



BRIEFING

PRIORITIES FOR THE 2021 FEDERAL ELECTION

Conservation Funding

Opportunity

Allocate a greater proportion of general revenue to fish and wildlife conservation as an investment in healthy environments and strong natural resource economies. Face the growing demand for investment by investigating new models that will generate dedicated and permanent funding to help finance sustainable government management programs and grassroots efforts into the future.

Responsibility

Department of Finance Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Treasury Board of Canada

Achievability

The conservation of our fish and wildlife resources is an important issue to Canadians; so is a strong economy. The next government can achieve environmental priorities while stimulating important sustainable resource use economies. The government can invest financial resources now while assessing sound long-term conservation financing policies to fully capitalize on potential social, economic, and political returns.

Background

- In 2018, over 5.685 million Canadians participated in hunting, fishing, trapping, or shooting sports, resulting in:
 - \$18.9 billion in direct spending in Canada;
 - \$13.2 billion to Canada's gross domestic product – 0.6% of the Canadian economy;
 - Support for nearly 107,000 Canadian jobs, and labour income estimated at \$6.4 billion; and
 - \$6.1 billion in federal and provincial government revenues.
- These activities and the associated economies rely on a healthy environment.
- Fish and wildlife conservation efforts are currently largely funded by anglers, hunters, and trappers through licence fees.
- The number of people engaged in these activities is declining. This creates a challenge in maintaining sustainable funding for fish and wildlife management as revenues are predicted to decline at both the provincial and federal levels.
- The sustainable management of Canada's natural resources requires a wide variety of activities: monitoring of fish and wildlife populations, policy development, quota setting, scientific research and enforcement, to name a few.
- The costs for programs to conserve fish and wildlife already exceed available funding - fish and wildlife conservation and management are rarely prioritized by the government.
- The 2017 National Conservation Summit identified the need to develop new tools for financing conservation actions as one of the Summit's four main themes.
- The Government of Canada currently invests in conservation by allocating:
 - General tax revenue to federal departments responsible for conservation activities

- For example, programs such as the former Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program that offer grants to organizations and groups carrying out on-the-ground conservation activities.
 - Revenue from fishing, hunting, and trapping licence fees to relevant government actions.
 - The fees from the Migratory Game Bird Hunting Permit and Canadian Wildlife Habitat Conservation Stamp that waterfowl hunters must purchase go directly to the Canadian Wildlife Service (ECCC) to manage migratory birds and to Wildlife Habitat Canada which funds habitat restoration and protection projects across the country, respectively. Since 1985, proceeds from the sale of the Wildlife Conservation Habitat Stamp have generated over \$55 million for habitat conservation efforts.
 - Required compensation/offset/penalty funding to Environmental Damages Fund.
- There are existing federal revenue streams (e.g., federal gas tax, carbon pricing proceeds) collected from boaters, anglers, hunters, and trappers that are potential sources of conservation funding.
- There are numerous examples of economic policy tools used outside of Canada to achieve conservation goals and to incentivize conservation action or dissuade negative impacts. They include market-based instruments, taxes, fees and levies, payments, and removal of subsidies for harmful activities.
- For example, the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act in the United States require manufacturers, producers, and importers to pay an excise tax on shooting, archery, and angling equipment. Recreational boaters also contribute through fuel and electric motor taxes.
 - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administers the associated Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program, which ensures a permanent, dedicated source of conservation funding.
 - More than \$20.2 billion has been collected and distributed to state agencies for fish and wildlife management, species and habitat protection, land acquisition, scientific study, population monitoring, education programs and access for hunting, fishing and boating since enactment.

Recipient state wildlife agencies have matched these funds with approximately \$6.7 billion, primarily through hunting and fishing licence revenues.

Proposed Solutions

- Allocate more general revenue to fish and wildlife conservation activities. This could be achieved in an immediate and direct way by making a funding investment:
 - To match migratory bird hunting permit contributions that would go directly back into migratory bird conservation management actions.
 - Invest in fish and wildlife enhancement funding programs that would support grassroots conservation organizations delivering on-the-ground projects that benefit fish and wildlife.
 - Apportion some of the federal gas tax or carbon pricing proceeds to support conservation work like invasive species prevention or nature-based climate change mitigation.
- Reduce administrative burden, limitations on eligible expenses (e.g. planning), constraints on stacking of government funding, and offer more longer-term commitments for existing and new federal fish and wildlife funding programs.
- Develop standards and protocols for measuring and evaluating the value of natural capital assets and the impact of projects to ensure compensation and offset programs (e.g. Environmental Damages Fund) are appropriately assessing costs to industry.
- Establish an initiative that would fully assess models for conservation financing that could be applied in Canada. This task could be undertaken by the Hunting and Angling Advisory Panel (see. Promotion priority for more details).
- Invest in promotion of fishing, hunting, and trapping as important sustainable development activities that also contribute to financing conservation activities (see Promotion priority for more details).

Benefits

Canada's fish and wildlife provide ecological, cultural, recreational, and economic benefits to all Canadians, and are key components of our country's rich biodiversity. The federal government has an important role in ensuring

that our natural resources are managed sustainably for the public good. Anglers, hunters, and trappers have proven their willingness to invest through direct financial contributions and on-the-ground conservation work. All Canadians benefit from healthy fish and wildlife populations and the conservation efforts of anglers, hunters, and trappers.