



Endangered Species Act (ESA) Modernization

NACD supports local management of habitat and species, rather than a top-down approach. Legislation is needed to improve and modernize the ESA to reflect current scientific wildlife management principles. ESA recovery plans need to have local public involvement from the outset in order to provide clearly defined goals, objectives, and alternative recovery options. Stakeholders have shown that through proactive, collaborative, voluntary, locally-led conservation practices, meaningful achievements can be made on both the land and in species recovery. The New England Cottontail, Greater Sage Grouse, and Lesser Prairie-Chicken are all recent successes.

Invasive Species Management

The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) conducts critical management activities to mitigate damages caused by invasive species like feral swine. NACD encourages full funding both for APHIS Wildlife Services and the national feral swine control program. NRCS's current feral swine pilot project should be expanded.

NACD supports the use of native plant and seed species in recovery efforts and restoration projects and urges the Departments of Agriculture and Interior to develop and disseminate geographically specific lists of "recommendations on what to plant and what not to plant" to help guide recovery and restoration efforts and to avoid using invasive species.

Forest Health

Without a wildfire funding change, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) will not be able to adequately manage our federal forests and address the environmental stressors that have led to an increase in tree mortality and pest problems. USFS currently spends just under 60% of its entire budget on wildfire suppression.

This forced budget strain harms our nation's forests and grasslands. Funding that was originally allocated for pre-suppression and other preventative efforts is reallocated to float the suppression budget as wildfire seasons have only continued to grow in intensity. The result has been an overall decrease in forest health, an increase in tree mortality, pest infestations in areas that historically have had none, deteriorated land, and an increase in erosion.

USFS pre-suppression funding needs to be used for its intended use. Our forests cannot continue to pay the price for preventative programs inability to function due to fire borrowing.

Wild Horse and Burro Management

The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 as amended directs U.S. federal agencies to manage wild herds to "maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationship" on herd management areas (HMAs). BLM scientists have established appropriate management levels (AML) to achieve that balance. Unfortunately, current management efforts including limited gathers, fertility control via PZP, adoptions, and sales have failed to control the ever-increasing horse and burro population, which continues to strain the natural resource capabilities of these lands beyond their carrying capacity resulting in rangelands that in certain areas are already unrecoverable.

NACD urges Congress to support the removal of the Interior Appropriations language that currently prevents the BLM from using all the tools provided to it under the Act to bring down the horse and burro population to AML.