



## HOW STATE FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES ARE FUNDED

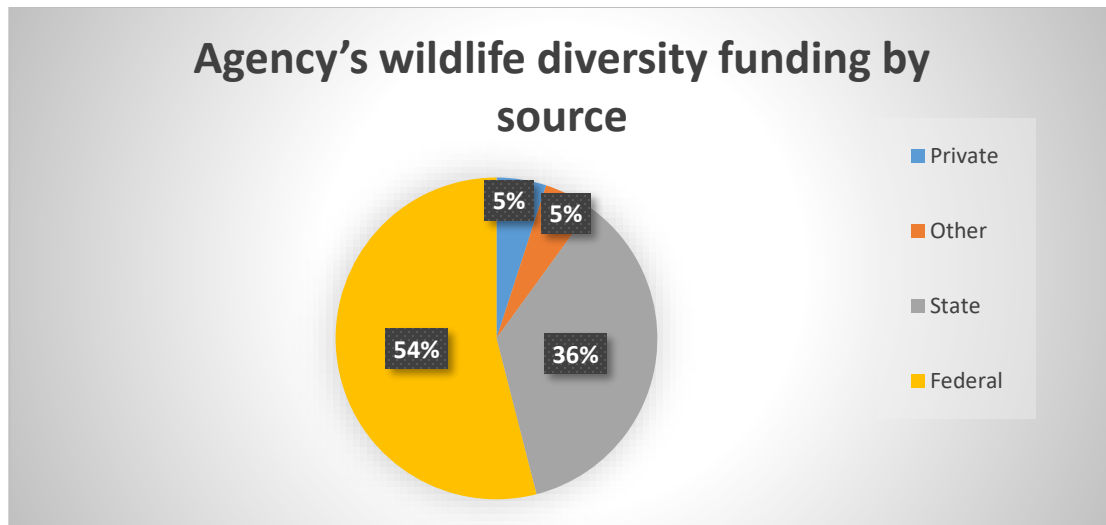
### CURRENT FUNDING FOR STATE FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES

Overall, the annual budget of state wildlife agencies is around \$5.6 billion collectively (AFWA). Of this, \$3.3 billion is from hunting and fishing related activities, either directly through the sale of licenses, tags, and stamps, or indirectly through federal excise taxes on hunting, recreational shooting, and angling equipment as well as a portion of the federal gas tax attributed to boating. Many states rely only on these hunting and fishing funds with a few states generating funding from a dedicated sales tax (e.g. Missouri and Arkansas), general state funds, and even grants and voluntary donations. The hunting and fishing dollars are, in almost all states, the only source of reliable and substantial funds. For example, [78 percent of wildlife revenue](#) for Colorado Parks and Wildlife comes from these sources.

The federal [Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program](#) distributes funds to states from excise taxes on hunting, fishing, and boating related equipment. They are often referred to as “user fees.” The fund is permanent, annual, and distributes to states via a formula based on land and water areas and the number of hunting and fishing license holders in each state. Grants fund up to 75 percent of project costs, usually matched by state hunting and fishing license revenues. Since the first program’s inception in 1937, more than \$20 billion in funds have been generated for conservation.

**State hunting and fishing license sales** generate substantial funding, and in states with high participation or high out-of-state license fees, these sales bring in more than federal excise taxes. In addition, boat registration fees often go back to the state fish and wildlife agencies.

**Other funding** comes from a variety of sources at the state level, including lottery funds, portions of state sales taxes, general funds, real estate transfer fees, and sales of wildlife license plates, or creative fundraising events like Georgia’s [Weekend for Wildlife](#) most often used to fund their wildlife diversity programs. On average, about **10 percent** of an agency’s budget for fish and wildlife conservation and law enforcement activities funds conservation for species that are not hunted or fished—typically referred to as “wildlife diversity” or “nongame” programs.



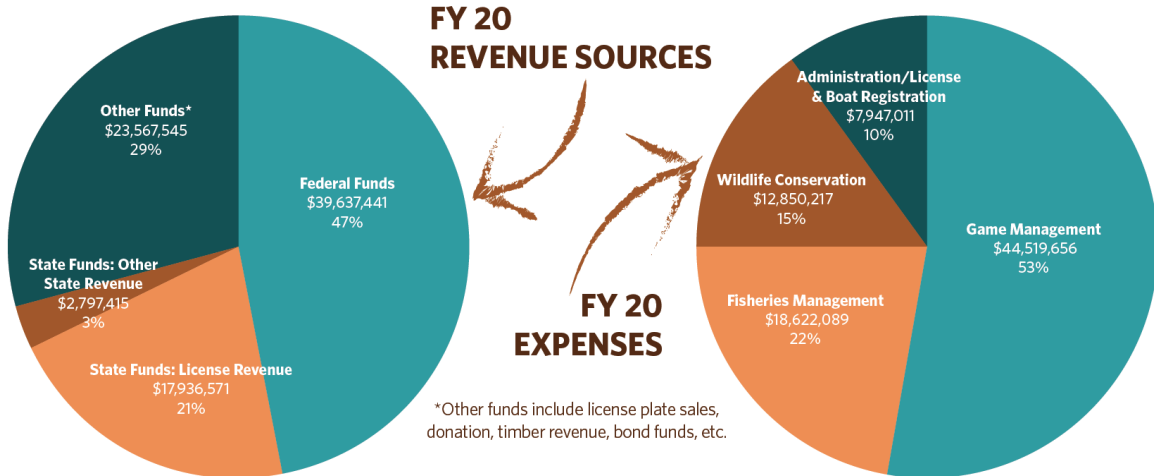
*Data from unpublished 2012 AFWA survey*

The most significant funding for wildlife diversity programs is the federal [State and Tribal Wildlife Grants](#) program, which relies on annual congressionally allocated funds (i.e., not dedicated or permanent) to states and territories focused on preventing wildlife from becoming endangered. These funds also are distributed by a formula based on land area of a state and the total human population. Each state is required to create and update a State Wildlife Action Plan, and the funds can only be spent on species, habitats, threats and actions identified in the plan. These plans have identified 12,000 “Species of Greatest Conservation Need.” The allocations of approximately \$70 million annually fall far short of the \$1.3 billion annually required to implement the plans and prevent wildlife from becoming endangered. For example, in 2012, states reported that they were implementing between 5 and 70 percent of their plans, with an average implementation of just 21 percent. The grants require a 35 percent match. Although lacking in meeting the full need, since its inception in 2000, more than a billion dollars has been provided to states. The [20<sup>th</sup> anniversary report](#) provides success stories from each state and many tribes.

Some agencies have a more complex structure than others, but in many agencies species that are not hunted or fished are not given the same priority as those that are. However, it is important to note that we are trying to increase the pie, not simply divide it up into smaller pieces. State hunting and angling user fees abide by the user-pay, user-benefit philosophy with tremendous investments in habitat that benefit all wildlife. They also provide greater access to enjoy the outdoors that all benefit from (e.g. boat ramps are good for all boaters/paddlers). However, this has drastically limited agencies from fulfilling their full mission for all wildlife and all citizens as the needs are simply much, much greater. We must work together to help agencies secure greater funding from a variety of sources.

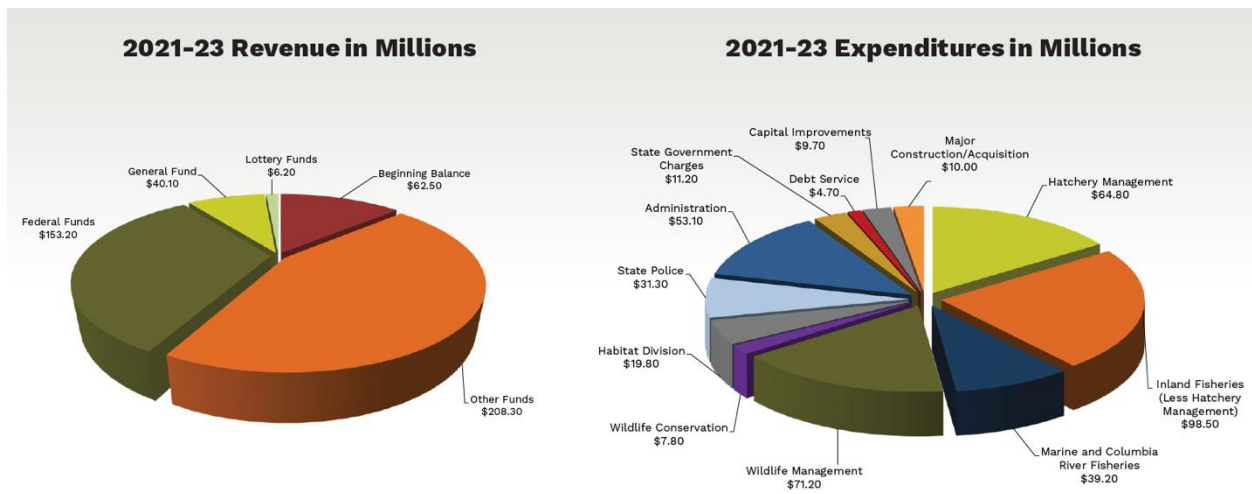
## Examples of State Wildlife Agency Budgets

1. Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Division FY20 Revenue and Expenses



15 percent of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Division's expenses went toward "Wildlife Conservation"

2. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife 2021-23 Governor's Recommended Budget – Revenue and Expenditures



About 2 percent of the expenditures in the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife 2021-23 Governor's Recommended Budget are for "Wildlife Conservation"

3. Wyoming Game and Fish Department Approximate Expenditures by Species

Less than 13 percent of expenditures by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department go toward non-game or Threatened and Endangered Species

