



## THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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### Memorandum

Date: 25 January 1995

To: Section, Chapter, and Student Chapter Presidents

From: Tom Franklin, Wildlife Policy Director

Subj: Fish and Wildlife Diversity Initiative

The **Fish and Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative** is the most important wildlife management funding opportunity since passage of the Pittman-Robertson that established the federal aid program in the 1930s. This initiative is so important to the future of fish and wildlife management that it must advance with the support of all who care about wildlife.

Fish and wildlife resources are suffering from inadequate funding. Historical federal efforts to support nongame, such as the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act of 1980, have failed. But help is on the way. The Wildlife Society and American Fisheries Society, in partnership with the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and other groups, have launched a campaign to support the Fish and Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative.

The Fish and Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative aims to provide critically needed money for wildlife conservation, outdoor recreation and environmental education. The funding proposal is simply an expansion of the successful Pittman-Robertson/Dingell-Johnson federal aid programs. The proposal includes modest surcharges on a spectrum of outdoor products to raise the **\$350 million** needed for conservation, recreation and education programs in all 50 states.

The Wildlife Society strongly favors the Fish and Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative as the best mechanism to give the people who care about wildlife diversity the chance to contribute directly to the wildlife and habitats they enjoy and value. We need to ensure reliable funding to state fish and wildlife agencies exclusively for conserving wildlife diversity and meeting wildlife-associated demands.

We are talking about several types of outdoor products for a surcharge including:

- Backpacks, sleeping bags, tents, hiking boots
- Binoculars, cameras and film
- Backyard wildlife supplies such as birdseed, bird feeders, bird houses
- Field guides: identification guides, wildlife viewing guides
- Recreational vehicles

The surcharge would never exceed 5% of the wholesale (not retail) price. For example, the user fee on a pair of binoculars you buy for \$70 would include a \$1.50 surcharge.

The Conservation vision of the initiative is to keep fish and wildlife common--to take action now to prevent fish and wildlife and their habitats from becoming endangered. The Wildlife Society believes the Fish and Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative will promote comprehensive wildlife management, strengthen traditional wildlife management, and support an ecosystem approach to conservation. It will provide funding for the proactive management of species not hunted or fished, threatened or endangered. This approach can save millions of dollars that are necessary to bring endangered species back from the brink of extinction. The recreation vision is to provide outdoor recreationists with more opportunities to enjoy wildlife as part of an outdoor experience. The education vision is to meet the tremendous interest in wildlife and conservation issues and to cultivate the next generation of conservationists and outdoor recreationists.

We are gaining support to introduce legislation by Spring 1995. The user pay concept of this initiative and the vision for reducing future wildlife conflicts is attractive to many public officials. We are spreading the word of common "cents" for wildlife to users and consumers, the outdoor industry, hiking clubs, conservation groups and the media. We are building state by state coalitions to publicize the need and asking for support. We need to gain congressional support and are starting a letter writing campaign aimed at wildlife-associated recreation equipment manufacturers. **The basic message is "pay a small fee to keep wildlife free."** We believe people want to contribute to wildlife conservation, places to hike, camp and enjoy a wildlife-rich, outdoors experience.

Sections, chapters and student chapters can get involved in the Fish and Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative by using the enclosed materials to:

1. Inform members of the initiative in your newsletters and meetings.
2. Contact regional and state professional societies, agencies and conservation organizations (hunting, fishing, and environmental groups), informing them of the funding initiative and soliciting their support.
3. Coordinate actions with your state fish and wildlife agencies.
4. Inform your congressional delegations, governors, and local officials of how the Fish and Wildlife Funding Initiative can benefit citizens and the natural resources.
5. Identify and contact manufacturers and dealers of outdoor products and urge them to support the initiative. Tell them that consumers are willing to pay a small additional amount for their products if the proceeds go to help fish and wildlife. Emphasize that funds will be allocated for use by the states and not the federal government.

I urge you to appoint a committee soon to plan and implement your section or chapter Fish and Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative activities. The professional wildlife management community has a tremendous leadership opportunity and responsibility to establish a critically needed funding base for species that are not hunted, fished, or endangered. We can thus greatly improve wildlife habitat while enhancing the quality of life for all Americans. Let's make it happen.

If you have questions or need additional information about the Fish and Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative, please call Tom Franklin, (301)897-9770, or E-mail [tws@clark.net](mailto:tws@clark.net).

enclosures: The Wildlife Diversity Initiative Funding Initiative fact sheets  
*Americans and Wildlife Diversity-- Executive Summary*  
*A Bridge to the Future: The Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative*