



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Director's Office
6060 Broadway
Denver, CO 80216
P 303.297.1192

TO: Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission
FROM: Director Jeff Davis
DATE: December 16, 2024
SUBJECT: 2025 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.



Jeff Davis, Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Parks and Wildlife Commission: Dallas May, Chair · Richard Reading, Vice-Chair · Karen Bailey, Secretary · Jessica Beaulieu
Marie Haskett · Tai Jacober · Jack Murphy · Gabriel Otero · Murphy Robinson · James Jay Tutchton · Eden Vardy

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 2025-26, including up to \$2.5 million for the CPW priorities outlined herein; and (2) forward a statement of concurrence to the Colorado Water Conservation Board.

Background:

The Species Conservation Trust Fund is traditionally supported by infusions of revenue from the Severance Tax Operational Fund (Operational Fund). Under current law, the SCTF is authorized to receive infusions of revenue via an annual appropriation of up to \$5 million, approved each year by the General Assembly through the Long Bill. The SCTF is also currently protected by the 200% statutory reserve requirement for the Operational Fund. When the reserve is full, which it is currently, there is a sufficient balance in the Operational Fund to sustain programs through two full years without disruption in the event of a severe severance tax revenue downturn. Pursuant to Section 24-33-111 (3)(a), C.R.S., annual legislation is still required to secure the required authorization of the species conservation project eligibility list.

FY 2025-26 Outlook:

The FY2024-25 Long Bill (H.B. 24-1430) included an appropriation of \$5 million from the Operational Fund to the SCTF effective July 1, 2024. The revenue from this appropriation is now available in the SCTF and requires legislative authorization during the 2025 session for Commission- and Board-approved priorities and projects that will begin in FY 2025-26.

The Governor's FY2025-26 budget request changes the source of revenue for three of DNR's programs traditionally funded with severance tax, including the SCTF, to transfers from the General Fund. This proposed change in revenue source for the SCTF does not change the requested appropriation amount, which remains at \$5 million. It also does not affect funding for projects that have already been approved in prior SCTF legislation.



Jeff Davis, Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Parks and Wildlife Commission: Dallas May, Chair · Richard Reading, Vice-Chair · Karen Bailey, Secretary · Jessica Beaulieu
Marie Haskett · Tai Jacober · Jack Murphy · Gabriel Otero · Murphy Robinson · James Jay Tutchton · Eden Vardy

In the event the General Assembly does not approve the proposed revenue source change and chooses to continue to use Operational Fund revenue for the SCTF, the Department anticipates that there will be sufficient severance tax revenue to support the SCTF at the requested \$5 million level through the forecast period (FY 2026-27) without requiring any of the funds currently held in the Operational Fund reserve.

FY 2025-26 Recommended Projects

The recommended Parks and Wildlife projects for FY 25-26 are summarized below.

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

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

- Understanding White-nose Syndrome Pathogen Dynamics in Colorado
- Drone based bait distribution equipment to support plague management in Colorado
- Identifying landscapes that facilitate Canada lynx reproduction
- Assessment of Inbreeding in Canada Lynx in Colorado 25 Years Post Reintroduction
- Estimates and determinants of white-tailed ptarmigan abundance, survival, breeding effort, and breeding success
- Assessing High-Priority Bird Species Interactions with Utility-Scale Solar Energy
- Colorado black rail genomics and migratory connectivity
- Brown-capped rosy-finch surveys

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

- Construction of a native Cutthroat Trout isolation facility at the Rifle Falls hatchery
- Modernization of the Mt. Ouray hatchery water supply for native Cutthroat Trout
- Evaluate the impacts of road salts on Cutthroat Trout and Boreal Toad populations
- Utilize cutting-edge genomic techniques to inform conservation and management actions of Northern Leopard Frogs in Colorado
- Evaluate winter survival, condition, and diet of native Great Plains fishes
- Determine the genetic population structure of Colorado Roundtail Chub populations



Jeff Davis, Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Parks and Wildlife Commission: Dallas May, Chair · Richard Reading, Vice-Chair · Karen Bailey, Secretary · Jessica Beaulieu
Marie Haskett · Tai Jacober · Jack Murphy · Gabriel Otero · Murphy Robinson · James Jay Tutchton · Eden Vardy

- Inventory and augment Native Species Populations in Western Colorado
- Improve habitat for Native Cutthroat Trout



Jeff Davis, Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Parks and Wildlife Commission: Dallas May, Chair · Richard Reading, Vice-Chair · Karen Bailey, Secretary · Jessica Beaulieu
Marie Haskett · Tai Jacober · Jack Murphy · Gabriel Otero · Murphy Robinson · James Jay Tutchton · Eden Vardy