

Greetings Senators Boozman and Cotton,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Arkansas Audubon Society, a statewide organization committed to fostering a greater knowledge of the natural history of Arkansas and promoting conservation of natural resources in Arkansas. We would like to urge you to support funding proposed for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program for FY2016 (\$70 million). This program is important for prioritizing research and conservation measures for wildlife and their habitat, especially those species that are endangered or threatened.

In Arkansas, this program has been instrumental in funding research that responds to current and imminent threats to wildlife for which scientists and citizens are concerned. For example, faculty and students at Arkansas State University are leading studies of white-nosed syndrome, a fungal disease that infects and kills our state's diverse bat community. Scientists at The Nature Conservancy are exploring ways to improve water quality in the Illinois River watershed. Arkansas Game and Fish Commission biologists are examining the success of restoration of native habitat from emergent wetlands in the Arkansas River Valley to woodlands in the Boston Mountains. These projects span the many ecoregions of the state that are crucial to supporting the unique biological diversity that help make Arkansas the Natural State. Citizens of Arkansas benefit from these whole ecosystems in the form of ecological and economic services, as well as recreational opportunities.

There are many reasons why the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program is worthy of support. First, the research priorities are specific and based on each state's comprehensive wildlife action plan, which is developed with the input of citizens, scientists, conservationists, and private landowners. Second, it facilitates partnerships across many interest groups, including governmental and non-governmental agencies, as well as scientists (and future scientists) in academia. Finally, there is a requirement for non-federal funds to match the grants provided, so the capacity for funding projects is greatly enhanced through cooperative efforts.

We urge you to (1) submit a programmatic request of \$70 million to the Senate Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations and (2) sign the letter being circulated by Senator Carpo and Senator Whitehouse in support of robust funding for the program in FY2016. Please contact Peter Stegner (4-6142) or Peter_Stegner@crapo.senate.gov in Senator Crapo's office or Julia Wyman (4-0405) or Julia_Wyman@whitehouse.senate.gov in Senator Whitehouse's office to sign the letter.

Thanks for your consideration of this important program and its impact on the wildlife of Arkansas.

Regards,
Dr. Maureen R. McClung
Conservation Chair
Arkansas Audubon Society