



## Overview

State wildlife agencies are severely underfunded. Traditional sources of revenue including hunting and fishing license sales and federal taxes on guns and ammunition are no longer sufficient for covering the demands of modern wildlife management including recovering threatened and endangered species and managing wildlife-based recreation for all user groups. If passed, the [Recovering America's Wildlife Act \(RAWA\)](#) will provide wildlife agencies with \$1.3 billion annually, but more consistent funding sources will still be needed to meet RAWA's match requirements and the growing duties of wildlife management.

## KEY POINTS

- State wildlife agencies receive **60%** of their funding from sources tied to hunting and fishing, yet only 4% of the public hunts and 17% engages in fishing. By contrast, **36%** of the U.S. public engages in wildlife watching.
- Wildlife watching generates over **\$30 billion** per year currently, yet virtually no revenue from this activity goes back into conservation as is the case for hunting and fishing.
- Around **10%** of state wildlife agency spending goes to the conservation of species that are not hunted or fished, even though these species make up approximately 98% of wildlife. Funding for these species also generally comes from voluntary sources that are inconsistent from year to year, such as fundraisers and sales of special license plates.

## Other Resources

- **US Fish and Wildlife Service:** [Overview](#) of the history/funding of state wildlife agencies
- **National Wildlife Federation:** (1) [Mechanisms and case studies](#) for state-level wildlife funding and (2) [toolkit](#) on securing wildlife funding

## Funding Options

- **General Fund Allocation:** [South Carolina](#) is one of few states whose Department of Natural Resources receives a consistent, annual allocation from the state General Fund. This allocation covers around a [quarter](#) of the agency's budget. States can also make one-time General Fund allocations to their wildlife agency. For example, in 2019, [Oregon](#) approved a one-time General Fund allocation of \$1 million to a temporary fund that bolstered state wildlife management and outdoor access, vis a vis matching fund contributions.
- **Outdoor Gear Tax:** [Texas](#), [Virginia](#), and [Georgia](#) recently passed bills that reallocate a portion of their outdoor gear tax towards funds for wildlife conservation. All three states' taxes encompass gear for non-hunting and fishing activities, such as hiking, camping, and water sports.
- **General Sales Tax:** States that have created a new sales tax for wildlife conservation include [Missouri](#), [Arkansas](#), and [Minnesota](#). Note that this option may not be possible in states with constitutional restrictions on creating new taxes.
- **Real Estate Transfer Tax:** Most states levy a tax on the transfer of real estate and property between owners. [Florida](#) and [South Carolina](#) both use revenue from their real estate transfer tax to support wildlife conservation.
- **Allocating Money From A Tax Increase:** [Iowa](#) voters approved a constitutional amendment in 2010 that created a Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund to be funded with revenue from the next state sales tax increase. While the Fund has been created, the sales tax allocation has not yet been approved.
- **Bond Programs:** [Nevada](#) has a \$218 million bond program slated for acquiring wildlife habitat and enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities. [West Virginia](#) also authorizes counties to issue bonds for land acquisition for the benefit of wildlife habitat.
- **Lottery Revenue:** States with a dedicated lottery fund can use this revenue to support wildlife conservation. Examples include [Arizona](#), [Colorado](#), [Maine](#), and [Oregon](#).
- **Severance Taxes:** [Many states](#) have a severance tax on resource extraction, especially for fossil fuels and minerals. Several use some of the revenue to fund conservation efforts. For example, [Colorado](#) uses some severance tax revenue for water conservation.
- **Voluntary Programs:** Also known as the "bake sale" approach, some states provide state residents with a variety of voluntary options for making donations to wildlife conservation. These include special license plates ([Texas](#)), income tax check-offs ([Connecticut](#)), or charities and fundraisers ([Georgia](#)).