



Photo: Art Michaels

New Federal Funding Proposal for Wildlife

Outdoor enthusiasts are hailing the introduction of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1998 (H.R.4717) in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Reinvestment and Environmental Restoration Act of 1998 (S.2566) in the Senate as the most promising opportunity in modern times to provide dedicated funding to fish and wildlife conservation programs across the country.

Both bills would return a percentage of federal offshore oil and gas revenue to the states to support conservation programs. The acts will provide funding for three purposes: Coastal impact assistance, land-based recreation, and wildlife conservation. Under this legislation, Pennsylvania's natural resource agencies could receive some \$30 million annually, \$12 million to \$14 million of which would be dedicated to fish and wildlife conservation, wildlife-based outdoor recreation, and environmental education.

"This could not come at a better time. Pennsylvania has many critical conservation needs, particularly among species that are not fished or hunted. These funds will help us prevent species from becoming threatened or endangered by protecting important habitats and identifying species at risk before it is too late," said Pete Colangelo, Executive Director of the Fish and Boat Commission. "In addition, these funds will let us provide innovative fish and wildlife-based recreational and educational programs for children and adults. Pennsylvanians consistently express strong support for these goals, but funding for such efforts has always been extremely limited."

Creating a dedicated funding source to conserve fish and wildlife has been highly successful in the past. Many sport fish and game animals across America have been restored through dedicated funds provided by anglers and hunters through license sales and other user fees. For example, the restoration of striped bass populations has come about from dedicated angler fees.

Recreation funds are also woefully lacking. The demands for wildlife-based recreational opportunities on public land and wildlife-related education programs are skyrocketing. In fact, Pennsylvania boasts more outdoor recreation days per resident than any other state in the nation. Yet, facilities such as wildlife observation areas, educational trails, and nature centers are not as widely available in Pennsylvania as they are in other states.

For more information on this initiative, contact Lisa Williams, PFBC's Non-game Program Specialist, at 814-359-5162, or the International Association of Fish and Wildlife agencies at 202-624-7890. You may also email teaming@sso.org or check the Teaming with Wildlife web site at www.teaming.com. Links to the House and Senate to view the full bill text are on the Teaming with Wildlife web site.

