

Teaming With Wildlife

Minnesota



February 17, 2011

The Honorable Chip Cravaack U. S. House of Representatives
508 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

To the Honorable Chip Cravaack:

The nation's premier program for proactively addressing wildlife conservation needs, **The State Wildlife Grants Program**, has been zeroed out in the House of Representatives' proposed Continuing Resolution for the FY11 budget. This disproportionate cut will bring to a halt a program that has been hailed as one of the most important conservation programs ever established. The State Wildlife Grants Program is the primary source of funding for implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans which were developed by each state and territory to identify wildlife conservation priorities for their state.

The overarching goal of these State Wildlife Action Plans is to keep common species common and thus lessen the need for listing species as threatened or endangered. It is much less costly to proactively address the conservation needs of a species than to try to recover a species that has already reached the Endangered Species List. The State Wildlife Grants Program provides the primary source of funding for this proactive work and these funds have been used to leverage additional state and private resources.

Since establishment of the State Wildlife Grants Program in 2001, Minnesota has received about \$1 million annually to address the conservation needs of wildlife species designated in our State Wildlife Action Plan as most in need of conservation. Much has been accomplished with State Wildlife Grants funds over the past ten years including restoration and enhancement of prairie habitat on which numerous rare wildlife species depend, and successful propagation and restoration of native mussel populations. Also, to help protect Minnesota's lakes and the wildlife that depend on them, State Wildlife Grants funds are invested to identify lake shoreline areas that are most important to wildlife. This information is being used by counties and lakeshore associations to restore and protect those critical habitats.

Minnesota's Teaming with Wildlife Coalition fully understands the gravity of the current budget situation and could understand a proportionate budget cut to the State Wildlife Grants program. However, the complete elimination of funding for this highly successful program is unacceptable. Wildlife is a public trust resource and the conservation of these resources should be supported with public funds. Ten years ago the states and territories rose to the challenge of developing Wildlife Action Plans to proactively address the conservation needs wildlife. To eliminate all funding for this cost-

effective conservation program is short-sighted. We respectfully request that funding for this important program be restored to a level that reflects a more proportionate reduction in funding.

Sincerely,

Audubon Minnesota - Mark R. Peterson, Executive Director

Fish and Wildlife Legislative Alliance - Lance Ness, President

Minnesota Chapter of the Society for Conservation Biology – Michael S. Rentz, President

Minnesota Chapter of The Wildlife Society – Michael A. Larson, President

Minnesota Conservation Federation - Gary Botzek, Executive Director

Minnesota Division, Izaak Walton League of America – Curt Leitz, President

Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society - Brian Winter, President

The Nature Conservancy - Isis Stark, Director of Government Relations