

Nov. 10, 2023

The Honorable Brenda Mallory, Chair
White House Council on Environmental Quality
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Shalanda Young, Director
White House Office of Management and Budget
Washington, D.C.

Dear Director Young and Chair Mallory:

The below signed hunting, wildlife conservation, and professional societies are writing to support fiscal year 2025 funding for the efforts of the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to maintain, conserve, and enhance wildlife migration corridors and seasonal ranges, particularly for big game species.

Specific and dedicated funding is necessary to successfully implement these Departmental priorities. Historically, funding for this work has largely been redirected from existing agency budgets and programs, competing each year for limited agency resources. This uncertain and underfunded approach has created challenges for consistent implementation by the agencies and their partners. We applaud the Administration's efforts in the President's FY2024 budget, e.g., specific funding to USGS and the USFWS focused on wildlife migration corridors research and conservation, and we have requested Congress ensure sufficient Fiscal Year 2024 funding to conserve wildlife migration corridors and seasonal ranges during this appropriations cycle. Our specific FY2025 funding recommendations by program are included as an addendum to this letter.

We ask the Administration to consider a concise, targeted crosscut wildlife migration budget to ensure year to year consistency and a reliable programmatic approach to wildlife corridors conservation. We identify several programs that contribute to the conservation of wildlife migration corridors and seasonal ranges in the addendum for your consideration as you develop the President's FY 2025 budget. It is important to note that measures to conserve big game migration corridors and seasonal ranges not only facilitate unobstructed movement for wildlife to access forage and other resources, but also contribute to overall habitat resiliency to changing conditions across a wide range of ecological systems and contribute to larger-scale efforts to increase connectivity for numerous species.

We welcome the efforts of our federal partners to develop policies and guidance that could support wildlife migration corridors and habitat conservation, and guidance and policies are only as effective as the funding behind them. Funding to support agencies, and State, Tribal and other public and private partners, to engage in wildlife corridor conservation and to implement high-priority on-the-ground conservation actions, are also needed. Targeted funding for the BLM, US Geological Survey, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the USFS to comprehensively conserve wildlife migration corridors and seasonal ranges will ensure that successful efforts to date do not falter.

These funding priorities are critically important to maintain current efforts, which have widespread support from state wildlife agencies, and a wide diversity of both hunting and non-hunting based non-governmental conservation organizations. Please contact us if you need any further information or clarifications. We look forward to working with you on a budget that supports the needs of wildlife.

Sincerely,

Archery Trade Association
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Boone and Crockett Club
California Waterfowl Association
Camp Fire Club of America
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Conservation Force
Delta Waterfowl
Houston Safari Club
Masters of Foxhounds Association
Mule Deer Foundation
National Deer Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Wild Turkey Federation
National Wildlife Federation
North American Grouse Partnership
Pheasants Forever
Pope & Young Club
Quail Forever
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Safari Club International
The Wildlife Society
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Whitetails Unlimited
Wild Sheep Foundation
Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Management Institute

Addendum

To maintain and improve wildlife migration corridors and seasonal ranges, we request that the President's FY 2025 budget include the following funding recommendations:

- **DOI Coordination and Support:** Over the past five years, the coordinator and agency liaisons have contributed greatly to successful federal, state, tribal and stakeholder coordination on wildlife corridor research, planning, and conservation. However, previous funding for these positions was drawn from existing bureau and agency budgets. Dedicated funding in the Office of the Secretary would maintain and enhance the ongoing success of these efforts, while keeping bureau and agency budgets whole. **We recommend providing an additional \$1 million to the Office of the Secretary for national and regional wildlife migration corridor coordination and support positions.**
- **USGS Science and Mapping Support.** The USGS has provided critical technical assistance to the agencies and state wildlife departments through its Corridor Mapping Team led by the Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit (CRU). Over the last five years the USGS has directed over \$1 million for the analysis of big game movement data and corridor mapping. These investments have provided the spatial maps of migration corridors that are the basis for conservation, however much work remains to be done, including and especially the effects on wildlife migrations from climate change. **We recommend including an additional \$5 million in the USGS Land Management Research budget, with specific direction to direct these funds towards wildlife corridor mapping and research.**
- **USFWS Science Applications Program.** The USFWS Science Applications Program has provided significant funding for several years to state and tribal fish and wildlife agencies for state defined priority research projects to identify and assess threats to migration corridors. Funding for state and tribal fish and wildlife agencies to continue to expand migration corridor research is critical to ensure that the best available science is informing management decisions. **We recommend increasing the budget for this program by \$3 million, specifically targeted at addressing state and tribal priorities for migration corridors research.**
- **Dedicated Wildlife Corridors Funding for NFWF.** Since 2019, NFWF has provided competitive grants from its Western Big Game Seasonal Habitat and Migration Corridors Fund for projects largely on public lands. This program has been highly successful, receiving far more requests for funding than available resources, and generating nearly \$30 million in matching funds from states and private sources. The Program is supported via pass-through funding from BLM, USFS, and the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, however dedicated funding over and above existing NFWF appropriations would ensure its continued success and minimize impacts to agency budgets. **We recommend increasing BLM's Wildlife & Aquatic Habitat Management and the USFS Watershed, Fish, Wildlife, Air and Rare Plants budgets by an additional \$2 million each, with the funds specifically directed to the NFWF Program.**
- **USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.** This program has been critical for voluntary landowner engagement in wildlife migration corridor and seasonal range conservation on private lands. **We ask that the FY25 budget increase overall funding for this program by \$2M, \$1.5M for an internal grant process and \$500,000 directed to NFWF for winter range and migration corridor habitat conservation.**