**Talking Points and Answers to Frequently Asked Question**

**Recovering America’s Wildlife Act (HR4647) Fly-In**

**March 13-14, 2018**

**Talking Points**

* This is bipartisan legislation introduced by Representatives Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE) and Debbie Dingell (D-MI) that creates a 21st-century funding model to facilitate states’ ability to address problems faced by species of greatest conservation need before federal listing is needed and expedite recovery efforts for those already listed. It also provides states with the ability to do more wildlife conservation education and wildlife-associated recreation.
* The goal is proactive conservation. It costs taxpayers and businesses hundreds of millions of dollars each year to restore threatened and endangered species, outlays that might be avoided or greatly reduced if proactive, voluntary conservation actions were implemented first. Every state’s science-based, non-regulatory Wildlife Action Plan would guide on-the-ground action for these species together with local communities.
* Healthy, sustainable fish and wildlife populations not only reduce the regulatory burden and uncertainty, but the economy thrives as well as our health and well-being by providing cleaner air and water.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

*What is the difference between the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act (HR 4647) and the Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow’s Needs Act (HR 2591)?*

* HR 2591 provides states with more flexibility to do outreach, education, and recruitment activities to meet today’s needs of hunters and recreational target to keep this cornerstone of wildlife conservation and the existing lifeblood of state agencies, going for generations to come. This provides state agencies with same flexibilities that already exist in the Dingell-Johnson/Wallop-Beaux Sport Fish Restoration Fund.
* HR 4647 enables the state agencies and their partners to work to conserve state species of greatest conservation need as identified in their State Wildlife Action Plan, which can extend to **all** species of fish and wildlife, those hunted and fished **and** those that are **not** hunted or fished.

*How did you come up with the figure of $1.3 billion per year?*

* We surveyed the state fish and wildlife agencies and asked them how much money they need to effectively implement their State Wildlife Action Plans. From their responses we determined that 75% of the cost is $1.3 billion, with the states providing an additional 25% non-federal match.

*What do you propose for an offset to pay for HR 4647?*

* We know this is a big investment, but we also believe this investment will return many dividends to our communities and economies. I do not have an offset identified today that would pay for this legislation. However, I would welcome the opportunity to work with you and your boss and other members of Congress to garner additional support for this bill and create the opportunity to identify an offset in order to enact this legislation.

*What about the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)? How is HR 4647 different from LWCF?*

* Recovering America’s Wildlife Act meets different needs of the states than the Land and Water Conservation Fund, but both are important. Specifically speaking to the “state-side funding” of the LWCF, it benefits every state differently, depending on how the state agencies and responsibilities are arranged and what the state’s priorities are for using LWCF monies. For many small, rural communities across the country, the LWCF is the only source of funding for the building and maintenance of playgrounds, swimming pools, and sporting facilities -- important infrastructure to keep our children and families healthy and active. It also provides states with opportunities to secure public access to important areas for outdoor recreation.
* However, fish and wildlife are not statutory purposes of the LWCF, and many state fish and wildlife agencies do not have the ability to direct how LWCF monies are prioritized or spent. And even if they did, states cannot use LWCF funds for research and monitoring of a species, species and habitat restoration activities, or wildlife conservation education, which may be very different needs than provided through LWCF. We need to be able to assess the status of fish and wildlife species, conduct proactive conservation actions on the ground, restore habitat, and allow the state agencies the ability to communicate better with their citizens on these important activities. This is why states need both.

*We noticed the bill allows but not requires states to spend funds on recovering federally listed species under the ESA.  Why?*

* Not every state agency has the capacity, political support or specific species expertise that may be needed to lead the way on recovering a particular federally listed species, but some do and want to do everything they can to help recover a particular species. Therefore, we are trying to provide the opportunity and flexibility for the states that are able to help recover listed species, to do so.

*Will the Alliance be advocating for expanded offshore drilling to help pay for RAWA?*

* I won’t speak on behalf of the Alliance or any particular state or state agency, but from that is a state’s rights issue, and we will leave it up to each individual state to determine what is best.

*I notice the bill specifically precludes requiring public access to private lands.  Why?*

* First, the state agencies take very seriously their relationship with private landowners and the immense trust that is **earned** in order to work collaboratively with those landowners to implement voluntary conservation measures on their lands and waters. We respect that trust and the voluntary approach to our conservation efforts. Some landowners may be happy to provide the public access for recreation, and we have other programs and parts of the WCRP for that, but some landowners want privacy and respect for their private property rights. We want to be able to implement proactive conservation work with private landowners while respecting their privacy and private property rights.

*Once this bill is enacted and funds are apportioned to the states, will Congress still need to appropriate funds to the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program?*

* We will continue to advocate for funding for the STWG program until the annual apportionments flow to the state agencies after Recovering America’s Wildlife Act is enacted. We cannot afford loss in funding continuity which would create a loss of jobs, breach of contracts and agreements, etc., which are currently funded through each state’s STWG apportionment.
* Once annual funding apportionments flow from WCRP to the state agencies, I expect the state agencies will use the WCRP funds to update and implement their State Wildlife Action Plans instead of the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program.
* However, rather than using the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program as an offset, Congress should consider directing that grant program to the Tribes who will still need those funds to conduct important fish and wildlife conservation work on their lands and waters.