



# Rebuilding America's Economy By Investing in Wildlife Conservation

*In response to the global pandemic and resulting economic crisis, we need recovery efforts that put Americans back to work quickly while creating long-term benefits for the nation.*

## **The bipartisan Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H.R.3742) will:**

- ◇ Invest \$1.3 billion annually to implement federally-mandated, but long-underfunded, State Wildlife Action Plans.
- ◇ Invest \$97 million annually in conservation efforts led by Tribal Nations.
- ◇ Create as many as 33,600 direct jobs every year, in fields such as heavy equipment operation, construction, landscaping, horticulture, forestry, engineering, and more.
- ◇ Support somewhere on the order of 100,000 additional jobs annually and will boost the outdoor recreation economy.

## **The bill will also create lasting economic benefits:**

- ◇ Preventing at-risk wildlife from needing the protections of the Endangered Species Act, saving taxpayer dollars.
- ◇ Recovering declining populations of pollinators and insectivores that provide billions in benefits to America's farmers.
- ◇ Helping aquatic species will improve water quality and reduce flooding, while increasing opportunities to enjoy outdoor recreation, like fishing and boating.
- ◇ Restoring wildlife habitats can protect communities by reducing the risks from extreme wildfires and storms.



## CASE STUDY

# Restoring Western forests creates forestry jobs, protects drinking water

Forested headwaters, like those Mokelumne River, of the are the source of much of the West's drinking water, but these watersheds are increasingly at risk from megafires. The Mokelumne River provides water to approximately a million and a half people in California's East Bay, and is home to salmon, steelhead trout, and the Sierra Nevada red fox—but the forests in its watershed are full of the brush and young trees that fuel out-of-control fires.

A 2014 study found that the economic benefits of forest restoration in the Mokelumne River watershed would total between \$126 and \$224 million—at least three times the cost. This labor-intensive work creates good-paying jobs, reduces risk to communities, and protects water supplies while protecting habitat for the Sierra Nevada red fox, one of the rarest mammals in North America.



LEFT: The 2015 Butte fire badly affected the Mokelumne River water shed. Photo, US Forest Service. CENTER: The rare Sierra Nevada red fox would benefit from the prevention of extreme forest fires. Photo, National Park Service. RIGHT: The Mokelumne River is as a National Wild and Scenic River. Photo, Steve Shupe/Flickr.

## CASE STUDY

# A \$400K project reconnected fish habitats while preventing repeated flood damage to a hurricane evacuation route



American eel numbers have declined by half in recent decades, partly due to obstacles to their migration like this perched culvert. Left photo: TNC.

Migrating eels are an important link in the food web and help mussels, a keystone species, reproduce. Top Photo: iStock.

Enlarging the culvert created construction and engineering jobs. Similar opportunities exist across the eastern seaboard. Bottom photo: TNC.

American eels make an incredible migration from the Sargasso Sea near Bermuda to points far inland of the Atlantic. However, in recent decades, American eel numbers have declined by half, in part because many of their migration routes are been cut off. This has impacts upstream: eastern elliptio mussels—which improve water quality and stabilize river beds—use American eels to reproduce.

New Hampshire's Lubberland Creek Preserve is a picturesque coastal saltmarsh, but its historic function as part of a fish migration route was blocked by a tiny road culvert. The elevation of this culvert—a few inches above the creek—made it impossible for migrating fish like eels, shad and herring to swim upstream.

Furthermore, the undersized culvert could not handle large storms, often damaging the road, a hurricane evacuation route. A recent \$400,000 project turned the culvert into a bridge—reconnecting the fish migration route, reducing flooding and increasing public safety.

A 2019 assessment identified dozens of similarly inadequate tidal crossings just in New Hampshire's small coastal zone. There could be thousands of similar opportunities to reduce flooding while reconnecting wildlife habitats across the eastern seaboard.

## CASE STUDY

# Bobwhite quail hunters help butterflies and farmers

The distinctive “bob-WHITE” whistle of the quail was once commonly heard across the farms and fields of eastern and southern states. Unfortunately, this popular game bird has been declining since the 1950s due to the loss of native grasslands. Restoring grasslands on public and private lands would boost quail numbers and provide essential benefits for people and wildlife.

Native prairie plants have deep roots that help absorb stormwater, so restoring grasslands would help reduce floods and improve water quality. Farmers would benefit from the insect control provided by birds as well as pollination by native bees and butterflies.

And more quail hunting could be a big boost for the economy. These hunters would purchase hunting gear at local stores, hire guides, pay landowners for the rights to use the land, stay at hotels, buy gas and more. All told, hunters spend more than \$27 billion on hunting gear and trips and directly support 200,000 jobs nationwide.



LEFT: Bobwhite quail. Photo: leshoward/Flickr. CENTER: Bird hunter, Kansas Tourism. RIGHT: Eastern Meadowlark, Doug Day.

## CASE STUDY

# Restoring Iowa Tall-Grass Prairies Creates Jobs and Improves Water Quality

Iowa's unique Loess Hills were created by centuries of winds depositing soil from the Missouri River Valley into steep, fragile hills along the eastern side of the river. The Loess Hills contain some of the best tallgrass prairie remaining in Iowa—which is particularly important since only 0.01% of Iowa's tallgrass prairie remains.

The Loess Hills prairies are home to a hundred species of butterflies, including the regal fritillary and the monarch, species have declined rapidly in recent decades.

Unfortunately, the Loess Hills prairies are threatened by invasive cedar trees. These trees shade out the wildflowers these butterflies rely on—while increasing the erosion of the fragile hills, which harms water quality in the Missouri River below.

Removing the cedars requires intensive labor—experienced chain-saw crews to cut down the trees, followed by prescribed fire every years. The steep, fragile hills means that the work needs to be done by experienced chainsaw operators.



Removing red cedar trees in Iowa's Loess Hills creates jobs for experienced chainsaw operators and fire managers. These efforts restore habitat for at-risk butterflies while improving water quality in the Missouri River.

Photos: TOP RIGHT, regal fritillary, USFWS. MIDDLE, Workers manually removing cedar trees, Turin WMA. LEFT, Child holding monarch, Fort George G. Meade.