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## **President Obama's Budget Request for Wildlife Conservation: Not keeping up with the numbers in need**

WASHINGTON – Today, the White House released the President's budget for Fiscal Year 2013, outlining the administration's priorities for the coming fiscal year which begins in October. Passing the Federal budget each year represents one of the primary ways that Congress is able to influence how biodiversity is protected within the United States. The first step in this process occurs when the President releases his budget. Here are some of the highlights:

- The budget proposes spending approximately \$179.7 million for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to implement the Endangered Species Act (ESA), an increase of \$3 million from the current budget year. Within that total, the budget proposes spending \$22 million to list new species under the ESA and to designate critical habitat for those species already protected by the ESA, an increase of \$2 million.
- The budget proposes spending approximately \$170 million for the National Marine Fisheries Service to implement the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the ESA with respect to marine species. This spending request represents a \$6 million decrease from the current budget year.
- The budget would cap the Conservation Reserve Program, a program that pays farmers to leave farm land idle and protect it as wildlife habitat, at 30 million acres. Because of high farm commodity prices, there have been strong incentives to convert idled farmland back into active production. Capping the size of the CRP program may result in lost opportunities to protect important wildlife habitat.
- The budget requests \$450 million for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which is the Federal government's primary source of funding for acquiring new land, a \$115 million increase from the current year's budget level. The LWCF funds are instrumental in reducing habitat fragmentation and securing important wildlife habitat. It is important to note that the LWCF is funded from the royalties the U.S. government receives due to offshore oil and gas activities on the outer continental shelf, not from taxpayer dollars. It represents the principle that money should be returned to protect and restore lands and waters to help offset the damage that offshore oil and gas production tends to cause.

The levels of funding requested for the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service to implement the ESA represents only a small increase in funding compared to the budget levels from 2009, the first year of the Obama Administration. When inflation is taken into account, the amount of money available for protecting threatened and endangered species has actually *decreased* on a year-to-year basis. Likewise, when inflation is taken into account, the amount of money available for listing new species under the ESA remains virtually unchanged since the beginning of the Obama administration. Since the Obama administration took office, an additional 72 species have been listed under the Endangered Species Act, meaning that from a dollars/species perspective, there continues to be less money each year to protect and recover endangered species. Continued shortfalls in funding may have



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significant consequences for protected species throughout the United States such as raising the costs of recovery and increasing the number of land use restrictions that have to be made in the future

In the coming months, the House and the Senate will hold hearings on the Administration's budget request. The Congress's appropriations committees will then introduce legislation in the spring or summer to fund the government in fiscal year 2013 budget. In addition to providing funding to the federal government, appropriation legislation often contains policy guidance and even requirements, known as riders, that impact biodiversity. SCB's policy team continues to track the budget and will keep members advised as noteworthy events unfold.

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The Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) is an international professional organization dedicated to promoting the scientific study of the phenomena that affect the maintenance, loss, and restoration of biological diversity. The Society's membership comprises a wide range of people interested in the conservation and study of biological diversity: resource managers, educators, government and private conservation workers, and students make up the more than 4,000 members world-wide.



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