



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Director's Office
6060 Broadway • Denver, CO 80216

To: Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission
From: Acting Director Laura Clellan
Date: 9 December 2025
Subject: 2026 Species Conservation Trust Fund Eligibility List Approval

Introduction

The native Species Conservation Trust Fund (SCTF) was created in 1998, pursuant to HB98-1006 (codified at section 24-33-111, C.R.S. (2014)). After its initial creation, the General Assembly expanded the SCTF to cover studies and programs within Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) dedicated to recovering species listed as threatened and endangered under state law; recovering and protecting federal candidate species; conducting scientific studies related to the listing or delisting of any species; and evaluating genetic, habitat, and declining species baseline data.

Additional Information

The Act specifically requires that funding be distributed for the following purposes:

1. Cooperative agreements, recovery programs, and other programs that are designed to meet obligations arising under the federal "Endangered Species Act of 1973" and that provide regulatory certainty.
2. Studies and programs established or approved by CPW and the Executive Director of the DNR regarding:
 - (a) Species placed on the state endangered or threatened list;
 - (b) Candidate species, in order to assist in the recovery or protection of the species, to avoid listing of the species; and
 - (c) Scientific research relating to listing or delisting any species.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Commission: (1) concur with the DNR Executive Director's proposed recommendations to the General Assembly to approve a total expenditure of up to \$5 million from the Species Conservation Trust Fund (SCTF) for FY 2026-27, including up to \$2.5 million for the CPW priorities outlined herein; and (2) forward a



Laura Clellan, Acting Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Parks and Wildlife Commission: Richard Reading, Chair · James 'Jay' Tutchton, Vice-Chair · Eden Vardy, Secretary · Jessica Beaulieu · Frances Silva Blayney · John Emerick · Tai Jacober · Dallas May · Jack Murphy · Gabriel Otero

statement of concurrence to the Colorado Water Conservation Board.

Background:

The Species Conservation Trust Fund is supported by infusions of revenue from the Severance Tax Operational Fund (Operational Fund). Under current law, the SCTF is authorized to receive revenue via an annual appropriation of up to \$5 million, approved each year by the General Assembly through the Long Bill. Based on the September 2025 revenue forecasts from Legislative Council Staff and the Governor's Office of State Planning and Budgeting, the Department anticipates that there will be sufficient severance tax revenue to support the SCTF at the \$5 million level through the forecast period (FY 2027-28).

FY 2026-27 Outlook:

The FY 2025-26 Long Bill (S.B. 25-206) included an appropriation of \$5 million from the Operational Fund to the SCTF effective July 1, 2025. The revenue from this appropriation is now available in the SCTF and requires legislative authorization during the 2026 session for Commission- and Board-approved priorities and projects that will begin in FY 2026-27.

The Governor's FY2026-27 budget request suggests sweeping revenues from the Severance Tax Operational Fund. The proposal will sweep \$4.1 million of revenue from the Severance Tax Operational Fund to the General Fund in FY 2025-26 and an additional sweep of \$2.5 million of revenue in FY 2026-27. This proposal does not impact the annual budget or efforts funded by the SCTF in FY 2025-26 or FY 2026-27.

FY 2026-27 Recommended Projects

The recommended Parks and Wildlife projects for FY 26-27 are summarized below.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife Projects Total Request: \$2,500,000

1. Native Terrestrial Wildlife Conservation (up to \$1,250,000)

- Efficacy and Impacts of New and Existing Insecticides Used in Plague Management
- Black Swift Statewide Trend Assessment and Monitoring
- Golden Eagle Helicopter Surveys in Western Colorado
- Bird Interactions with Utility-scale Solar Energy
- Developing a Statewide Pollinator Monitoring Program
- Evaluating Talus-roosting Western Bat Assemblages for White-nose Syndrome Surveillance
- Ex-situ Conservation Strategy for Colorado's Rare Plants
- Laboratory and Field Support for Statewide Plague Management and Monitoring
- Statewide Monitoring for Sensitive Forest Carnivores
- Is Prey Abundance Limiting Canada Lynx

2. Native Aquatic Wildlife Conservation (up to \$1,250,000)

- Expansion of genomic libraries to support the understanding of the status and distribution of aquatic invertebrates in Colorado
- Estimating occupancy and persistence of Wood Frogs (*Lithobates sylvaticus*) in Colorado
- Purchase of an ultra-high-performance liquid chromatograph to improve water quality standards for the protection of threatened and endangered aquatic species
- Assessing the ecological impact of urban runoff pollutants on wetland habitats and native aquatic species
- Toll Ranch Greenback Cutthroat Fish Screen to prevent non-native salmonids from entering the future greenback brood pond
- Modernizing Boreal Toad husbandry facilities for more efficient rearing of this native amphibian
- Development of Trojan Male Mosquitofish to protect native aquatic species by controlling this invasive species