

The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008

Title II – Conservation

What's in the title for wildlife?

- **ENDANGERED SPECIES RECOVERY DEDUCTION.** More than 70 percent of the nation's landscape is in private ownership and nearly two-thirds of endangered and threatened species are found on private lands. Current law has no tax provisions for private landowners engaged in helping to recover threatened or endangered species. The bill establishes a tax deduction for the cost of actions to implement site-specific management measures included in recovery plans under the Endangered Species Act. This provision is effective for expenditures paid or incurred after December 31, 2008.
- **EXTENDING THE DEDUCTION FOR CONSERVATION EASEMENTS:** More than 10 million acres of conservation easements are held by land trusts nationwide, many of them donated. The charitable tax deduction for conservation easements has proven to be a valuable incentive for making such gifts and conserving valuable land. The provision in the tax title of the bill extends the deduction for two years.
- **VITAL TRANSITION INCENTIVES IN GRP:** Strong crop prices have created economic incentives to put into crop production land that has previously been grazing land or land enrolled in CRP. In this bill the priority is placed on enrolling into the GRP, land that is currently in contracts set to expire under CRP, if the land is eligible and under significant threat of conversion to uses other than grazing.
- **NEW WILDLIFE INITIATIVE IN THE CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM:** CRP, one of the nation's core conservation programs for wildlife habitat, is expanded to include a new initiative to thin CRP acres planted to trees to improve wildlife benefits. This important cost share initiative will help millions of acres covered by this program to improve the habitat already in the program.
- **EXPANDED USE OF PILOT PROGRAM FOR ENROLLING WETLAND AND BUFFER ACREAGE IN CONSERVATION RESERVE IMPROVES WILDLIFE BENEFITS:** The CRP Wetlands Pilot Program is expanded to include former catfish pond acreage, constructed wetlands to reduce nutrient runoff, and flooded farmland. Enrolling more acres of forest land, especially in the South, more acres in the prairie pothole region using beneficial upland to wetland ratios of land enrolled, and more acres for better water quality will all contribute to improved wildlife habitat across the nation.

- **CRITICAL WATERFOWL HABITAT PROTECTED WITH WETLAND RESERVE PROGRAM:** The WRP provides \$1.3 billion in new funding for a total enrollment of over three million acres. This program provides critical habitat for waterfowl and wildlife alike. This provision will grow the program by about 33 percent over its current size. The WRP is modified to strengthened wildlife benefits, such as a provision that allows for mowing of WRP land “to meet the needs of specific wildlife species” so that WRP acres to be better maintained for wildlife habitat for particular species – such as shorebirds – that would benefit from less vegetative cover.
- **CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM:** This working lands program will address wildlife needs at the local level. Priorities will be set at the local level to address local resource needs, including local wildlife priorities. The new CSP will continue to provide substantial wildlife benefits through multiple resource conservation efforts and long-term conservation activities.
- **THE WILDLIFE HABITAT INCENTIVES PROGRAM ENCOURAGES BENEFICIAL HABITAT FOR WILDLIFE:** WHIP is reauthorized and better focused on private and tribal agricultural land and nonindustrial private forestland. The bill better assists long-term projects by increasing the amount of money that can be spent on projects lasting over 15 years.
- **INCREASES SUPPORT FOR POLLINATOR HABITAT:** In all programs, The Secretary will now have the authority to encourage pollinator habitat for native and managed pollinators in all conservation programs and pollinator habitat is authorized for incentive payments under EQIP.
- **NEW VOLUNTARY PUBLIC ACCESS PROGRAM:** The Voluntary Public Access program provides \$50 million from 2009 through 2012 for grants to state programs that compensate landowners for allowing public access to their land for outdoor wildlife-related activities such as hunting and bird watching.
- **NEW COOPERATIVE CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS INITIATIVE OFFERS OPPORTUNITY FOR WILDLIFE HABITAT:** Six percent of conservation programs including CSP, WHIP, and EQIP is set aside for cooperative conservation partnerships, allowing states and local governments, and nonprofit groups, to utilize program resources to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner. This program represents a significant opportunity for the wildlife community to address habitat needs through the use of multiple conservation programs.