



Briefing Statement

January 14, 2013

Subject: Wildlife Diversity Program Funding

Mission

The Wildlife Diversity Program serves Idaho by ensuring that wildlife, fish, and plant populations are preserved, protected, perpetuated, and managed to provide long-term, stable populations of native species for benefit by all residents and visitors.

Vision

Guided by the Idaho Fish and Game Commission, the Wildlife Diversity Program shall work with Idaho residents and conservation partners to maintain natural, self-sustaining populations of all native wildlife, fish, and plants to ensure a rich outdoor heritage for all generations.

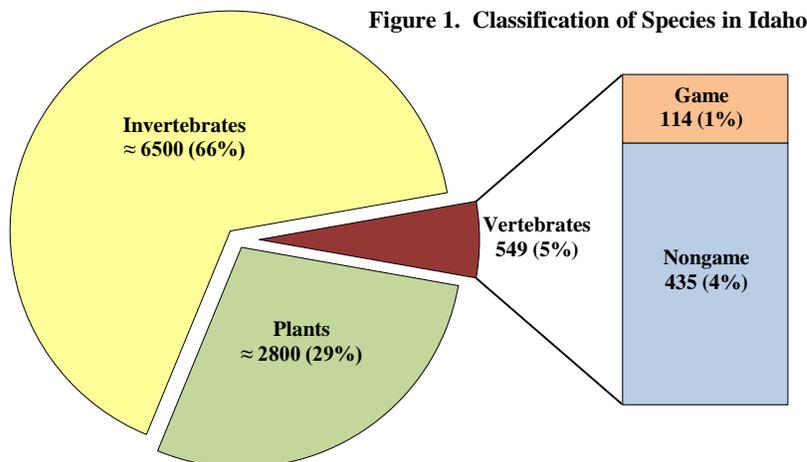
The Compass

The Department's 15-year strategic plan, *The Compass*, was approved by the Idaho Fish and Game Commission in 2005 and includes the following four overarching goals:

- Sustain Idaho's fish and wildlife and the habitats upon which they depend
- Meet the demand for fish and wildlife recreation
- Improve public understanding of and involvement in fish and wildlife management
- Enhance the capability of the Department to manage fish and wildlife and serve the public

Core Responsibility

The Department has statutory responsibility for approximately 10,000 species of fish, wildlife, and plants. Of these, about 550 are vertebrate animals, 80% of which are classified as "nongame" and are not hunted, fished, or trapped (Fig. 1).



Program Emphasis:

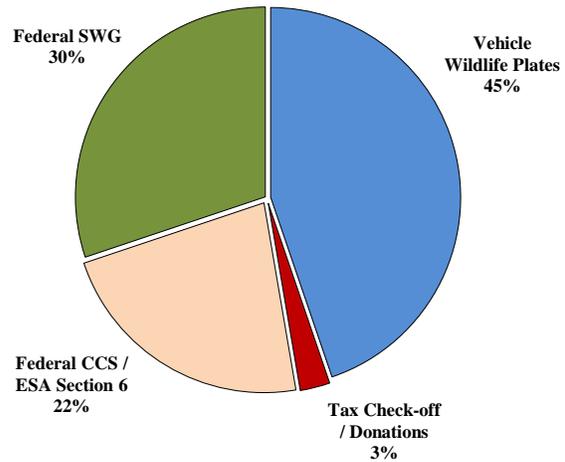
- ❖ 200+ wildlife species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) identified in Idaho's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP)
- ❖ 100+ rare, sensitive, or federally listed (T&E) native plants

The Wildlife Diversity Program's core responsibility is to implement those elements of *The Compass* that relate to public trust "nongame" wildlife and rare native plants. In particular, conservation, education, research, and management projects focus on the highest priority "Species of Greatest Conservation Need" identified in Idaho's State Wildlife Action Plan. State authority for management of native fish, wildlife, and plants is thus maintained through proactive actions designed to prevent future endangered species listings under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Budget & Funding

The Wildlife Diversity Program operates on an annual budget of approximately \$2M and receives zero funding from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. Instead, program revenue comes primarily from the sale of specialty wildlife vehicle license plates (i.e., bluebird, elk, and cutthroat trout), and voluntary state income tax check-offs and other donations. Income from these sources is then used to leverage matching federal funds through State Wildlife Grants and Challenge Cost Share / ESA Section 6 programs. Approximately half of the program's budget is comprised of state/private fund sources with the other half coming from Congressionally appropriated federal dollars (SWG) or competitive federal funding opportunities (CCS, ESA Section 6) (Fig. 2).

Figure 2.
WDP funding by revenue source, FY12



Trends, Challenges & Needs

Annual revenue to the Wildlife Diversity Program has declined by approximately 10% per year in three of the last four fiscal years (Fig. 3). As federal funding fluctuates annually in unpredictable ways, dedicated sources of state revenue (vehicle wildlife plates and tax check-offs) have declined consistently each year for the last six fiscal years. Appropriated annually by Congress, State Wildlife Grants constitute 30% of the program's annual budget (Fig. 2) and are especially vulnerable to budget cuts or complete elimination.

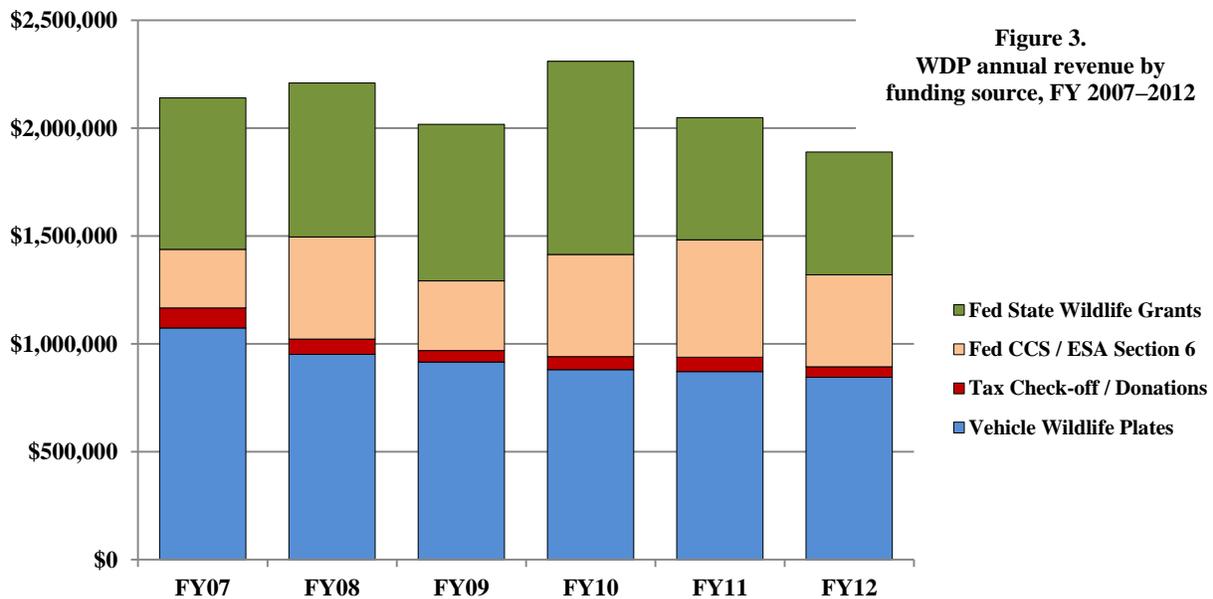


Figure 3.
WDP annual revenue by funding source, FY 2007–2012

To reduce reliance on federal funding, strengthen the program to provide better public services, and fulfill the Department's mission, new mechanisms for generating dedicated revenue are needed. With increased income from more stable sources, the Wildlife Diversity Program has enormous potential for growth and expansion in areas of critical need, such as: at-risk species conservation; wildlife viewing; citizen science; and conservation education, research, and management. Investing proactively in conservation actions designed to benefit sensitive species will prevent future ESA listings and continue to provide healthy populations of native fish, wildlife, and plants to ensure a rich outdoor heritage for generations to come.