluntary conservation stamp.
- Offer a “generic” voluntary conservation stamp (not specific to any one species).

Other Mechanisms

Tap into the governor’s emergency funds and environmental contingency account

For various reasons outlined in the FCG report, the group did not endorse any particular funding mechanism. However, individual members of the group continued to pursue the idea of a voluntarily purchased Wildlife Heritage Stamp as well as other ideas. General recognition exists that a voluntary stamp program would not likely meet the needs of the state’s wildlife agency, let alone public education and access needs.

General recognition exists that a voluntary stamp program would not likely meet the needs of the state’s wildlife agency, let alone public education and access needs.

15 and Forward: Agency Strategic Plan (2015-2016)

Developed over two years of internal discussions and public consultation, the WFP’s “15 and Forward” strategic planning process reaffirmed FWP’s longstanding commitment to managing all wildlife for all Montanans and addressed the need to broaden funding. The resulting strategic plan (FWP Vision and Guide 2016 – 2026) noted that, “While revenue from current sources will continue to be essential, we must find new funding sources to build a sustainable future.”

2018 Financial Review Advisory Committee

Due to a new funding review cycle adopted in 2015, FWP convened another citizen council to review the agency’s funding needs in 2018. This committee concluded that the agency’s overall budget situation did not demand another hunting/fishing license fee increase for core wildlife management programs. However, the group did reiterate the recommendation that the agency investigate a revenue structure that could provide for revenue from the non-license-buying public.

On The Horizon

The state budget situation makes it unlikely that the Legislature will consider any tax or new program needs for FWP. The need to tackle funding for emerging issues like AIS will prove to be a steep enough climb; additional revenue discussions seem unlikely.

The Montana Wildlife Future Group came together to sustain and advance Montana’s outstanding wildlife management legacy

In addition to the need for wildlife management funding, there are also discussions underway about the need for additional funding for state parks, access, trails and recreational infrastructure on public land. These discussions could culminate in legislation, ballot initiatives, or other opportunities to link up with wildlife funding needs identified here.

The Way Forward

The *Montana Wildlife Future Group* came together to sustain and advance Montana's outstanding wildlife management legacy and to continue to provide Montanans with the ability and means to connect and enjoy their state's outdoor heritage. The *Group* believes that scientific wildlife management must continue to flourish despite long-term challenges, and that public access and education must be sustained. The *Group* thinks that these issues challenge our current generation to respect and retain the investments and successes of previous generations of Montanans to rebuild the state's wildlife legacy.

After extensive discussion over a two-year period, the *Group* determined that additional, supplemental funding should be sought for FWP and other entities involved in sustaining and advancing wildlife management, public access, and outdoor education and recreation across Montana. Such supplemental funding should be broad-based and reliable:

Montana enjoys a well-deserved international reputation for its wildlife legacy that is unrivaled in the nation for its variety and completeness of native species.

Broad-based: while the user-pays license fee approach will continue to be the core of funding for fish and wildlife management, supplemental funding should come from a broader cross-section of the public, reflecting the widespread social, environmental and economic benefits from wildlife management activities.

Reliable: The complexity and long timeframes of wildlife conservation mean that funds should be sustained at a consistent level over time. Ideally, funds should be allocated based on strategic priorities defined according to the best science and long-term public input rather than short-term political pressures

The Montana Wildlife Future Group arrived at five priority areas:

1. Terrestrial Habitat Protection
2. Aquatic Habitat Protection
3. Human – Wildlife Conflict Resolution
4. Species Conservation Through Research, Recovery and Management
5. Wildlife Conservation Education and Recreation

These priority areas are detailed in the following section.

Priority Opportunities to Conserve Montana's At-Risk Species

The *Montana Wildlife Futures Group* has identified the following five areas as priorities for additional management focus by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) that (1) would advance the conservation of at-risk/endangered/greatest-conservation-need species, and (2) are presently underfunded. We offer these priorities as a contribution to broader, ongoing discussions about the need for increased public funding for wildlife, land, water, and recreation. Our intention is not to supplant other priorities or redirect current FWP funding or activities, but rather to identify additional unmet needs for future consideration.

1 Terrestrial Habitat Protection

Problem Statement: Montana is obligated to manage all wildlife: both hunted and non-game species. Non-game species depend on much of the same habitat needed by big game and other hunted species. Montanans love their wildlife and yet most Montanans are unaware they do not financially support wildlife management because funding comes through the purchase of hunting or fishing licenses. As Montana's economy and populations continue to grow, protecting and restoring wildlife habitat and corridors in key areas of the state will also grow in importance. Expanded funding for non-game habitat protection will benefit both non-game and hunted species.

Land protection, through **fee title acquisitions and easements**, is a widely recognized priority for big game habitat, recreational access, water quality, and a variety of other conservation needs. Habitat protection is also a **top need for the protection of at-risk species**. When done right, land protection activities can benefit species of conservation need while also supporting game species, recreational use, and other conservation values. At the same time, greater attention to at-risk species can result in expanded protection of finer-filter habitats that are not currently protected through game and sportfish habitat protection efforts. In addition to land protection, many at-risk species depend on **cooperative conservation action on working private lands**. Habitat protection also needs to include technical assistance and incentives for working landowners.

Expected and Measurable Outcomes: Increasing funding for habitat protection to encompass the needs of at-risk species alongside existing efforts to protect game animal habitat and recreational access will result in:

- Important habitats for species of concern – including year-round habitat, breeding habitat, migration corridors, and linkage zones – will be identified, prioritized, and protected

- Protection of habitat for species of special concern will help halt or reverse population declines, helping increase species abundance and avoid the need for regulatory actions to protect species

- Urban, suburban, and riparian areas will receive greater emphasis in habitat protection activities

- Habitat acquired for at-risk species will also provide benefits for hunted species, resulting in a cumulative benefit above and beyond existing habitat protection activities

Estimated need (based on MT FWP projections): **\$19.2 million / year**

2 Aquatic Habitat Protection

Problem Statement: Montana's prized rivers and lakes face increasing, and increasingly complex, threats. Climate change, water quality degradation, and aquatic invasive species threaten to cause fundamental changes in river and stream food webs and ecology, that would lead to major ecological degradation and societal adjustments in our relationships to these highly valued resources.

Aquatic and riparian habitats are important for all wildlife, but they are particularly important for many species of greatest conservation need, including threatened and endangered fish. In addition, Montanans have a cherished relationship with the state's lakes and rivers. Additional action is needed for riparian and **aquatic habitat protection and restoration**. Maintaining **in-stream flows** and protecting **water quality** remain crucial to many at-risk species, as well as to maintaining a cultural bond to our rivers and lakes.

Expected and Measurable Outcomes - Funding aquatic habitat protection will result in:

- Protection of water quantity/in-stream flows will improve habitat quantity and quality for species at risk while also increasing habitat for desirable sportfish species

- Expanded adoption of non-regulatory water quality improvement projects will improve water quality to the benefit of at-risk species, sportfish species, and human communities

- Aquatic invasive species spread will be slowed, halted, and reversed, with benefits for aquatic habitats and water infrastructure

- River and lake water temperatures will remain within acceptable limits of change

- Protection of habitat for aquatic species of special concern will help halt or reverse population declines, helping increase species abundance and avoid the need for regulatory actions to protect species

- Montanans will increase their understanding and participation in protecting aquatic habitats

Estimated need (based on MT FWP projections): **\$5.5 million / year**

3 Human-Wildlife Conflict Resolution

Problem Statement: In some fast-growing areas of Montana, more people are choosing to settle in the wildlife-urban interface. In other areas of the state, long-time residents are experiencing growing or recovering wildlife populations. Either situation can result in increasing conflict between people and the wildlife that live on the landscape, including grizzly bears, elk, wolves, deer and mountain lions, to name a few. Managing these conflicts in way that benefits both people and wildlife requires a significant financial investment in educational resources and wildlife management staff on the ground. Relying solely on license revenue, federal grants, or biennial state legislative appropriations can cause funding uncertainties, and challenges to human-wildlife conflict management.

In addition to habitat protection, the recovery of some key at-risk/endangered wildlife species will demand greater attention to **reducing conflicts between wildlife and humans**, including everything from livestock depredation to vehicle mortality to conflicts in recreational areas. Addressing these conflicts will require more capacity for FWP to conduct education/outreach and implement targeted management programs.

- Expected Outcomes:** Increased, reliable funding for human-wildlife conflict programs will result in:
- A notable reduction over time in human-wildlife conflict
 - A quicker response time by department staff to landowner-wildlife conflict
 - A reduction over time in wildlife-related vehicle collisions through identifying and addressing key impact areas
 - A notable reduction over time in the need for lethal wildlife conflict resolution

Estimated need (based on MT FWP projections): **\$1.6 million / year**

4 *Species Conservation Through Research, Recovery and Management*

Problem Statement: While the management of game and sport fish species has been informed by decades of data and fieldwork, wildlife managers face **significant data gaps** for many of Montana's at-risk species. Montana is obligated by law to manage for all wildlife species. Hunting and fishing license sales and other revenue do not provide adequate resources to follow population trends for species of conservation concern. Increased inventory and data collection efforts are essential to **assessing species status** and identifying conservation actions before significant declines occur and to prevent potential federal listing of species.

Inventorying and monitoring is a critical component of effective wildlife management and conservation. Wildlife managers have a stated commitment to use science to conduct wildlife management. Managers need better information to improve conservation outcomes. The inventory and monitoring program can leverage partnerships with universities, in-state NGOs, and partner agencies to increase management efficiencies. These partners can provide key technical services to promote the health and conservation of Montana wildlife.

Expected and Measurable Outcomes: Funding for inventorying and monitoring species of conservation concern will result in:

- Filling data gaps and answering questions for species of conservation concern
- Recovery, management, and monitoring of species to achieve population stability, improved habitat and restored migratory corridors
- A more effective wildlife conservation program that covers a broader range of species
- Species-specific maps of priority areas for conservation and tools for prioritizing conservation efforts
- Reduced species listings by USFWS and better information on habitat use and limiting factors effecting management or conservation actions
- A more effective Wildlife Health Program with improved management and surveillance for wildlife diseases. Many of these diseases affect livestock, wildlife populations, and/ or hunting and fishing opportunities that people care deeply about

Estimated need (based on MT FWP projections): **\$11.75 million / year**. *This does not include an additional \$200K in fixed costs (automated species survey systems).*

5 *Wildlife Conservation Education and Recreation*

Problem Statement: All Montanans enjoy the state's fish, wildlife and outdoor recreational opportunities. However, many Montanans engage with wildlife in ways other than hunting or fishing. Improved opportunities for wildlife conservation recreation (e.g. bird watching) and education can build broader public support for and interest in non-game species.

Recruitment, retention and reactivation of hunters and anglers remain a priority within the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and among many stakeholder groups. From the standpoint of increasing conservation of at-risk species, attention is also needed to support and expand participation in wildlife viewing, wildlife-focused tourism, photography, and other **non-hunting recreation**. These activities can engage a broader segment of the public than hunting and angling, and they can often cultivate interest in species that are not hunted or fished. Support for wildlife conservation recreation can include physical **infrastructure**, like wildlife viewing sites and interpretative facilities, as well as **outreach and educational programming**.

Expected and Measurable Outcomes: Funding wildlife conservation education and recreation programs will result in:

- New interpretive sites, kiosks, trails, educational materials, and viewing platforms around the state
- Expanded Master Naturalist and Project WILD programs
- Expanded "Travel WILD" programs in additional communities
- A new Montana WILD Eastern facility and augmentation of existing state park facilities to incorporate the Montana WILD model.
- Increased private land access opportunities
- Greater numbers of Montanans participating in educational programs and wildlife viewing recreation

*Estimated need (based on MT FWP projections): **\$5.94 million / year**. This does not include an additional \$2 million in fixed costs (Montana WILD Eastern Facility and Travel WILD mobile classrooms).*

Total Estimated annual need (based on MT FWP projections): \$43.99 Million.

Meeting this total funding need could come through a combination of federal, state, and/or other funds. For instance, additional federal funding under the Recovering America's Wildlife Act could provide \$29 million of this total need. We anticipate a resulting state-level funding need of approximately \$14.99 million, which would include approximately \$7.25 million to meet the non-federal match requirement of RAWA plus an additional \$7.74 million in other state or nongovernmental spending.

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