

Sportsmen oppose cuts in House funding bill

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/article/20110331/NEWS01/103310303>

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Written by

MICHAEL BABCOCK

Tribune Outdoor Editor

Sportsmen's groups warned Wednesday that budget cuts to conservation programs proposed by the U.S. House of Representatives will hit Montana and other rural states hard.

The cuts are contained in House Resolution 1, passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on Feb. 19. Congress returns to Capitol Hill this week to negotiate the final funding resolution by April 8.

Among programs that face substantial budget cuts or total elimination are the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, farm bill conservation programs, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, State and Tribal Wildlife Grants and the Clean Water Act.

"These programs not only protect hunting and fishing access for sportsmen and women, but they are also foundational to fish and wildlife habitat conservation, and stimulate local economies by creating jobs, particularly in rural communities," said Ben Lamb of the Montana Wildlife Federation.

Lamb moderated a teleconference call Wednesday that included Scott Yaich of Ducks Unlimited in Memphis, Tenn.; Bill Geer of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership; Mark Humpert of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies; Steve Moyer of Trout Unlimited and Dave Nomsen of Pheasants Forever.

Yaich noted that the North America Wetlands Conservation Act would receive no appropriations under the House budget resolution.

"Wetlands have been disappearing from our landscape for decades. Every year the U.S. is losing more than 80,000 acres of wetlands," he said.

Yaich said the benefits for wetlands from the act have been significant. He said that in addition to the conservation of 7 million acres across the U.S., wetlands projects created 4,500 jobs.

"This program should be viewed as an investment. It more than pays for itself in direct and indirect economic return," Yaich said.

HR1 zeros out the appropriation for NAWCA, something Yaich said will mean the loss of thousands of acres of wetland that will not be conserved or restored.

"As snow begins to melt in the upper Midwest, serious flooding is anticipated. Because so many wetlands have been drained, that water flows straight to the river, and puts downstream farms and communities in harm's way," he said.

Meanwhile, the Tenderfoot Land Acquisition project in the Little Belt Mountains is threatened by the HR1 budget cuts to the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The conservation fund is not supported by tax dollars, but it receives about \$900 million annually from offshore oil and gas leases.

Geer said the fund is a primary source of funding for recreational access, places to hunt and fish, and habitat security for nongame wildlife species.

"But HR1 proposes to use that money for purposes other than intended by legislation," he said.

Geer said HR1 jeopardizes the Tenderfoot Land Acquisition project, in which 8,220 acres of private land in Meagher County would be purchased and given to the Lewis and Clark National Forest.

Private land currently surround U.S. Forest Service land and locks out the public.

"This has enormous public support," Geer said. "In 2010, we did the first acquisition. They purchased 1,160 acres. This year, LWCF would provide

funding for 3,160 acres. In (fiscal year) 2012, there would be funding for 3,900 acres.

"If you pull the rug out by re-authorizing funding, it leaves hunters and anglers with less land to access, and far less habitat for mule deer, elk and west slope cutthroat trout," Geer said. "It (the funding) provides habitat, but also access to land the public could not access."

Geer also said the conservation fund is "an income generator. Every dollar invested gives about a \$4 return, and it contributes \$730 billion to the economy."

Mark Humpert of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies said funding for state and tribal wildlife grants program would be eliminated under HR1.

Montana receives about \$1 million per year through the program. One project funded by the grants is the conservation of river-dwelling arctic grayling in the Big Hole River.

"Working with 33 private landowners on 160,000 acres, there have been 150 separate habitat programs funded to help grayling recover," Humpert said.

Another threatened project is the Milk River Initiative, in which partners protected more than 1,700 acres of riparian habitat through fee title or conservation easements.

"Willows, dogwoods and cottonwoods have been planted to restore riparian zones and provide habitat for shorebirds, waterfowl and other critters," Humpert said.

Any cuts to the program also will cost jobs, according to the officials on the Wednesday conference call.

"Just from the NAWCA standpoint alone, we are talking 8,500 to 9,000 jobs that are at stake," Yaich said. "About 1.3 million waterfowl hunters generated about \$2.3 billion in 2006, they created more than 27,600 jobs, and those generated about \$900 million in employment income. It is a significant impact."

Lamb said hunting, fishing and wildlife watching are huge economic generators in Montana.

"There is an \$11 million per year sustainable economy built just around hunting and fishing on the Rocky Mountain Front," he said. "(If HR1 passes,) we are going to have fewer rooms rented at the Stage Stop Inn in Choteau, fewer people buying that new shotgun from Capital Sports in Helena, or even that extra box of ammo.

"You will start seeing that slow whittling away of the hunting economy built in Montana," Lamb added. "A quarter of all Montanans buy hunting and fishing licenses."

Reach Tribune outdoor editor Michael Babcock at triboutdoors@greatfallstribune.com or at 791-1487 or 800-438-6600.

Missoulian

Sportsmen oppose federal cuts to conservation programs

http://missoulian.com/news/state-and-regional/article_c28f6588-5b4b-11e0-ae70-001cc4c002e0.html

By **ROB CHANEY** of the Missoulian | Posted: Wednesday, March 30, 2011 10:15 pm

Hunting and fishing advocates are rallying support to block federal funding cuts they claim unfairly single out conservation programs.

"These guys are happy to cut 0.5 percent of the federal budget, but won't touch billions of dollars in business subsidies," said Ben Lamb of the Montana Wildlife Federation during a conference call Wednesday. "The House took a butcher knife to a lot of these programs rather than using a scalpel."

Leaders of Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Trout Unlimited said the House of Representative's HR1 appropriations bill would hurt jobs as well as wildlife if the programs were cut as proposed. Congress must pass an appropriations bill by April 8, when the current stop-gap spending authority ends.

TRCP's Bill Geer said the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which uses royalties from federal oil and gas leases for habitat projects, would be cut from \$458 million last year to \$50 million this year. That could derail projects like a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's effort to buy private land in Meagher County's Tenderfoot Creek that blocks access to public land. The sportsmen's group has provided the bridge loans to buy the land until an LWCF grant can transfer it to the U.S. Forest Service.

"This is a project supported by the county commissioners, the governor, Trout Unlimited, (Montana Department of) Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the Audubon Society and 30 local rod-and-gun clubs," Geer said. "Cutting the program leaves people financially at risk, and it leaves hunters and anglers with far less land to access."

Trout Unlimited vice president for government affairs Steve Moyer said legislation to restrict the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Water Act enforcement powers would leave 20 million acres of wetlands unprotected and cancel numerous wildlife improvement projects. Asked if the cuts were sending a message to environmentalists, he agreed that was possible.

"I think mostly that was a fast-moving quick hit," Moyer said of the program cut choices. "They needed to find \$100 billion, and this was the low-hanging fruit. But these clean-water policy changes are to some degree a backlash to the EPA."

Moyer also criticized House members for putting the measures in an appropriations bill without hearings or review by the public or affected congressional committees. Lamb added the split didn't appear to be between Republicans and Democrats as between the incoming freshmen Republicans and their more experienced party members.

"We don't distinguish among political parties - just how people vote on an issue," Lamb said. "I think there's a great awakening of the conservative sporting base. They care about how you vote on the issues that matter most to them."

Montana Rep. Denny Rehberg said he didn't expect Montanans to stop conservation work if they got fewer federal dollars this year, saying "conservation is not a bank fund."

"Many of us warned that the reckless deficit spending of the past few years would have painful consequences - and that it would hurt funding for good programs that help people," Rehberg said in an email. "Yet, over our objections, the money continued to pour out the doors to fund boondoggles like stimulus signs.

"We've sunk so far in the hole that there literally isn't enough money to fund many of the things that we could previously have afforded," he added. "Unfortunately, in many cases, good programs will be impacted like the bad ones. Today, with billions of dollars in maintenance backlogs on our public lands, not to mention the threat from wildfire and insects caused by mismanagement, I think we ought to question whether now is the right time to give the government more land."



Federal budget cuts would hurt hunting, fishing

Wednesday, March 30 2011 @ 10:31 PM MDT

Contributed by: Admin

by Jodi Stemler

Several national and Montana sportsmen groups are deeply concerned about proposed funding cuts to conservation and wildlife management programs that they feel threaten hunting and fishing access and opportunity.

Representatives from prominent sportsmen groups held a telephone conference on Wednesday to answer reporters' questions and offer their unique perspective on the proposed budget cuts included in HR 1, which was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on February 19, 2011.

"Finding ways to reduce the massive federal deficit simply must be done. But in doing so, let's make sure to support those federal investments that pay for themselves several times over — and be critical of those that are truly wasteful," commented Dale Hall, President and CEO of Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

"Conservation has always, and continues to, pay for itself. Congress and the administration should approach the budget challenge with facts and analyses, not a meat cleaver."

Some of the programs slated for dramatic cuts or elimination include the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, Farm Bill conservation programs, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, State and Tribal Wildlife Grants, the Clean Water Act, and more. These programs not only protect hunting and fishing access for sportsmen and women, but they are also foundational to fish and wildlife habitat conservation and stimulate local economies by creating jobs, particularly in rural communities.

"Sportsmen and women depend on having places to go to hunt and fish. The Land and Water Conservation Fund has been instrumental in providing these opportunities and with reliable funding in the future could go even further to ensure access to existing public lands, making public lands public," said Ben Lamb of the Montana Wildlife Federation. "However the cut of nearly 90% of the program's funding as proposed in HR 1 will dismantle the program. It is critical to

note that LWCF is not taxpayer funded but rather paid for as a conservation offset through a small portion of receipts collected from offshore oil and gas drilling in federal waters.”

Congress returned to session this week and will attempt to negotiate the final budget before the most recent continuing resolution expires on April 8. Conservation leaders issued the following statements expressing concern about cuts to the conservation programs:

“AFFTA sees these conservation programs as critical economic drivers for our businesses and customers. As small businesses fueling America’s \$42-billion fishing industry, conservation is critical to the economic activity generated by our industry.” Randi Swisher, President, American Fly Fishing Trade Association

“What makes these budget cuts unfair is that many of the fishery and water conservation programs slated for cuts or elimination in H.R.1 are matched with state and local funding providing a significant return on federal dollar investment. In addition, many of these programs are supported by volunteers in communities across our Nation who give their time and expertise to ensure that our fisheries remain healthy and abundant so future generations can enjoy recreational fishing.” Gordon Robertson, Vice President, American Sportfishing Association.

“Tens of thousands of species, more than 90 percent of our nation’s fish and wildlife that is typically neither hunted nor fished, is put at risk without funding to conserve them on public and private lands. The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program has been an important source of funds to help keep America’s common species common and off the endangered species list by proactively conserving wildlife before they become too rare and costly to protect with last-ditch efforts.” Mark Humpert, Director of Wildlife Policy and Science, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

“Theodore Roosevelt is rolling over in his grave at the prospects of the dismantling of our conservation framework, under the smokescreen of deficit reduction. This is clearly an end run at sensible fish and wildlife conservation.” Jim Martin, Conservation Director, Berkley Conservation Institute.

“Sportsmen and women support wildlife management in the United States and pump nearly \$200 billion a year into state and local economies, yet Congress is making wholesale cuts to conservation in a way that jeopardizes our opportunities in the field and the economies and management activities we support.” Gaspar Perricone, Co-Director Bull Moose Sportsmen’s Alliance

“Conservation funding by Congress is critical to funding on the ground projects. Many of the conservation budget cuts are in programs that are matched several times over by conservation groups, state and local agencies as well as private landowners.” Miles Moretti, President & CEO, Mule Deer Foundation.

A hundred years ago pioneers crossed this country nourishing themselves on the millions of native grouse they encountered everywhere in their travels. Today, many are candidates for the Endangered Species Act and are extremely dependent on the lands administered and helped by these conservation programs. Eliminating or diminishing support for these lands will threaten this American cultural heritage as well as sportsmen's opportunities and the considerable dollars sportsmen bring to the table for conservation." Ralph Rogers, President North American Grouse Partnership

"During a time when Americans are increasingly losing access to traditional places to hunt and fish, the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund plays a critical role in securing lands that allow sportsmen to continue to follow our passions. The LWCF helps create more public lands by working with willing sellers of private lands – such as in Montana's Tenderfoot Creek Land Acquisition Project - thereby supporting the conservation of critical fish and wildlife habitat and increasing public access for hunting and fishing. The Tenderfoot Creek area was Identified in the TRCP Montana Sportsmen Value Mapping Project as a top priority 'bread and butter' hunting and fishing area for acquisition by sportsmen throughout Montana." Bill Geer, Climate Change Initiative Manager, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

"Sportsmen and women are willing to shoulder our share of budget cuts, but we will cry foul when faced with disproportionate cuts and ill-conceived legislative riders which should not be on appropriations bills. Congress has a duty to address our fiscal problems in a way that is worthy of the support of all Americans who love the outdoors." Steve Moyer, Vice President for Government Affairs, Trout Unlimited

"Invasive species are not waiting for Congress to approve a budget. They continue to multiply and wreak havoc on our lakes, streams and woods. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is restoring our country's largest freshwater lakes and protecting a fishing industry worth 7 billion dollars annually in jobs and tourism. The American people need jobs and want local accessible outdoor opportunities. We know our grandchildren should not be crushed by debt, but they also should not inherit a world where Mother Nature becomes barren because we took a break in stopping the spread of harmful invasive species." Douglas H. Grann, President & CEO, Wildlife Forever

"We all share their desire to reduce our national debt and balance our budget; however, the recent slash and burn approach to reducing the federal budget could not have occurred with careful consideration of which conservation programs work and which do not. Consider this, the cuts to these programs occurred in a portion of the federal budget related to water and land management which amounts to about one half of one percent of the entire federal budget. Their actions could not have taken into account the non-federal funds that are

leveraged by these funds or the ecological services that these programs provide for the public. In each case, the return on the investment of federal dollars pays public dividends in excess of that original investment.” Steve Williams, President, Wildlife Management Institute

Final program decisions could be enacted as early as April 8. A budget resolution is being negotiated in Congress and some proposals include significant cuts for fiscal year 2011 to several foundational conservation programs that benefit sportsmen and women:

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

- * House-passed HR 1 cuts \$398 million from current levels, a nearly 90% cut and essentially eliminating the program, which is authorized to spend \$900 million.
- * LWCF generates \$4 in economic value for every \$1 invested.
- * Does not use taxpayer dollars, but rather uses a small portion of revenues from offshore oil and gas drilling.
- * Provides tool for conservation and recreational needs in every state in America, supports land conservation in our National Parks, Forests, Refuges and Bureau of Land Management areas; protects working forests and ranches through easements; partners with state and local entities to provide recreational opportunities for all Americans.
- * Provides funding to ensure sportsmen’s access to public lands and protection of additional places to hunt and fish.
- * Vital to recreational activities that contribute \$730 billion annually to the economy; supports 6.5 million jobs and stimulates 8% of all consumer spending

North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grant Program (NAWCA)

- * Eliminates funding for the program - \$47.6 million cut from FY2010 levels.
- * Competitive grant program for the conservation of waterfowl and other wetland-associated migratory birds.
- * For over 20 years, grants made available through NAWCA have helped thousands of public-private partnerships protect and improve the health of wetland and wetland-associated landscapes impacting more than 26 million acres through September 2010.
- * NAWCA more than triples the legally required 1:1 match-to-grant ratio by partnering with private landowners, States, non-governmental conservation organizations, tribes, Federal agencies, trusts, and corporations. On average, the amount of non-federal matching funds exceeds the requested grant amount by more than 3:1.

State and Tribal Wildlife Grant Program (STWG)

- * Eliminates the full \$90 million
- * Established in 2002, STWG had worked to protect fish and wildlife in their

habitat.

- * Plans for FY 2011 funds included: restoring and enhancing 30,000 acres of grasslands in Kansas and improving the habitat on Ossabaw Island in Georgia for several bird species.

Agricultural Conservation Programs

- * Proposed cuts would cap the Wetlands Reserve Program enrollment at 202,218 acres, permanently reducing the program by 47,782 acres. The WRP helps farmers, ranchers and landowners restore and conserve wetlands on their properties while also focusing on improving habitat for waterfowl and fish and wildlife species. More than 1.9 million acres of wetlands are currently enrolled in the WRP.

- * More than \$350 million would be cut from levels authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. EQIP provides technical assistance and payments for landowners to improve land management and farming practices, including fish and wildlife habitat enhancement.

- * Cuts overall discretionary funding for the USDA Farm Service Agency by more than \$190 million diminishing the agency's ability to implement vital Farm Bill conservation programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Program.

- * Cuts overall discretionary funding for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service by \$170 million. This will result in less technical assistance to farmers, ranchers and landowners interested in implementing conservation efforts on their land. A lack of adequate technical assistance has been identified as one of the biggest barriers to participation in and effective implementation of these programs.

Clean Water Act riders

- * The "Waters of the U.S." rider would stop efforts by the Army Corps of Engineers and the EPA to partially restore Clean Water Act protection for some wetlands and streams which were curtailed by Supreme Court decisions. Taken together, these decisions and existing agency guidance have removed protections for at least 20 million acres of wetlands, especially prairie potholes and other seasonal wetlands that are essential to waterfowl populations throughout the country.

- * HR 1 removes the EPA's ability to veto Army Corps authorized permits for the disposal of dredged and fill material, and to designate certain areas as off limits for disposal of dredge and fill material, under Section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act. Section 404(c) authority has only been used 13 times, but it has saved great rivers such as the South Platte (CO), Ware Creek (VA), and the Big River (RI) from wasteful, fish habitat destroying project proposals.

- * Eliminates federal funding for implementation of the EPA's Chesapeake Bay restoration program impacting efforts by landowners, state agencies, and federal agencies to restore water quality and habitat in the Chesapeake Bay watershed

to meet the pollution reduction targets.

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Comments (0)

The Clark Fork Chronicle

<http://www.clarkforkchronicle.com/article.php/20110330223156617>

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Wetlands Conservation Funding Continues to Hang in Limbo | [Video](#)

Retha Colclasure

3/30/2011



Conservation groups are talking to their congressional representatives. They're concerned about potential cuts to funding for programs like the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, or NAWCA.

We first reported on the proposed elimination of the program several weeks ago. Since then, Congress has still not passed a budget for fiscal year 2011, and the funding for NAWCA is still hanging in limbo.

But in that time, conservation groups have been telling representatives why they feel the program is so important and deserves to keep most of its \$47 million budget.

"I think we are more optimistic. This is all a financial decision. We, everybody understands the need to reign in spending and reduce the deficit. That should be done in a real thoughtful way, and we need to understand programs that actually contribute to the economy and those that are more of a drain," said Steve Adair, of Ducks Unlimited.

The current budget is set to expire on April 8.

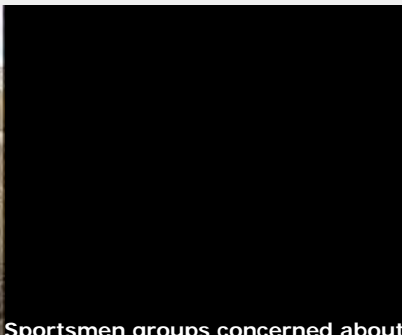


Sportsmen groups concerned about Congressional cuts

<http://www.kpax.com/news/sportsmen-groups-concerned-about-congressional-cuts/>

Posted: Mar 30, 2011 5:22 PM by Irina Cates (KPAX News)

Updated: Mar 31, 2011 9:05 AM



Sportsmen groups concerned about

Congressional cuts



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Some national sportsmen's organizations say Congress is taking a butcher knife to conservation and wildlife management programs, instead of using a scalpel.

Sportsmen groups are concerned about the proposed budget that could drastically cut or eliminate several programs critical to hunting, fishing, and wildlife habitat.

Some of the programs slated for dramatic cuts or elimination include the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, Farm Bill conservation programs and the Clean Water Act.

"Ultimately these kind of cuts, we feel, hurt not only our hunting and angling heritage, but also kind of hurt the local economies that have built up around hunting and angling issues, or hunting and angling sports," says Ben Lamb, Conservation Director for State/National Issue, Montana Wildlife Federation

The sportsmen groups say if these cuts go through, thousands of people could lose their jobs across the United States.

And one of the many topics of concern in the discussion is how the budget cuts would affect wetland conservation.

Ducks Unlimited officials say a recent study shows the United States loses about 80,000 acres of wetlands each year.

"As snow begins to melt in the upper Midwest, serious flooding is once again anticipated. Because so many of the wetlands that once held water on landscape have been drained, that water now flows straight to the rivers and increases flooding damages on a year to year basis," says Scott Yaich, Director of Conservation Operation, Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

The groups say activities such as hunting, fishing and bird watching bring in two to three billion dollars a year into Montana.

They also believe some of the decisions about the cuts happened really fast and there was no consultation or consideration for the outcome.

"We all realize that there is a need to balance the budget, but we don't think that going after what really amounts to about half of percent of the federal budget, is a great way to achieve these cuts," Lamb said.

Members of Congress are returning to Capitol Hill this week to negotiate the final funding resolution by next Friday.

NBCMontana.com

<http://www.nbcmontana.com/news/27376603/detail.html>

Wildlife Groups Worried About Conservation Program Cuts

MISSOULA COUNTY

By Maritsa Georgiou

POSTED: 4:43 pm MDT March 30, 2011

UPDATED: 4:48 pm MDT March 30, 2011

ENLARGE



MISSOULA, Mont. -- Hunting and fishing groups are worried about proposed cuts to key federal conservation programs.

Opponents claim those cuts, some close to 90%, will cost Montanans jobs and money. Here's what's on the U.S. House budget block: The Land and Water Conservation Fund, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grant Program, the State and Tribal Wildlife Grant Program, Agricultural Conservation Programs and the Clean Water Act.

Wildlife groups say cutting those programs will ripple through Montana's tourism, fishing and hunting industries.

"The house took a butcher knife to these programs rather than using a scalpel," Montana Wildlife Federation Conservation Director Ben Lamb said. "For Montana, when you look at the kind of revenues that hunting, fishing and even wildlife watching and general tourism [bring in], what we're looking at is about a \$2-3 billion a year economy just in Montana." Congress returned to session this week. Lawmakers will attempt to negotiate the final budget before Friday.

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Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Threatened by HR1

By *Aaron_Decker*

Created 03/30/2011 - 17:01

More than a billion dollars in cuts would eliminate or diminish several key outdoor funds and grant programs

[Aaron Decker](#)

Subtitle:

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Aaron Decker

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Body:

Helena, MT -- Sportsman's Groups are raising alarms across the nation over the proposed budget cuts included in HR 1, which was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on February 19, 2011.

Representatives from multiple wildlife/habitat conservation organizations -- including Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership -- participated in a telenews conference on Wednesday to discuss the tremendous impact the budget cuts of HR1 could have on several funds and grant programs that hunters and anglers depend on for recreational opportunities.

[The Land and Water Conservation Fund](#) (LWCF) would have 90 percent of its funds -- \$398 million -- slashed from current levels, essentially shutting the program down.

Among the many conservation and recreational efforts it helps fund and protect in the U.S. at both state and national levels, the LWCF plays an integral part in providing funding to ensure sportsman's access to public lands and protection of additional places to hunt and fish.

"Sportsmen and women depend on having places to go to hunt and fish. The Land and Water Conservation Fund has been instrumental in providing these opportunities and with reliable funding in the future could go even further to ensure access to existing public lands, making public lands public," said Ben Lamb of the Montana Wildlife Federation.

Currently, offshore oil and gas drilling provide funding for the LWCF (not tax payer dollars) and for every one dollar invested, the LWCF generates four dollars in economic value.

Also impacted would be the [North American Wetlands Act Grant Program](#), which would lose all funding -- \$47.6 million in cuts from FY 2010.

For more than 20 years, the NAWCA has provided grants through public-private relationships that have impacted more than 26 million acres of wetland and wetland-associated landscapes.

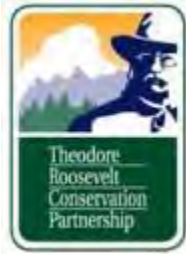
Any grant awarded by the NAWCA legally requires a \$1:1 grant-to-match ratio, however though partnering with private landowners, States, non-governmental conservation organizations, tribes, Federal agencies, trusts, and corporations, the average amount of non-federal matching funds exceeds the requested grant amount by more than 3:1.

Other programs slated for dramatic cuts or elimination include the Farm Bill conservation programs, State and Tribal Wildlife Grants, the Clean Water Act, and more.

"Finding ways to reduce the massive federal deficit simply must be done. But in doing so, let's make sure to support those federal investments that pay for themselves several times over -- and be critical of those that are truly wasteful," commented Dale Hall, President and CEO of Ducks Unlimited, Inc. "Conservation has always, and continues to, pay for itself. Congress and the administration should approach the budget challenge with facts and analyses, not a meat cleaver."

Congress returned to session this week and will attempt to negotiate the final budget before the most recent continuing resolution expires on April 8th.

Source URL: <http://www.petersenshunting.com/content/outdoor-recreation-opportunities-threatened-hr1>



[Gary Engberg Outdoors](#)

Fishing, Hunting and Conservation Journalism

<http://www.garyengbergoutdoors.com/blog/2011/03/30/hunters-and-anglers-fear-cuts-to-conservation-programs-will-threaten-recreation-opportunities-3-30-2011/>

[Hunters and Anglers Fear Cuts to Conservation Programs Will Threaten Recreation Opportunities 3-30-2011](#)

[gengberg](#) March 30th, 2011

Hunters and Anglers Fear Cuts to Conservation Programs Will Threaten Recreation Opportunities Sportsmen Groups Hold Tele News Conference to Voice Concerns over Proposed Funding Cuts

(Helena, Mont.) Several national and Montana sportsmen groups are deeply concerned about proposed funding cuts to conservation and wildlife management programs that they feel threaten hunting and fishing access and opportunity.

Representatives from prominent sportsmen groups held a tele news conference on Wednesday to answer reporters' questions and offer their unique perspective on the proposed budget cuts included in HR 1, which was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on February 19, 2011.



“Finding ways to reduce the massive federal deficit simply must be done. But in doing so, let’s make sure to support those federal investments that pay for themselves several times over - and be critical of those that are truly wasteful,” commented Dale Hall, President and CEO of Ducks Unlimited, Inc. **“Conservation has always, and continues to, pay for itself. Congress and the administration should approach the budget challenge with facts and analyses, not a meat cleaver.”**

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Additional quotes from Sportsmen’s Organizations

“During a time when Americans are increasingly losing access to traditional places to hunt and fish, the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund plays a critical role in securing lands that allow sportsmen to continue to follow our passions. The LWCF helps create more public lands by working with willing sellers of private lands - such as in Montana’s Tenderfoot Creek Land Acquisition Project - thereby supporting the conservation of critical fish and wildlife habitat and increasing public access for hunting and fishing. The Tenderfoot Creek area was identified in the TRCP Montana Sportsmen Value Mapping Project as a top priority ‘bread and butter’ hunting and fishing area for acquisition by sportsmen throughout Montana.” **Bill Geer, Climate Change Initiative Manager, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership**

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“Tens of thousands of species, more than 90 percent of our nation’s fish and wildlife that is typically neither hunted nor fished, is put at risk without funding to conserve them on public and private lands. The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program has been an important source of funds to help keep America’s common species common and off the endangered species list by proactively conserving wildlife before they become too rare and costly to protect with last-ditch efforts.” **Mark Humpert, Director of Wildlife Policy and Science, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.**

“Theodore Roosevelt is rolling over in his grave at the prospects of the dismantling of our conservation framework, under the smokescreen of deficit reduction. This is clearly an end run at sensible fish and wildlife conservation.” **Jim Martin, Conservation Director, Berkley Conservation Institute.**

“Sportsmen and women support wildlife management in the United States and pump nearly \$200 billion a year into state and local economies, yet Congress is making wholesale cuts to conservation in a way that jeopardizes our opportunities in the field and the economies and management activities we support.” **Gaspar Perricone, Co-Director Bull Moose Sportsmen’s Alliance**

“Conservation funding by Congress is critical to funding on the ground projects. Many of the conservation budget cuts are in programs that are matched several times over by conservation groups, state and local agencies as well as private landowners.” **Miles Moretti, President & CEO, Mule Deer Foundation.**

“A hundred years ago pioneers crossed this country nourishing themselves on the millions of native grouse they encountered everywhere in their travels. Today, many are candidates for the Endangered Species Act and are extremely dependent on the lands administered and helped by these conservation programs. Eliminating or diminishing support for these lands will threaten this American cultural heritage as well as sportsmen’s opportunities and the considerable dollars sportsmen bring to the table for conservation.” **Ralph Rogers, President North American Grouse Partnership**

“Sportsmen and women are willing to shoulder our share of budget cuts, but we will cry foul when faced with disproportionate cuts and ill-conceived legislative riders which should not be on appropriations bills. Congress has a duty to address our fiscal problems in a way that is worthy of the support of all Americans who love the outdoors.” **Steve Moyer, Vice President for Government Affairs, Trout Unlimited**

“Invasive species are not waiting for Congress to approve a budget. They continue to multiply and wreak havoc on our lakes, streams and woods. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is restoring our country’s largest freshwater lakes and protecting a fishing industry worth 7 billion dollars annually in jobs and tourism. The American people need jobs and want local accessible outdoor opportunities. We know our grandchildren should not be crushed by debt, but they also should not inherit a world where Mother Nature becomes barren because we took a break in stopping the spread of harmful invasive species.” **Douglas H. Grann, President & CEO, Wildlife Forever**

“We all share their desire to reduce our national debt and balance our budget; however, the recent slash and burn approach to reducing the federal budget could not have occurred with careful consideration of which conservation programs work and which do not. Consider this, the cuts to these programs occurred in a portion of the federal budget related to water and land management which amounts to about one half of one percent of the entire federal budget. Their actions could not have taken into account the non-federal funds that are leveraged by these funds or the ecological services that these programs

provide for the public. In each case, the return on the investment of federal dollars pays public dividends in excess of that original investment.” **Steve Williams, President, Wildlife Management Institute**

A budget resolution is being negotiated in Congress and some proposals include significant cuts for fiscal year 2011 to several foundational conservation programs that benefit sportsmen and women. Final program decisions could be enacted as early as April 8.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

- House-passed HR 1 cuts \$398 million from current levels, a nearly 90% cut and essentially eliminating the program, which is authorized to spend \$900 million.
- **LWCF generates \$4 in economic value for every \$1 invested.**
- Does not use taxpayer dollars, but rather uses a small portion of revenues from offshore oil and gas drilling.
- Provides tool for conservation and recreational needs in every state in America, supports land conservation in our National Parks, Forests, Refuges and Bureau of Land Management areas; protects working forests and ranches through easements; partners with state and local entities to provide recreational opportunities for all Americans.
- Provides funding to ensure sportsmen’s access to public lands and protection of additional places to hunt and fish.
- Vital to recreational activities that contribute \$730 billion annually to the economy; supports 6.5 million jobs and stimulates 8% of all consumer spending

North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grant Program (NAWCA)

- **Eliminates funding for the program - \$47.6 million cut from FY2010 levels.**
- Competitive grant program for the conservation of waterfowl and other wetland-associated migratory birds.
- For over 20 years, grants made available through NAWCA have helped thousands of public-private partnerships protect and improve the health of wetland and wetland-associated landscapes impacting more than 26 million acres through September 2010.
- NAWCA more than triples the legally required 1:1 match-to-grant ratio by partnering with private landowners, States, non-governmental conservation organizations, tribes, Federal agencies, trusts, and corporations. On average, the amount of non-federal matching funds exceeds the requested grant amount by more than 3:1.

State and Tribal Wildlife Grant Program (STWG)

- **Eliminates the full \$90 million**

- Established in 2002, STWG had worked to protect fish and wildlife in their habitat.
- Plans for FY 2011 funds included: restoring and enhancing 30,000 acres of grasslands in Kansas and improving the habitat on Ossabaw Island in Georgia for several bird species.

Agricultural Conservation Programs

- * Proposed cuts would cap the Wetlands Reserve Program enrollment at 202,218 acres, permanently reducing the program by 47,782 acres. The WRP helps farmers, ranchers and landowners restore and conserve wetlands on their properties while also focusing on improving habitat for waterfowl and fish and wildlife species. More than 1.9 million acres of wetlands are currently enrolled in the WRP.

- * More than \$350 million would be cut from levels authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. EQIP provides technical assistance and payments for landowners to improve land management and farming practices, including fish and wildlife habitat enhancement.

- * Cuts overall discretionary funding for the USDA Farm Service Agency by more than \$190 million diminishing the agency's ability to implement vital Farm Bill conservation programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Program.

- * Cuts overall discretionary funding for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service by \$170 million. This will result in less technical assistance to farmers, ranchers and landowners interested in implementing conservation efforts on their land. A lack of adequate technical assistance has been identified as one of the biggest barriers to participation in and effective implementation of these programs.

Clean Water Act riders

- The "Waters of the U.S." rider would stop efforts by the Army Corps of Engineers and the EPA to partially restore Clean Water Act protection for some wetlands and streams which were curtailed by Supreme Court decisions. Taken together, these decisions and existing agency guidance have removed protections for at least 20 million acres of wetlands, especially prairie potholes and other seasonal wetlands that are essential to waterfowl populations throughout the country.

- HR 1 removes the EPA's ability to veto Army Corps authorized permits for the disposal of dredged and fill material, and to designate certain areas as off limits for disposal of dredge and fill material, under Section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act. Section 404(c) authority has only been used 13 times, but it has saved great rivers such as the South Platte (CO), Ware Creek (VA), and the Big River (RI) from wasteful, fish habitat destroying project proposals.

- Eliminates federal funding for implementation of the EPA's Chesapeake Bay restoration program impacting efforts by landowners, state agencies, and federal agencies to restore water quality and habitat in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to meet the pollution reduction targets.



Farm News: Hunters Feel Threatened In Budget

<http://www.wisconsinfarmreport.com/News-1631-Hunters-Feel-Threatened-In-Budget.html>

Posted: 03.31.2011

Several national and Montana sportsmen groups are deeply concerned about proposed funding cuts to conservation and wildlife management programs that they feel threaten hunting and fishing access and opportunity.

Representatives from prominent sportsmen groups held a tele news conference Wednesday to answer reporters' questions and offer their unique perspective on the proposed budget cuts included in HR 1, which was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on February 19, 2011.

"Finding ways to reduce the massive federal deficit simply must be done. But in doing so, let's make sure to support those federal investments that pay for themselves several times over — and be critical of those that are truly wasteful," commented Dale Hall, CEO of Ducks Unlimited Inc. "Conservation has always, and continues to, pay for itself. Congress and the administration should approach the budget challenge with facts and analyses, not a meat cleaver."

Some of the programs slated for dramatic cuts or elimination include the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, Farm Bill conservation programs, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, State and Tribal Wildlife Grants, the Clean Water Act, and more. These programs not only protect hunting and fishing access for sportsmen and women, but they are also foundational to fish and wildlife habitat conservation and stimulate local economies by creating jobs, particularly in rural communities.

"Sportsmen and women depend on having places to go to hunt and fish. The Land and Water Conservation Fund has been instrumental in providing these opportunities and with reliable funding in the future could go even further to ensure access to existing public lands, making public lands public," said Ben Lamb of the Montana Wildlife Federation. "However the cut of nearly 90% of the program's funding as proposed in HR 1 will dismantle the program. It is critical to note that LWCF is not taxpayer funded but rather paid for as a conservation offset through a small portion of receipts collected from offshore oil and gas drilling in federal waters."

Congress returned to session this week and will attempt to negotiate the final budget before the most recent continuing resolution expires on April 8.



http://www.agri-pulse.com/Hunters_anglers_fear_conservation_cuts_03302011K.asp

Sportsmen say: Teddy would not be proud about cuts in conservation programs

By Kristin Merony

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HELENA, MT., March 30 – As lawmakers work to reach a compromise on cutting federal spending for fiscal 2011, several sportsmen groups say they are deeply concerned that proposed funding cuts could strike directly at America’s bedrock conservation programs that protect fish and wildlife and pump nearly \$200 billion into states and local communities.

“Theodore Roosevelt is rolling over in his grave at the prospects of the dismantling of our conservation framework, under the smokescreen of deficit reduction. This is clearly an end run at sensible fish and wildlife conservation,” emphasized Jim Martin, Conservation Director, Berkley Conservation Institute.

Some of the programs slated for dramatic cuts or elimination in HR. 1, which was proposed in the U.S. House of Representatives earlier this year, include the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, Farm Bill conservation programs, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, State and Tribal Wildlife Grants, the Clean Water Act, and more.

“Finding ways to reduce the massive federal deficit simply must be done. But in doing so, let’s make sure to support those federal investments that pay for themselves several times over – and be critical of those that are truly wasteful,” commented Dale Hall, President and CEO of Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

The groups noted that many of the proposed cuts would hit programs that are matched by state and local funding. The LWCF is not taxpayer funded but rather paid for as a conservation offset through a small portion of receipts collected from offshore oil and gas

drilling in federal waters.

Representatives from 17 different organizations reported that cuts to these programs occur in a portion of the federal budget associated with water and land management, which amounts to about one half of one percent of the entire federal budget.

Steve Moyer of Trout Unlimited acknowledged that sportsmen and women were willing to shoulder their share of the budget cuts, but simply did not agree with the disproportionate cuts and ill-conceived legislative riders proposed in HR 1.

“Congress has a duty to address our fiscal problems in a way that is worthy of the support of all Americans who love the outdoors,” added Moyer.

To return to the News Index page, click: <http://www.agri-pulse.com/>



THE CONSERVATIONIST

STANDING UP FOR OUR RIGHT TO THE OUTDOORS

<http://www.fieldandstream.com/blogs/conservationist/2011/04/crossroads-american-hunters-and-anglers-whats-stake>

April 05, 2011

A Crossroads For American Hunters and Anglers: What's At Stake

by Hal Herring

Although I cannot match Bob Marshall's deeply researched story from two weeks ago concerning House Resolution 1, the US House of Representatives proposal to cut our crushing federal deficit, I just took part in a teleconference on the budget bill that left me so unnerved that I have to address the same topic. I'm not trying to beat readers over the head with this, but we are at a crossroads for American hunters and fishermen.

The situation goes far beyond political parties. It is about representatives who may be well-meaning, but are ignorant of the very basics of conservation and how it affects our economy, our quality of life, and our access to basic resources like clean water, not to mention fish to catch and wild game to hunt. There are times when those who know what is at stake must inform the decision makers. In this case, it is sportsmen who know the facts on the ground, and now is such a time.

Let's look, again, at what is at stake. And please remember, the part of the federal budget that is devoted to conservation and land and water protection makes up about .5% of the entire budget. You could kill our entire legacy of conservation, ensure the loss of most of our wildlife and fisheries, allow the poisoning of our air and waters, and do nothing whatsoever to actually address the national debt. (And, although it is beyond my scope here, please apprise yourself, as a taxpayer, or just a citizen, of all that has NOT been targeted for cutting. According to these elected representatives, what we can do without as a nation, first, are mostly the things that we hunters and fishermen understand to have great value. WE are the low-hanging fruit.)

A few outtakes from the teleconference:

Bill Geer of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership: "HR 1 cuts \$398 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. These are not taxpayer funds- they come from offshore oil and gas royalties, and the money is already there for conservation projects. The bill just takes the money away and directs it elsewhere..."

At stake: just one example out of hundreds- acquisitions like the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's years-long effort to obtain public access and protect elk range on over 8200 acres along Tenderfoot Creek, a tributary of Montana's famed Smith River.

Scott Yaich of Ducks Unlimited: "HR 1 zeroes out the budget for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), even as we are losing an estimated 80,000 acres of wetlands annually in the US..."

"We are talking about the loss of \$200 million in worker's earnings from the restoration and other projects that will be halted by these cuts. These are projects that pay for themselves, and then some, for year after year....and we are talking about this even while the snowmelt this spring is already causing flooding in the upper Midwest due to the filling of wetlands...huge costs, directly related to the loss of wetlands... NAWCA has always been an investment with a high return..."

Mark Humpert of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies: "We see the loss of state and tribal wildlife grant funding, the loss of funding matches from revenues like the Pittman-Robertson tax on firearms and ammunition...program like Teaming for wildlife, which has been one huge success in protecting non-game and at-risk wildlife species. This has been the core federal program for proactive, non-regulatory species protection, keeping species from becoming endangered and subject to federal regulation."

Examples: Work throughout the Big Hole River basin to restore populations of native Arctic Grayling.

Milk River initiative: restoring riverbottom habitats and riparian areas in northern Montana

1000's of other projects across the US."

Humpert: "If we want a future for our birds, with abundant wildlife and fishing, this (Teaming for Wildlife) is one of the programs that we cannot lose."

Steve Moyers, Trout Unlimited: "HR 1 will halt funding for the EPA to assess what waters are covered by the Clean Water Act. Since the two Supreme Court decisions limiting the scope of the Clean Water Act, what waters are covered and what are not has been in question. HR 1 proposes to stop the EPA from assessing those waters..."

The 404c program of the Clean Water Act is a veto power used by the EPA to halt projects that are deemed to be extraordinarily wasteful, unnecessary, or destructive. "It's only been used 13 times," Moyers said, "but it has stopped some of the most destructive and wasteful projects ever proposed."

Among those projects: the public-money and fisheries squandering Yazoo Area Backwater Pumps Project in Mississippi, and the Two Forks Dam on the South Platte River of Colorado, a project that would have drowned a thirteen-mile long gold medal trout fishery and thousands of acres of bighorn sheep, elk, deer and bear habitat near Denver, all to boost real estate development in sprawling Denver.

“HR 1 zeroes the budget for the 404c program,” Moyers says, noting also that it zeroes the budget for further work on the Cheapeake Bay clean-up and restoration.

Dave Nomsen of Pheasants Forever: “We are coming off a 20 year success story with wetlands conservation, with 232,000 acres enrolled, and more landowners waiting for enrollment. HR 1 cuts \$119 million from that. Cuts \$130 million from our Conservation Stewardship Plan. Cuts the Conservation Incentives Plan. I know we are all looking for cuts to the budget, but we have to fund these critical and successful programs.”

I have written here before about how so many of our citizens seem to have no idea why we have the resources that we have. We no longer seem to know why you can turn on your faucet and, for pennies or less, enjoy a drink of cold, refreshing water--even though that's a luxury unheard of throughout most of the world. Why you can breathe clean air, and have supper in an old rural tavern that makes all its money during deer season. Cast for rainbows in the city limits of Missoula, Montana, or shoot a limit of ducks in the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge, hunt turkeys on the Royal Blue Wildlife Management Area in Tennessee, and so on, where ever it is that you love, where you take your kids or grandkids fishing or swimming or hunting. We've had it good, based on the hard work of those who came before us. The reason we have had it good (and one of the reasons that we live in a truly exceptional nation) is because of programs like the ones that will be cut under HR1.

The short-sighted drafters of HR 1 offer us a future that looks a lot like contemporary Mexico or India, or China, a future where most of the gains of our past have been lost, and where the pressures of population growth and the loss of a conservation ethic will produce losses that are unimaginable from where we stand today. These losses will cost billions of dollars to reverse if they can be reversed at all. HR 1 is not yet the law of the land. There is still time for citizens who know what is at stake to contact their representatives, and help them understand what we as sportsmen know by heart.

The Salt Lake Tribune

<http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/outdoors/51546585-117/conservation-cuts-wildlife-program.html.csp>

Fish, wildlife groups criticize proposed cuts

BY TOM WHARTON

The Salt Lake Tribune

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A Republican budget proposal in the U.S. House of Representatives that would eliminate or drastically reduce several major fish and wildlife programs has conservation organizations from around the country fighting mad.

The proposal in HR1 would affect the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grant Program, the State and Tribal Wildlife Grant Program, agricultural conservation programs and portions of the Clean Water Act.

“Conservation funding by Congress is critical to funding on-the-ground projects,” said Miles Moretti, president and CEO of the Salt Lake City-based Mule Deer Foundation, one of over 600 conservation groups opposing the cuts. “Many of the conservation budget cuts are in programs that are matched several times over by conservation groups, state and local agencies as well as private landowners.”

Opponents of the cuts have been issuing news releases, holding conference calls and rallying members in an effort to preserve some if not all of the money — which amounts to about one half of 1 percent of the federal budget.

HR1 will be debated this week as funding to run the federal government expires Friday. According to Ducks Unlimited, the U.S. Senate Democratic majority is offering amendments to the bill, including the restoration of cuts to the Land and Water Conservation Fund and state wildlife grants. The Senate amendment also does not contain language that would cut Wetlands Act dollars.

“Finding ways to reduce the massive federal deficit simply must be done,” said Dale Hall, CEO of Ducks Unlimited. “But in doing so, let’s make sure to support those federal investments that pay for themselves several times over, and be critical of those that are truly wasteful. Conservation always, and continues to, pay for itself. Congress and the administration should approach the budget challenge with facts and analyses, not a meat cleaver.”

The groups fighting the cuts make several arguments.

In the case of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and North American Wetlands Conservation Act, federal dollars must be matched by state or local governments or private organizations. That can sometimes double, triple or even quadruple the original federal investment.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund uses no general tax funds. Money for its projects that have been used to build or purchase lands for dozens of city parks throughout Utah comes from revenues from offshore oil and gas drilling.

In the case of the Clean Water Act riders, HR1 deals more with changing policy than it does for providing tax dollars.

“Sportsmen and women are willing to shoulder our share of budget cuts, but we will cry foul when faced with disproportionate cuts and ill-conceived legislative riders, which should not be on appropriations bills,” said Steve Moyer, vice president for government affairs of Trout Unlimited. “Congress has a duty to address our fiscal problems in a way that is worthy of the support of all Americans who love the outdoors.”

Mark Humpbert of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies argued in a conference call that the State Wildlife Grant dollars not only helped bring back game species such as the wild turkey but provides money for the 90 percent of U.S. Wildlife that is not hunted nor fished. He said this money helps state develop plans to prevent species from being listed as endangered.

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BRAD DOKKEN: House conservation cuts should concern hunters and anglers

H.R. 1, which recently passed the U.S. House of Representatives, approves \$60 billion in federal budget cuts and takes a buzz saw to a number of flagship conservation programs, including the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (widely known as NAWCA), the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program.

By: **Brad Dokken**, Grand Forks Herald

“Theodore Roosevelt is rolling over in his grave at the prospects of the dismantling of our conservation framework, under the smokescreen of deficit reduction. This is clearly an end run at sensible fish and wildlife conservation.”

— **Jim Martin, conservation director, Berkley Conservation Institute**

There’s a scene in the 1976 movie, “Network,” in which disgruntled TV anchor Howard Beale launches into an on-the-air rant that includes this classic line:

“I’m mad as hell, and I’m not going to take it anymore.”

In so many words, that’s the message conservation groups across the country asked hunters and anglers to send members of Congress this week during a conference call with reporters.

The reason for this urging is an ill-conceived piece of budget legislation, H.R. 1, which recently passed the U.S. House of

Representatives. The bill, which approves \$60 billion in federal budget cuts, takes a buzz saw to a number of flagship conservation programs, including the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (widely known as NAWCA), the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program.

H.R. 1 also whittles away at farm bill conservation programs and protections provided by the federal Clean Water Act.

No one argues that budget cuts are necessary, but conservation programs take an especially hard hit under the Republican-crafted bill. One of the cuts that should be of special concern in this part of the world is the proposal to eliminate funding — to the tune of \$47.6 million — for NAWCA, one of the most successful wetland conservation programs of all time. Enacted in 1989, NAWCA has leveraged federal, state and other matching funds to put more than 2,000 projects on the ground and conserve more than 7 million acres, officials said during the call.

You don't have to go very far to see the impact of NAWCA, either. Kellys Slough National Wildlife Refuge and Glacial Ridge in Polk County — one of the largest wetland and prairie restorations in U.S. history — are just two examples of NAWCA funds at work.

Scott Yaich, director of conservation operations for Ducks Unlimited, said President Barack Obama has requested \$50 million for NAWCA in fiscal year 2012, but the proposal that passed the GOP-controlled House puts the entire program in jeopardy.

From a practical and conservation standpoint, cutting NAWCA doesn't make sense, Yaich said, adding the program has created more than 8,500 jobs and generated more than \$200 million.

Because of that success, NAWCA traditionally has garnered widespread bipartisan support. Not this time.

“The bottom line is this program should be viewed as an investment,” Yaich said. “It more than pays for itself in direct and indirect economic return. H.R. 1 zeroes out this appropriation. The net economic impact is ultimately a net cost to the Treasury, and thousands of acres wouldn’t be conserved or restored.”

In case you’re wondering, freshman Rep. Rick Berg, R-N.D., voted in favor of H.R. 1 and its deep conservation cuts. So did Minnesota Republican Reps. Michele Bachmann, Chip Cravaack, Erick Paulsen and John Kline.

Minnesota Democratic Reps. Collin Peterson, Keith Ellison, and Tim Walz all voted against the bill, while Rep. Betty McCollum, D-Minn., did not vote.

The pattern, though, should be obvious.

The irony to all of this is that the Republican Party has successfully aligned itself as the party that represents hunting, fishing and the shooting sports in recent elections. If H.R. 1 ultimately passes, it will be difficult to buy that claim — especially since hunters and anglers will feel a disproportionate share of the pain.

“Conservation programs should shoulder a fair burden of reduction,” Dave Nomsen, vice president of government affairs for Pheasants Forever, said during the conference call. “That is certainly not the case with this particular plan.”

That’s why, like Howard Beale in “Network,” it’s time for hunters and anglers to make some noise — regardless of their party affiliation.

“Hunters and fishermen need to get in the game and get engaged here,” Nomsen said.

Dokken reports on outdoors. Reach him at (701) 780-1148; (800) 477-6572, ext. 148; or send e-mail to bdokken@gfherald.com.

<http://www.startribune.com/sports/outdoors/119128394.html>

Conservation groups say budget cuts would be epic

- Article by: [DOUG SMITH](#) , Star Tribune
- Updated: April 2, 2011 - 9:33 PM



[hide](#)

Proud archer: Johnny Steveken, 10, of West Lakeland Township, bagged this deer last fall in Washington County -- his first time in his stand.

Photo: -, ALL

Federal conservation and environmental programs that affect hunters, anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts have been targeted for major budget trims in the U.S. House as Congress wrestles with the budget deficit.

But many fishing, hunting and conservation groups -- including Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever and Trout Unlimited -- say the proposed cuts by the Republican-controlled House are a "slash and burn" approach that threatens hunting and fishing. Forty-two conservation groups sent Congress a letter protesting the cuts, and they are urging their members to voice opposition. (Read the letter at startribune.com/cluboutdoors.)

"Conservation programs should shoulder a fair and proportionate burden of reduction to the federal deficit, but clearly that is not the case here," said Dave Nomsen of Pheasants Forever, based in Minnesota.

Among the proposals in the House budget bill HR1:

- Eliminate funding for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant program, which over 20 years has protected about 26 million acres of waterfowl habitat in public-private partnerships with landowners, states and groups like Pheasants Forever. Those partners matched the \$1 billion in federal allocations with another \$2.3 billion.

Minnesota has received about \$32 million, which was matched by more than \$95 million in private dollars. Nearly 100,000 acres have been protected by easements or acquisition, another 59,000 acres have been restored and 50,000 acres of habitat have been improved.

"NAWCA is a huge resource for delivering on-the-ground conservation for Minnesota," said Matt Holland, PF's director of conservation.

- Trims \$400 million -- 90 percent -- from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which comes from offshore oil and gas royalties that, since 1964, have gone to provide recreation and protect parks, forest and wildlife areas. Supporters say the fund generates \$4 in economic value for every \$1 invested.
- Cuts 50,000 acres from the federal Wetland Reserve Program, which pays landowners to protect, restore and enhance wetlands. Enrollment would be capped at about 202,000 acres.

Congressional leaders are negotiating another budget extension, which includes \$30 billion in cuts; the current extension ends Friday.

SE deer regs under fire

Antler-point restrictions and a ban on party hunting for bucks in southeastern Minnesota -- special regulations launched there just last fall by the Department of Natural Resources to increase the number of mature bucks -- would be scrapped under a bill in the Minnesota House.

"I would say the vast majority of hunters want to see these restrictions removed," said Steve Drazkowski, R-Mazeppa, author of the amendment.

The Minnesota Deer Hunters Association supports removal of the restrictions.

But DNR officials said the regulations were imposed only after years of discussions and public meetings with hunters there. Surveys showed 53 percent supported protecting yearling bucks. The DNR wants to try the new regulations for at least three years and says hunters will already see more mature bucks this fall.

"A number of yearling bucks that weren't shot last fall now will be 2-year-old bucks, which should be a pretty nice bucks," said Ed Boggess, DNR fish and wildlife division director.

Buck harvest was down last fall, as expected because of the regulations, but Boggess said harvest should rebound this fall, "with a lot more bigger bucks."

The House Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Policy and Finance Committee is expected to finish debating the issue and vote on the bill Tuesday.

The bill also: allows anglers to use two fishing lines; lifts a 20-year-old northern spearing ban on Cass Lake; removes the 16-foot height restriction for deer stands; and reduces the number of Minnesota lakes with special fishing regulations intended to boost the size of northerns -- now 125 -- to 60.

Sharpshooting ends

Federal sharpshooters have ended their effort to kill deer near Pine Island for chronic wasting disease (CWD) testing. The sharpshooters and local landowners ended up killing 752 adults and 428 fawns. Test results on 1,123 deer have come back, all negative.

The DNR had wanted to test 900 mature deer.

"Given that we haven't found any positives, I'm OK with being off 100 or so deer," said Lou Cornicelli, DNR big game program coordinator. He added that though no additional deer have been found with CWD, it doesn't mean no other deer have the fatal brain disease.

"This suggests we're in good shape, but we're not out of the woods," he said.

The DNR will do intensive surveillance of hunter-killed deer in that area this fall and will create a separate permit area.

Citizen input, or not?

Rep. Drazkowski, who co-authored a bill (HF1073) removing citizens from the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council and the Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources,

is having second thoughts after getting an earful from constituents. "They told me that having the Legislature eliminate citizen input sends a poor message," Drazkowski wrote in a column on his legislative website. "After considering their input, I've determined they are absolutely right." He has removed his name from the bill. To read his column, see www.startribune.com/a285.

Did you know?

- Ducks Unlimited CEO Dale Hall will be the keynote speaker at this year's Capital City DU Chapter dinner in St. Paul on Wednesday. Tickets are available at www.ducks.org/minnesota until Tuesday.
- Applications for this fall's bear hunt are open, but this year hunters selected in the lottery must buy their licenses by July 29, and remaining licenses will be made available to other hunters. A total of 7,050 licenses are available in 11 permit areas.
- A House-Senate conference committee is expected to begin this week trying to reach agreement on two very different bills that deal with natural resource funding and policy issues. As currently written, the DNR says budget cuts in the bills would force the agency to reduce services at 13 to 26 state parks, with five to 10 of those being mothballed.
- After years of trying, mourning dove hunting supporters in Iowa finally have legalized dove hunting there. All of the states bordering Iowa, including Minnesota, allow dove hunting. The bill flew through the Legislature and Gov. Terry Branstad signed it into law.

Doug Smith • dsmith@startribune.com

Hendee: Budget cuts threatening conservation

By [David Hendee](#)

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER



Habitat improvement projects, such as those done at the Dismal River, are one of many that conservation groups and supporters say pays for itself.

Theodore Roosevelt. Turning in his grave.

That's the image many hunters, anglers and outdoor enthusiasts want Americans to consider at the prospect of dismantling the nation's century-old conservation legacy under what they say is the smokescreen of deficit reduction.

Roosevelt was the president who made conservation a key national issue.

"There can be no greater issue than that of conservation in this country," he said in 1912.

Ninety-nine years later, federal conservation funding is on the chopping block in Washington's tough-on-spending culture. A budget resolution in Congress proposes deep cuts or elimination of several programs considered critical to hunting, fishing and wildlife habitat.

"Finding ways to reduce the massive federal deficit simply must be done," said Dale Hall, president and chief executive of Ducks Unlimited. "But in doing so, let's make sure to support those federal investments that pay for themselves several times over — and be critical of those that are truly wasteful."

“Conservation has always paid, and continues to, pay for itself. Congress and the administration should approach the budget challenge with facts and analysis, not a meat cleaver.”

Habitat and conservation organizations, state wildlife agencies and some private landowners are alarmed about the proposed funding cuts that they feel threaten hunting and fishing access and opportunity across the nation.

They said hunters and anglers are willing to shoulder their share of stark budget choices, but cry foul at what they said are disproportionate cuts and ill-conceived legislative riders which should not be on appropriations bills.

They note that conservation programs amount to about one half of 1 percent of the federal budget — and the return on the investment pays dividends to the environment and to the federal treasury that exceeds the original cost.

The names of the endangered programs aren't widely known, but supporters said they are good for the economy in creating jobs — especially in rural areas — and are critical for fish, wildlife and habitat conservation.

Congress is attempting to negotiate the final budget before the most recent continuing resolution expires Friday.

On the chopping block are the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, farm bill conservation programs, Land and Water Conservation Fund, State and Tribal Wildlife Grants and others.

The wildlife grants program has been an important source of funds to help keep the nation's common species off the endangered species list by proactively conserving wildlife before it becomes too rare and costly to protect with last-ditch efforts, said Mark Humpert, director of wildlife policy and science for the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Humpert formerly was wildlife diversity manager at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in Lincoln.

“Tens of thousands of species — more than 90 percent of our nation's fish and wildlife that is typically neither hunted nor fished — is put at risk without funding to conserve them on public and private lands,” he said.

Kristal Stoner, the current wildlife diversity manager at Nebraska Game and Parks, said most of the conservation work done across the state is on private land. These are landowners who apply to participate in cost-sharing programs to things

like remove invasive red cedar trees that squeeze out grazing land and wildlife habitat.

Nine wildlife biologists across Nebraska help landowners maximize results.

Since 2001, Nebraska's Natural Legacy Project has turned nearly \$7.5 million in state wildlife grants into more than \$14 million in wildlife and habitat conservation. Iowa has had similar results with the \$7.7 million it received during the same period.

Projects include more than 100 habitat improvements in southeast Nebraska's prairies and bluffs. In northeast Nebraska, landowners established a protective corridor linking 20 miles of the lower Niobrara River, eight miles of Verdigre Creek and 12 miles of Bazile Creek, along with stretches of Ponca Creek and the Missouri River.

Other projects across Nebraska include work in the Rainwater Basin, Cherry County wetlands, the Elkhorn and Dismal River headwaters and western grasslands.

"This isn't only about hunting and fishing," Stoner said. "Many people just like to watch wildlife. Some folks are just concerned about threatened and endangered species and want to know that we're doing something about it."

The conservation programs at risk in Washington pay for that work.

Hall put this week's campaign this way:

"We must ensure that these bipartisan and cost-effective conservation programs do not become collateral damage of politics."

Contact the writer:

402-444-1127, david.hendee@owh.com

Friday, April 1, 2011

Hunters and Anglers Fear Cuts to Conservation Programs Will Threaten Recreation Opportunities

HELENA, Mont.- Several national and Montana sportsmen groups are deeply concerned about proposed funding cuts to conservation and wildlife management programs that they feel threaten hunting and fishing access and opportunity.

Representatives from prominent sportsmen groups held a tele news conference Wednesday to answer reporters' questions and offer their unique perspective on the proposed budget cuts included in HR 1, which was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on February 19, 2011.

"Finding ways to reduce the massive federal deficit simply must be done. But in doing so, let's make sure to support those federal investments that pay for themselves several times over - and be critical of those that are truly wasteful," commented Dale Hall, CEO of Ducks Unlimited Inc. "Conservation has always, and continues to, pay for itself. Congress and the administration should approach the budget challenge with facts and analyses, not a meat cleaver."

Some of the programs slated for dramatic cuts or elimination include the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, Farm Bill conservation programs, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, State and Tribal Wildlife Grants, the Clean Water Act, and

more. These programs not only protect hunting and fishing access for sportsmen and women, but they are also foundational to fish and wildlife habitat conservation and stimulate local economies by creating jobs, particularly in rural communities.

"Sportsmen and women depend on having places to go to hunt and fish. The Land and Water Conservation Fund has been instrumental in providing these opportunities and with reliable funding in the future could go even further to ensure access to existing public lands, making public lands public," said Ben Lamb of the Montana Wildlife Federation. "However the cut of nearly 90% of the program's funding as proposed in HR 1 will dismantle the program. It is critical to note that LWCF is not taxpayer funded but rather paid for as a conservation offset through a small portion of receipts collected from offshore oil and gas drilling in federal waters."

Congress returned to session this week and will attempt to negotiate the final budget before the most recent continuing resolution expires on April 8.

-30-

Additional quotes from Sportsmen's Organizations

"AFFTA sees these conservation programs as critical economic drivers for our businesses and customers. As small businesses fueling America's \$42-billion fishing industry, conservation is critical to the economic activity generated by our industry." Randi

Swisher, President, American Fly Fishing Trade Association

"What makes these budget cuts unfair is that many of the fishery and water conservation programs slated for cuts or elimination in H.R.1 are matched with state and local funding providing a significant return on federal dollar investment. In addition, many of these programs are supported by volunteers in communities across our Nation who give their time and expertise to ensure that our fisheries remain healthy and abundant so future generations can enjoy recreational fishing." Gordon Robertson, Vice President, American Sportfishing Association.

"Tens of thousands of species, more than 90 percent of our nation's fish and wildlife that is typically neither hunted nor fished, is put at risk without funding to conserve them on public and private lands. The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program has been an important source of funds to help keep America's common species common and off the endangered species list by proactively conserving wildlife before they become too rare and costly to protect with last-ditch efforts." Mark Humpert, Director of Wildlife Policy and Science, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

"Theodore Roosevelt is rolling over in his grave at the prospects of the dismantling of our conservation framework, under the smokescreen of deficit reduction. This is clearly an end run at sensible fish and wildlife conservation." Jim Martin, Conservation Director, Berkley Conservation Institute.

"Sportsmen and women support wildlife management in the United States and pump nearly \$200 billion a year into state and

local economies, yet Congress is making wholesale cuts to conservation in a way that jeopardizes our opportunities in the field and the economies and management activities we support."
Gaspar Perricone, Co-Director Bull Moose Sportsmen's Alliance

"Conservation funding by Congress is critical to funding on the ground projects. Many of the conservation budget cuts are in programs that are matched several times over by conservation groups, state and local agencies as well as private landowners."
Miles Moretti, President & CEO, Mule Deer Foundation.

A hundred years ago pioneers crossed this country nourishing themselves on the millions of native grouse they encountered everywhere in their travels. Today, many are candidates for the Endangered Species Act and are extremely dependent on the lands administered and helped by these conservation programs. Eliminating or diminishing support for these lands will threaten this American cultural heritage as well as sportsmen's opportunities and the considerable dollars sportsmen bring to the table for conservation." Ralph Rogers, President North American Grouse Partnership

"During a time when Americans are increasingly losing access to traditional places to hunt and fish, the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund plays a critical role in securing lands that allow sportsmen to continue to follow our passions. The LWCF helps create more public lands by working with willing sellers of private lands - such as in Montana's Tenderfoot Creek Land Acquisition Project - thereby supporting the conservation of critical fish and wildlife habitat and increasing public access for hunting and fishing. The Tenderfoot Creek area was Identified in

the TRCP Montana Sportsmen Value Mapping Project as a top priority 'bread and butter' hunting and fishing area for acquisition by sportsmen throughout Montana." Bill Geer, Climate Change Initiative Manager, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

"Sportsmen and women are willing to shoulder our share of budget cuts, but we will cry foul when faced with disproportionate cuts and ill-conceived legislative riders which should not be on appropriations bills. Congress has a duty to address our fiscal problems in a way that is worthy of the support of all Americans who love the outdoors." Steve Moyer, Vice President for Government Affairs, Trout Unlimited

"Invasive species are not waiting for Congress to approve a budget. They continue to multiply and wreak havoc on our lakes, streams and woods. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is restoring our country's largest freshwater lakes and protecting a fishing industry worth 7 billion dollars annually in jobs and tourism. The American people need jobs and want local accessible outdoor opportunities. We know our grandchildren should not be crushed by debt, but they also should not inherit a world where Mother Nature becomes barren because we took a break in stopping the spread of harmful invasive species."

Douglas H. Grann, President & CEO, Wildlife Forever

"We all share their desire to reduce our national debt and balance our budget; however, the recent slash and burn approach to reducing the federal budget could not have occurred with careful consideration of which conservation programs work and which do not. Consider this, the cuts to these programs occurred in a portion of the federal budget related to water and land

management which amounts to about one half of one percent of the entire federal budget. Their actions could not have taken into account the non-federal funds that are leveraged by these funds or the ecological services that these programs provide for the public. In each case, the return on the investment of federal dollars pays public dividends in excess of that original investment." Steve Williams, President, Wildlife Management Institute

A budget resolution is being negotiated in Congress and some proposals include significant cuts for fiscal year 2011 to several foundational conservation programs that benefit sportsmen and women. Final program decisions could be enacted as early as April 8.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

- House-passed HR 1 cuts \$398 million from current levels, a nearly 90% cut and essentially eliminating the program, which is authorized to spend \$900 million.
- LWCF generates \$4 in economic value for every \$1 invested.
- Does not use taxpayer dollars, but rather uses a small portion of revenues from offshore oil and gas drilling.
- Provides tool for conservation and recreational needs in every state in America, supports land conservation in our National Parks, Forests, Refuges and Bureau of Land Management areas; protects working forests and ranches through easements;

partners with state and local entities to provide recreational opportunities for all Americans.

- Provides funding to ensure sportsmen's access to public lands and protection of additional places to hunt and fish.
- Vital to recreational activities that contribute \$730 billion annually to the economy; supports 6.5 million jobs and stimulates 8% of all consumer spending

North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grant Program (NAWCA)

- Eliminates funding for the program - \$47.6 million cut from FY2010 levels.
- Competitive grant program for the conservation of waterfowl and other wetland-associated migratory birds.
- For over 20 years, grants made available through NAWCA have helped thousands of public-private partnerships protect and improve the health of wetland and wetland-associated landscapes impacting more than 26 million acres through September 2010.
- NAWCA more than triples the legally required 1:1 match-to-grant ratio by partnering with private landowners, States, non-governmental conservation organizations, tribes, Federal agencies, trusts, and corporations. On average, the amount of non-federal matching funds exceeds the requested grant amount by more than 3:1.

State and Tribal Wildlife Grant Program (STWG)

- Eliminates the full \$90 million
- Established in 2002, STWG had worked to protect fish and wildlife in their habitat.
- Plans for FY 2011 funds included: restoring and enhancing 30,000 acres of grasslands in Kansas and improving the habitat on Ossabaw Island in Georgia for several bird species.

Agricultural Conservation Programs

Proposed cuts would cap the Wetlands Reserve Program enrollment at 202,218 acres, permanently reducing the program by 47,782 acres. The WRP helps farmers, ranchers and landowners restore and conserve wetlands on their properties while also focusing on improving habitat for waterfowl and fish and wildlife species. More than 1.9 million acres of wetlands are currently enrolled in the WRP.

More than \$350 million would be cut from levels authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. EQIP provides technical assistance and payments for landowners to improve land management and farming practices, including fish and wildlife habitat enhancement.

Cuts overall discretionary funding for the USDA Farm Service

Agency by more than \$190 million diminishing the agency's ability to implement vital Farm Bill conservation programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Program.

Cuts overall discretionary funding for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service by \$170 million. This will result in less technical assistance to farmers, ranchers and landowners interested in implementing conservation efforts on their land. A lack of adequate technical assistance has been identified as one of the biggest barriers to participation in and effective implementation of these programs.

Clean Water Act riders

- The "Waters of the U.S." rider would stop efforts by the Army Corps of Engineers and the EPA to partially restore Clean Water Act protection for some wetlands and streams which were curtailed by Supreme Court decisions. Taken together, these decisions and existing agency guidance have removed protections for at least 20 million acres of wetlands, especially prairie potholes and other seasonal wetlands that are essential to waterfowl populations throughout the country.
- HR 1 removes the EPA's ability to veto Army Corps authorized permits for the disposal of dredged and fill material, and to designate certain areas as off limits for disposal of dredge and fill material, under Section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act. Section 404(c) authority has only been used 13 times, but it has saved great rivers such as the South Platte (CO), Ware Creek (VA), and the Big River (RI) from wasteful, fish habitat destroying project proposals.

- Eliminates federal funding for implementation of the EPA's Chesapeake Bay restoration program impacting efforts by landowners, state agencies, and federal agencies to restore water quality and habitat in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to meet the pollution reduction targets.

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Budget cuts could threaten federal land conservation program



Michael Sears

Tim Zindl, owner of Oak Ridge Pheasant Ranch in Jefferson County, checks on birds in his enclosures as he prepares for another season of raising pheasants. Zindl says government shouldn't spend money it doesn't have and he thinks conservation funding will be cut.

Programs paying farmers and others to leave fields for wildlife

conservation could be cut

By [Rick Barrett](#) of the Journal Sentinel

March 31, 2011 | [\(33\) Comments](#)

Voluntary government programs that pay farmers, ranchers and other landowners to let their land sit idle for conservation and wildlife purposes could be on the chopping block as Congress attempts to slash billions of dollars in spending.

One of the initiatives at risk, the Conservation Reserve Program, affects 400,000 acres in Wisconsin. It pays landowners for idling tracts for 10 to 15 years, to provide wildlife habitat and other ecosystem benefits.

Terms vary. But on average the program pays farmers \$80 per acre, according to the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation.

"It is arguably the greatest conservation initiative that's ever been undertaken in this country," said Kevin Wallenfang, regional wildlife biologist for the Pheasants Forever chapter based in Middleton.

Some farmers want to be released from their Conservation Reserve Program contracts so they can plant the acreage with corn and soybeans and take advantage of high commodity prices.

But they don't want the \$2 billion program dismantled, said Bob Oleson, a Dane County farmer and executive director of the Wisconsin Corn Growers Association.

"First of all, farmers are conservationists," Oleson said. "Yes, it puts dollars in farmers' pockets. But it's for land that, for conservation reasons, should not be in production."

An appropriations bill passed by the House of Representatives would result in a nearly 90% reduction in funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which is authorized to spend \$900 million.

The Farm Service Agency would have its discretionary spending reduced by \$190 million, diminishing the Conservation Reserve Program. More than \$350 million would be cut from the Environmental Quality Initiatives Program that provides wildlife-habitat technical assistance to farmers and other landowners. Nearly \$200 million would be cut from another program that provides similar assistance.

"These spending reductions are very much on the table," said Jodi Stemler a spokeswoman for environmental groups including Ducks Unlimited, based in Memphis, Tenn.

Farmers and environmentalists acknowledge that some funding reductions are inevitable.

Government should not spend money it doesn't have, said Tim Zindl, a pheasant farmer in Jefferson County.

"Do I think they are going to cut the funding? Absolutely," he said.

Some initiatives could be eliminated entirely, such as the North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grant Program.

"Theodore Roosevelt is rolling over in his grave at the prospects of the dismantling of our conservation framework, under the smoke screen of deficit reduction. This is simply an end run at sensible fish and wildlife conservation," said Jim Martin, conservation director for the Berkley Conservation Institute, in Spirit Lake, Iowa.

But not everyone agrees that conservation initiatives should be spared.

Nationwide there are 40 million acres in the Conservation Reserve Program.

"That's the equivalent of idling every farm in Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio and Indiana," said Brian Riedl, a research fellow with the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank in Washington, D.C.

"I would like to see the CRP phased out," Riedl said, adding that government should not pay farmers to take care of their land.

It's like paying Dairy Queen to keep its freezers plugged in, Riedl quipped.

"And once a government program is created, it creates an interest group dedicated to preserving it. Every dollar government spends, no matter how wasteful, will be defended by the recipients," he said.

The conclusions of conservation groups should not be automatically accepted, said Christina Botteri, a media contact for the National Tea Party Federation.

"Personally, I reject the premise that measures put in place by well-meaning environmentalists are at all necessary, warranted or beneficial," Botteri said.

Some anglers are worried about the cuts, saying America's \$42 billion fishing industry depends on a healthy ecosystem.

"What makes these budget cuts unfair is that many of the fish hatchery and water conservation programs slated for cuts or elimination are matched with state and local funding, providing a significant return on federal-dollar investment," said Gordon Robertson, vice president of the American Sportfishing Association, in Alexandria, Va.

Tens of thousands of species, more than 90% of the nation's fish and wildlife that is typically neither hunted nor fished, is at risk without conservation funding, said Mark Humpert a policy director with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, in Washington, D.C.

The Great Lakes ecosystem and billions of dollars in tourism also are at risk, some environmentalists say.

"Invasive species are not waiting for Congress to approve a budget. They continue to multiply and wreak havoc on our lakes, streams and woods," said Douglas Grann, president of Wildlife Forever, in Brooklyn Center, Minn.

"We know that our grandchildren should not be crushed by debt," Grann said, while also arguing that they should not inherit a world where nature becomes barren because conservation programs were dismantled.

Find this article at:

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/wisconsin/119037739.html>

Promoting and Protecting Recreational Fishing



<http://www.activistangler.com/continued-articles/?SSScrollPosition=179>

Proposed Cuts Threaten Recreational Fisheries

Friday, April 1, 2011 at 11:20AM

[Continued from Journal Page](#)

Budget cuts as currently proposed in H.R. 1 from the U.S. House of Representatives spell bad news for fish and wildlife conservation.



In response to this, the [Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership](#) (TRCP) convened a tele-news conference this week for sportsmen's groups to voice their concerns.

Educate yourself below and then emphasize the importance of these programs to your [representatives and senators](#).

Here's some food for thought to get your started from Steve Williams, president of the Wildlife Management Institute:

“We all share their desire to reduce our national debt and balance our budget; however, the recent slash and burn approach to reducing the federal budget could not have occurred with careful consideration of which conservation programs work and which do not.

“Consider this: the cuts to these programs occurred in a portion of the federal budget related to water and land management which amounts to about one half of one percent of the entire federal budget.”

“Their (House of Representatives) actions could not have taken into account the non-federal funds that are leveraged by these funds or the ecological services that these programs provide for the public. In each case, the return on the investment of federal dollars pays public dividends in excess of that original investment.”

Here's what TRCP reports:

“Finding ways to reduce the massive federal deficit simply must be done. But in doing so, let's make sure to support those federal investments that pay for themselves several times over — and be critical of those that are truly wasteful,” said Dale Hall, president and CEO of Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

“Conservation has always, and continues to, pay for itself. Congress and the administration should approach the budget challenge with facts and analyses, not a meat cleaver.”

Some of the programs slated for dramatic cuts or elimination include the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, Farm Bill conservation programs, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, State and Tribal Wildlife Grants, the Clean Water Act, and more. These programs not only protect hunting and fishing access for sportsmen and women, but they are also foundational to fish and wildlife habitat conservation and stimulate local economies by creating jobs, particularly in rural communities.

“Sportsmen and women depend on having places to go to hunt and fish. The Land and Water Conservation Fund has been instrumental in providing these opportunities and with reliable funding in the future could go even further to ensure access to existing public lands, making public lands public,” said Ben Lamb of the Montana Wildlife Federation.

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Congress returned to session this week and will attempt to negotiate the final budget before the most recent continuing resolution expires on April 8th.

Additional quotes from Sportsmen’s Organizations

“During a time when Americans are increasingly losing access to traditional places to hunt and fish, the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund plays a critical role in securing lands that allow sportsmen to continue to follow our passions.

“The LWCF helps create more public lands by working with willing sellers of private lands – such as in Montana’s Tenderfoot Creek Land Acquisition Project - thereby supporting the conservation of critical fish and wildlife habitat and increasing public access for hunting and fishing.

“The Tenderfoot Creek area was identified in the TRCP Montana Sportsmen Value Mapping Project as a top priority ‘bread and butter’ hunting and fishing area for acquisition by sportsmen throughout Montana.” **Bill Geer, Climate Change Initiative manager, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership**

“AFFTA sees these conservation programs as critical economic drivers for our businesses and customers. As small businesses fueling America’s \$42-billion fishing industry, conservation is critical to the economic activity generated by our industry.” **Randi Swisher, President, American Fly Fishing Trade Association**

“What makes these budget cuts unfair is that many of the fishery and water conservation programs slated for cuts or elimination in H.R.1 are matched with state and local funding providing a significant return on federal dollar investment.

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“A hundred years ago pioneers crossed this country nourishing themselves on the millions of native grouse they encountered everywhere in their travels.

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“Sportsmen and women are willing to shoulder our share of budget cuts, but we will cry foul when faced with disproportionate cuts and ill-conceived legislative riders which should not be on appropriations bills. Congress has a duty to address our fiscal problems in a way that is worthy of the support of all Americans who love the outdoors.” **Steve Moyer, vice president for Government Affairs, Trout Unlimited**

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Nature becomes barren because we took a break in stopping the spread of harmful invasive species.” **Douglas H. Grann, president & CEO, Wildlife Forever**

And Here is what is threatened:

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Eliminates the full \$90 million

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More than \$350 million would be cut from levels authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. EQIP provides technical assistance and payments for landowners to improve land management and farming practices, including fish and wildlife habitat enhancement.

Cuts overall discretionary funding for the USDA Farm Service Agency by more than \$190 million diminishing the agency's ability to implement vital Farm Bill conservation programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Program.

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the Clean Water Act. Section 404(c) authority has only been used 13 times, but it has saved great rivers such as the South Platte (CO), Ware Creek (VA), and the Big River (RI) from wasteful, fish habitat destroying project proposals.

Eliminates federal funding for implementation of the EPA's Chesapeake Bay restoration program impacting efforts by landowners, state agencies, and federal agencies to restore water quality and habitat in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to meet the pollution reduction targets.



<http://professionaloutdoormedia.org/>

Hunters and Anglers Fear Cuts to Conservation Programs Will Threaten Recreation Opportunities

Posted Thu, 03/31/2011 - 4:25pm by LLDovey

Several national and Montana sportsmen groups are deeply concerned about proposed funding cuts to conservation and wildlife management programs that they feel threaten hunting and fishing access and opportunity. Programs slated for dramatic cuts or elimination include the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, Farm Bill conservation programs, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, State and Tribal Wildlife Grants, the Clean Water Act, and more. These programs not only protect hunting and fishing access for sportsmen and women, but they are also foundational to fish and wildlife habitat conservation and stimulate local economies by creating jobs, particularly in rural communities.

Representatives from prominent sportsmen groups, including POMA CPs American Sportfishing Association, Boone and Crocket Club, Ducks Unlimited, Mule Deer Foundation held a tele news conference on March 30, 2011 to answer reporters' questions and offer their unique perspective on the proposed budget cuts included in HR 1, which was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on February 19, 2011.

"Finding ways to reduce the massive federal deficit simply must be done. But in doing so, let's make sure to support those federal investments that pay for themselves several times over — and be critical of those that are truly wasteful," commented Dale Hall, President and CEO of Ducks Unlimited, Inc. "Conservation has always, and continues to, pay for itself. Congress and the administration should approach the budget challenge with facts and analyses, not a meat cleaver."

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The Columbus Dispatch

dispatch.com

<http://www.dispatch.com/live/content/sports/stories/2011/04/03/budget-cuts-would-hit-conservation-programs-hard.html>

Budget cuts would hit conservation programs hard

Sunday, April 3, 2011 03:12 AM

By [Dave Golowenski](#)

FOR THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

The fact that cost-cutting in the proposed federal budget would hit conservation efforts hard has triggered a response from leading hunting and fishing organizations.

The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership - a 26-member consortium that includes Ducks Unlimited, the International Game Fish Association, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Izaak Walton League and Pheasants Forever among its heavy hitters - said in a statement that the proposed cuts, if enacted, "would adversely impact our nation's ability to conserve open spaces, clean water and valuable fish and wildlife habitat for future generations."

The partnership suggested in a recent statement that the nation's 34 million sportsmen, who pump about \$192 billion into the U.S. economy each year, can't pursue, observe and appreciate wildlife that has no place to thrive.

"It all starts with the habitat," the partnership's statement said.

Among the programs facing cuts:

- The Land and Water Conservation Fund provides grants to state and local governments to help conserve land for wildlife-related public use. The budget would be cut almost 90 percent from 2010 funding. Originally proposed to receive \$900 million, the cuts would provide less than 5 percent of that amount for 2011 programs.

- The Environmental Protection Agency is tasked with overseeing wetlands, streams and other waterways. The budget as proposed would jeopardize the agency's oversight under the Clean Water Act on 20 million acres of wetlands, small streams and other waters important to fish, wildlife and sportsmen.
- The North American Wetlands Conservation Act would be defunded, equal to a loss of \$47million in support of wetlands habitat conservation. The act has generated more than \$3billion for wetlands restoration and conservation during the past 20 years.
- The Wetlands Reserve Program would face cuts that cap enrollment at about 202,000 acres, permanently slashing almost 48,000 acres. The program currently has 1.9million acres of wetlands enrolled.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages fish and game species across the nation, would face \$65million in cuts to its resource management budget.

Additional millions would be lopped off the budgets of other programs crucial to habitat conservation.

Parting shots

Connie Shook of Columbus wants to start a fishing club for women. For information, check the website meetup.com/Female-Fishers/. Pamela Dillon will be retiring April30 as chief of the Ohio Division of Watercraft. She began her career with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources in 1976 as a park naturalist aide and became a watercraft officer in 1977. Columbus ice fishing addict John Roesch called Thursday while moving his gear back to the mainland from his winter haunts at South Bass Island. His summary of the 2011 season: "The best ice in 30 years, and the worst fishing in memory." Roesch said he hopes the walleye get over their close-mouthed ways this spring.

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