

FUNDING STATE WILDLIFE AGENCIES

FACTSHEET

Is your state complying with the spirit and the letter of the Pittman Robertson Act?



The Pittman-Robertson Act was enacted in 1937 was intended to promote preservation and restoration of wildlife habitats. Combined with the Sport Fish Restoration Act, it imposes an 11% federal tax on the sale of guns, ammunition, and some sporting goods. Those funds are held by the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service and distributed to state game agencies for *state conservation, wildlife, and outdoor recreation projects*. Funding is based on a formula that includes both the area of the state and its number of licensed hunters. The FWS may only approve funding for state projects that meet the criteria and purposes of the Pittman Robertson Act.

What Are the Criteria?

Specifically, the funds are required to be used to “assure sound conservation policies” “for the benefit of a diverse array of wildlife” “in recognition of the primary role of the States to conserve all wildlife.” Section 1 of the Act concludes with the requirement that “. . .all projects shall conform to the standards fixed by the Secretary of the Interior.”

Public Input Matters!

Currently the public is shut out of the process. Conservation groups depend on FWS to advocate for the resource protection values of the Pittman Robertson Act.

PEER and 27 groups including the Global Indigenous Council, Center for Biological Diversity and The Humane Society of the United States have joined together and are advocating for a public comment period before funds are distributed to states.

<https://peer.org/letter-to-secretary-haaland-pittman-robertson-wolves-09-27-2021-pdf/>

Restricting Funds to States



It is not novel for the government to use federal funding as a way to leverage states to comply with federal policies. Highway Trust Funds have been withheld in some states that failed to comply with the national drinking age or establish speed limits that conform to federal requirements. US foreign aid is regularly predicated with restrictions, requiring countries to make broad reforms to receive funds.

Gold Star for Accountability in the Midwest



The Midwest Regional FWS, lead by USFWS Midwest Regional Director Charlie Wooley, is currently holding back over \$26 million in funds designated for the state of Minnesota. FWS witnessed sloppy and harmful logging in state Wildlife Management Areas and found that state practices were not conforming to the requirements of the Pittman Robertson Act. FWS found that the state had 'lost control of land' acquired or managed with Pittman-Robertson funding and license revenue. The agencies are working together to ensure that the fund will be spent to boost wildlife habitat, hunting, bird-watching, hiking and other outdoor recreation.

Our Most Vulnerable Species Depend on Federal Protection

After decades of slow recovery, **Gray Wolves** are on the verge of being relisted as an endangered species. Rogue states are passing legislation and authorizing wolf hunting in excess of federal goals.

The Pittman Robertson Act, supporting regulations, and FWS policy require FWS to restore, conserve, manage, and enhance wild birds and wild mammals through providing for public use and benefit while also prohibiting FWS from distributing funds for purposes or activities that are not consistent with the Act.

Despite federal bans on hunting the wolves, states continue to allow the wolf populations to be decimated by hunting, with no repercussions from the federal government.

2021	Approximate Number of Gray Wolves Killed	Amount FWS distributed in Federal Funds
Alaska	1500	\$66 million
Idaho	495	\$28 million
Montana	273	\$37 million
Wyoming	47	\$25 million

Slaughter of Yellowstone Pack



25 Yellowstone National Park wolves were killed during the 2021-2022 hunting season in Montana - 20% of the park's vulnerable wolf population. Park Superintendent Sholley was forced to plead with the Governor of Montana in an attempt to stop the state authorized hunt in order to save the remaining wolves.

Federal Regulations and Agency Policy

Federal regulations require FWS to restore, conserve, manage, and enhance wild birds and wild mammals through providing for public use and benefit these resources.

Who is eligible to receive the benefits of the Acts?

50 CFR Subpart B - State Fish and Wildlife Agency Eligibility § 80.10

States acting through their fish and wildlife agencies are eligible for benefits of the Acts only if they pass and maintain legislation that:

- (a) Assents to the provisions of the Acts;
- (b) Ensures the conservation of fish and wildlife;

FWS Policy prohibits states from receiving funds for removal or control of wolves.

FWS Directive Eligibility Standards for Wildlife Restoration, 521 FW 1 § 1.8(H) (Oct. 10, 2001)

1.8 What are ineligible activities? The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act prohibits using Federal Aid funds for certain purposes. ... The following is a summary of ineligible activities: ...

H. Wildlife damage management activities.

- (1) Wildlife damage management activities, including removal or control of predatory, nuisance, or depredating animals; purchase or application of repellants or toxicants; installation of control pipes, culverts, fences, or other barrier or exclusion structures.



What's going on in your region?

Contact PEER with questions or concerns
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