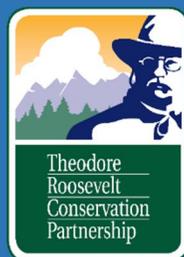




RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE TRUMP TRANSITION TEAM



Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

About the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Established in 2002, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is a coalition-building organization that seeks to unite and amplify the voices of sportsmen and women around important federal issues that affect fish and wildlife habitat, funding for conservation programs, and sportsmen's access.

We work with 50 diverse partner organizations and countless other allies, grassroots supporters, and businesses on the issues most important to hunters and anglers— including management of America's public lands, forests, wetlands, and saltwater fisheries, as well as policy and funding for private lands conservation, clean water initiatives, drought solutions, and restoration on the Gulf Coast. The TRCP is a voice for sportsmen and women in Washington, D.C., and around the country.

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The TRCP's Mission: Guarantee All Americans Quality Places to Hunt and Fish

Inspired by the legacy and vision of Theodore Roosevelt, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP) seeks to unite and amplify the voices of all hunters and anglers around conservation and sportsmen's access.

Sportsmen have been stewards of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation for more than a century. The money we spend on tags, licenses, and gear fuels a growing sector of the U.S. economy and gives our community leverage to drive conservation policy in America. Today, sportsmen's dollars fund a conservation system that is the envy of the world. As a united force, we can ensure that our treasured wild game and habitat remain intact for the next generation to enjoy.

With 50 formal partner organizations, the TRCP unites the voices of more than 55,000 individual grassroots members and more than 1,500 state and local sportsmen's organizations that represent millions of conservationists. We use sound science and an extensive grassroots and communications network to ensure that America's natural resources are protected for future generations. The TRCP and its partners are working together to preserve the traditions of hunting and fishing by:

- Conserving and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat;
- Seeking increased funding for fish and wildlife conservation programs; and
- Increasing public access to quality hunting and fishing opportunities.

The TRCP worked with its Policy Council members and Board of Directors to develop a set of policy and funding transition recommendations for the incoming Trump Administration. Our top recommendations include the following:

Top Priorities for 2017

- Conservation Funding
- Farm Bill
- Infrastructure & the Outdoor Economy
- Magnuson-Stevens Act Reauthorization
- Public Lands Access
- Sage Grouse

TRCP Recommendations to the Trump Transition Team

INFRASTRUCTURE

Issue Overview: Thirty-seven million Americans hunt and fish, spending \$58 billion annually. Recreational activities such as hunting and fishing are vital everyday activities for communities, particularly in rural areas, that rely on these economic generators. America's natural resources form the infrastructure of a robust outdoor recreation economy. According to a 2012 report by the [Outdoor Industry Association](#), this economy drives \$646 billion in annual direct consumer spending and supports more than 6 million jobs. Federal public lands in particular play a crucial role in upholding this economic engine, sustaining rural communities and the places where sportsmen from across the country hunt and fish. An Administration-led, comprehensive Infrastructure Package would provide an opportunity to identify and ensure long-term funding for a range of Department of Interior (DOI), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Department of Transportation infrastructure needs. We encourage the Trump Administration and its departmental and agency leadership to consider the importance of funding for conservation and natural infrastructure in any broader infrastructure package. Specifically, consideration should be given to key priorities to sustain our nation's public lands and support the outdoor economy including 1) federal public lands access, management and restoration; 2) provisions such as the wildfire funding fix and a permanent solution for the Land and Water Conservation Fund; and 3) addressing maintenance backlogs within our public lands system including facilities, roads, bridges and trails; and, 4) funding for programs supporting natural infrastructure solutions (including wetlands conservation) and collaborative on-the-ground partnership programs.

- **Policy Recommendations**

- *Issue a Public Access Commitment for America's Public Lands. This would include a requirement that prioritizes public access to the nation's public lands for hunting, fishing and other forms of wildlife-dependent recreation.*
- *Focus on job growth within the outdoor economy and the importance of the nation's public lands to this growth.*
- *Develop a priority system and funding stream for addressing the multi-billion dollar maintenance backlog and make the necessary improvements to facilities, roads, bridges and trails within our national network of public lands.*
- *Support the suite of programs critical to fish and wildlife conservation: Pittman-Robertson; Dingell-Johnson; North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA); National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP); Federal Land Transaction and Facilitation Act (FLTFA); National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF); and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Partners Program.*
- *Enhance public access and public facilities by reauthorizing and providing strong annual funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and ensure a percentage of this funding is directed toward public access projects.*
- *Reissue President George H.W. Bush's commitment to No Net Loss of Wetlands, and focus on voluntary incentives for wetland conservation, including ramping up Farm Bill conservation programs.*
- *Support new authorities for natural infrastructure solutions in the Water Resources Development Act and funding for mitigation measures that reduce wildlife-transportation issues in the next Highway Bill reauthorization.*
- *Issuance of a recommitment to the Everglades Restoration Project and restoration of the Mississippi River Delta through an 8-year timeframe goal to complete major restoration milestones in these important landscapes.*

TRCP Recommendations for the Trump Transition Team

INFRASTRUCTURE

Everglades Restoration, South Florida Water Quality

Issue Overview: The Everglades and associated and adjacent coastal estuaries are of vital importance to recreational anglers and hunters. Florida is home to more sportfishing activity than any other state and also hosts a wide range of hunting and boating activities. Saltwater fishing alone is enjoyed by nearly 2.4 million Floridians and visitors each year, creating almost 115,000 jobs and nearly \$8 billion in economic activity. Poor water quality and loss of habitat, especially in south Florida in the Lake Okeechobee watershed and the Everglades are threatening much of that cultural and economic activity. The TRCP and the sportfishing and conservation community are united in their efforts to expedite federal and state efforts to improve the Lake Okeechobee watershed and restore critical water flows into the Everglades and Florida Bay. This restoration focuses on construction of projects that move water south from Lake Okeechobee into the Everglades rather than inundating estuaries on the Gulf and Atlantic coasts with excess freshwater flows; however, the timeframe has been extended too long. Restoration projects that have already been identified to allow water to move from north to south into the Everglades must be expedited, including improving water storage capabilities north of Lake Okeechobee and addressing excessive nutrients entering the watershed from municipalities and agricultural operations.

First 100 Days:

Issue Overview: The House and Senate both passed Water Resource Development Act (WRDA) legislation in 2016 but the bills have yet to be conferenced and may not be before the end of the current Congress. Both bills contained authorization for the \$1.9 billion Central Everglades Planning Project, essential to restoring historic water flows into the Everglades and minimizing negative impacts of storm water runoff in the Caloosahatchee and St Lucie River watersheds. Administrative support for a WRDA including that authorization is essential to Everglades restoration efforts. Authorization of construction for the Central Everglades Planning Project must include appropriation of federal funds for construction to be completed. Construction can begin with the State of Florida using funds on hand as match for federal expenditures, but federal funds must be appropriated for project completion.

- **Policy Recommendations**
 - *Sign into law a Water Resources Development Act that includes authorization of the Central Everglades Planning Project.*
 - *Support a strong FY2018 Army Corps of Engineers' funding level for the Central Everglades Planning Project.*
 - *Issuance of a recommitment to the Everglades Restoration Project through an 8-year timeframe goal to complete major restoration milestones in this important landscape.*

By Year 1:

Issue Overview: The Herbert Hoover Dike is the primary water control structure on Lake Okeechobee and is responsible for protecting communities from flood waters from the lake. The dike is aging and in disrepair, forcing the Army Corps of Engineers and South Florida Water Management District to make emergency large-volume freshwater releases from Lake Okeechobee to the east and west to lower lake levels and avoid compromising the integrity of the structure. While repairs are underway, a completion date is not anticipated until after 2025, potentially resulting in additional years of emergency freshwater and nutrient laden discharges into the Caloosahatchee and St Lucie watershed.

TRCP Recommendations for the Trump Transition Team

- **Policy Recommendation**
 - *Expedite construction of improvements to the Herbert Hoover Dike on Lake Okeechobee.*

Issue Overview: The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project calls for the construction of a reservoir south of Lake Okeechobee to help store runoff from Lake Okeechobee and treat water to remove nutrients before water is released into the Everglades. While many of the delays in the advancement of reservoir construction involve decisions made at the state and local level, extensive federal support will be needed to move toward construction. The sportfishing and conservation community is united in its support for increasing water storage both south and north of Lake Okeechobee.

- **Policy Recommendation**
 - *Commit to supporting the construction of a reservoir in the Everglades Agricultural Area.*
 - *Support a strong FY2019 Army Corps of Engineers' funding level for the Central Everglades Planning Project.*

By Year 2:

Issue Overview: The ultimate goal of Everglades restoration is to move water from Lake Okeechobee south. The Tamiami Trail, a road that transects south Florida through the Everglades, is a major impediment to water moving into the Everglades from north to south. The Corps of Engineers has called for construction of 11 miles of bridges to allow water to pass under the Tamiami Trail but only one mile of bridge has been constructed to date. Additional appropriations are needed to elevate more of the road to allow for comprehensive restoration of the Everglades.

- **Policy Recommendation**
 - *Include in the FY2020 Department of Interior budget the funding necessary to continue to elevate the Tamiami Trail.*

Issue Overview: The Army Corps of Engineers is in the process of studying the best locations and most cost-effective ways to build water storage reservoirs north of Lake Okeechobee to help hold storm runoff and limit nutrient loading into Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades. Additional storage both north and south of the lake is an essential part of comprehensive Everglades restoration efforts.

- **Policy Recommendation**
 - *Support an authorization for an expedited study process in the next Water Resources Development Act and move toward construction of storage reservoirs as soon as possible.*
 - *Expedite construction of water storage north of Lake Okeechobee.*

TRCP Recommendations for the Trump Transition Team

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mississippi River Delta Restoration

Issue Overview: Habitat loss in the Mississippi River Delta, including the erosion and subsidence of the barrier islands, marshes, swamps and natural ridges formed by sediment deposits from the river, is threatening the long-term health and sustainability of the Gulf of Mexico's recreational and commercial fisheries, migratory waterfowl and other birds and coastal communities. In the last century, nearly 2,000 square miles of coastal habitat, an area the size of Delaware, have been lost due to levees and other flood control and navigation projects on the lower Mississippi River disconnecting adjacent wetlands from annual sediment deposits and allowing saltwater to intrude deep into freshwater areas, killing trees and wetland grasses.

For the first time in nearly 50 years of trying to address this crisis, Louisiana and a host of federal agencies with authority to manage coastal wetlands, wildlife and fisheries including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have funding available through fines from the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon disaster to begin to build the large- and small-scale projects needed to address this crisis. However, federal agencies, especially the ACOE, have been notoriously slow in advancing projects through the engineering and design phase and toward construction. The TRCP and its partners have advocated for a host of restoration projects and initiatives to address the loss of critical habitat in the Mississippi River Delta and across the Gulf of Mexico Region including large-scale restoration of marshes using dredged materials and by diverting water and sediment from the Mississippi River. It is of vital importance to the long-term health of the Gulf's fisheries and communities and the nation's wildlife that the Trump Administration makes the restoration of the Mississippi River Delta a top priority.

First 100 Days:

Issue Overview: Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority officials have been meeting with representatives from the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), NOAA, ACOE, the U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Department of Agriculture throughout 2016 to ensure coordination of efforts to construct diversions and other essential restoration projects and minimize delays due to federal policies. Regular meetings of these agencies must continue during the Trump Administration.

- **Policy Recommendation**
 - *Ensure Mississippi River Delta diversions are a priority for CEQ, other federal entities and agencies.*

Issue Overview: The Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 (GOMESA) dedicates hundreds of millions in royalties collected from Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas development to Gulf of Mexico producing states. Louisiana has committed its share of funds to restoring coastal habitats and protecting coastal communities. The funds are essential for long-term maintenance of projects constructed with Deepwater Horizon penalties yet the previous administration attempted to redirect those dedicated funds to other priorities in consecutive budgets. GOMESA funds are essential to the long-term sustainability of the Gulf's fisheries, wildlife and communities.

- **Policy Recommendation**
 - *Affirmation of commitment of GOMESA funds to habitat restoration and community protection projects in the Gulf.*

TRCP Recommendations for the Trump Transition Team

Issue Overview: The Mississippi River Gulf Outlet is a decommissioned federal navigation channel that the Army Corps of Engineers failed to maintain that caused the destruction and alteration of 250,000 acres of wetlands east of New Orleans. The 2007 Water Resources Development Act called for the restoration of that habitat at full federal cost, yet the Corps has disputed congressional intent. The Trump Administration should require the Corps to complete the work as charged by Congress and appropriate the necessary funds.

- **Policy Recommendation**
 - *Ensure a full federal commitment to the ecosystem restoration of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet.*

Issue Overview: The Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority is preparing the EIS for the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion, which is essential to the restoration and sustainability of coastal wetlands south and west of New Orleans. The Army Corps of Engineers, DOI and NOAA should be supportive of this process and committed to evaluating the EIS as quickly as possible.

- **Policy Recommendation**
 - *Support development of the Environmental Impact Statement for Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion.*

By Year 2:

Issue Overview: The Army Corps of Engineers' New Orleans District often spends in excess of \$100 million per year to dredge the lower Mississippi River for navigation purposes. Federal policy requires the disposal of dredged materials in the least expensive possible way, which is often interpreted by the Army Corps of Engineers as dumping the materials in deep water of the Gulf or at the head of passes in the Mississippi River where it cannot be used to build land. The cost of identifying and using dredged spoil for restoration should be a factor in determining the expense of disposing materials and dredged spoils should be used beneficially for wetland restoration to the maximum extent.

- **Policy Recommendation**
 - *Improve the beneficial use of dredged materials.*

Issue Overview: Louisiana's coastal restoration and hurricane protection master plan contains a host of marsh creation, barrier island and ridge restoration projects and sediment and freshwater diversions. Currently, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires a separate EIS for each project though all marsh creation and barrier island restoration projects have similar impacts. A programmatic EIS for restoration projects in the Mississippi River Delta can help limit time spent clearing bureaucratic hurdles and move projects to construction.

- **Policy Recommendation**
 - *Develop a Programmatic EIS for related coastal restoration projects in Louisiana.*
 - *Support for the broad restoration vision for the Mississippi River Delta through the issuance of a commitment for an 8-year timeframe goal to complete major restoration milestones in this important landscape.*

TRCP Recommendations for the Trump Transition Team

CONSERVATION FUNDING

Issue Overview: Under the federal budget, conservation funding spans across a wide range of federal departments and agencies and touches upon nearly every aspect of our daily lives. Known as Function 300 of the Federal Budget, funding under this category sustains the nation's natural resources, protects public health and supports critical components of the nation's built infrastructure. From the water we drink to the air we breathe to the health of the nation's fish and wildlife populations the conservation and environmental portions of the federal budget play a critical role. Yet, this all-encompassing portion of the federal budget has continued to shrink from approximately 2% in the 1970s to now closer to 1% of the total federal budget. Over the last 40 years, conservation as a percentage of the federal budget has been cut in half.

This decline in federal funding has had significant impacts on our nation's public lands and on federal natural resources agencies' ability to protect and improve habitat.

- Bureau of Land Management ó Lost 7.1% of its core management budget between 2003 and 2015. Meanwhile, BLM lands are often the public lands most directly accessible for hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation activities and visitation has risen by 17% on BLM public lands. Even with increased visitation however, BLM budget cuts have impacted activities on-the-ground such as habitat conservation and facilities management.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ó Lost 6.7% of its core management budget between 2003 and 2015 despite having 21 new national wildlife refuges and increasing numbers of endangered species listings. More than 200 wildlife refuges have NO dedicated staff.
- U.S. Forest Service ó Lost 9.1% of its core management budget between 2003 and 2015. Moreover, more than 50% of the agency's budget now goes to fighting wildfires (all other natural disasters, such as hurricanes and tornadoes, are funded with supplemental/emergency funds and not core agency funds). The agency has closed 1,400 developed recreation sites in the last decade and reduced services at many others.

In addition to key U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies identified above, other critical agencies such as the Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Marine Fisheries Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service have all been impacted in countless ways by this forty year decline in conservation funding and diminishment of the federal budget to sustain our environment and natural resources.

First 100 Days:

Issue Overview: The President's FY2018 Budget slated for delivery to Congress in early February will provide an important first opportunity for the Trump Administration to advance a strong conservation budget that benefits communities across America. Additionally, in early 2017, a new budget deal will need to be negotiated with Congress.

Policy Recommendations

- *Support a FY2018 President's Budget that sustains and increases where possible funding for conservation programs within the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and its agencies (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service); U.S. Department of Agriculture (U.S. Forest Service*

TRCP Recommendations for the Trump Transition Team

(USFS) and Natural Resources Conservation Service); National Marine Fisheries Service; Environmental Protection Agency; and the Army Corps of Engineers.

- *Secure a budget deal for FY2018 and beyond that patches sequestration and increases the topline number for the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill to at least \$32.5 billion, a 2% increase from FY2016 funding levels.*
- *Support a fix for the wildfire funding situation and support strong funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund if presented as part of a larger budget deal.*

By Year 1:

Issue Overview: Within the first year of the Trump Administration, we recommend the Administration focus on three key policy areas with relevance to long-term sustained levels of federal funding for conservation.

The Wildfire Disaster Funding Act - Emergency wildfire suppression is currently not funded like other natural disasters but instead through an antiquated system of transfers within the USFS and DOI annual budgets. These budget shortfalls and the practice of transferring are crippling the ability of agencies to manage forests effectively for people, water and wildlife, including projects that help reduce catastrophic fire risk and future wildfire suppression costs. In just the last two years, more than \$1 billion were transferred from USFS and DOI forest programs to cover fire suppression shortfalls. The Wildfire Disaster Funding Act will resolve this inefficiency and reduce the devastating impacts that transfers have had on people, water and wildlife.

Comprehensive Infrastructure Package - An Administration-led, comprehensive Infrastructure Package would provide an opportunity to identify and ensure long-term funding for a range of infrastructure needs. We encourage the new Administration to consider the importance of funding for conservation and natural infrastructure in any broader infrastructure package. Specifically, consideration should be given to the inclusion of new funding for federal public lands access, management and restoration; provisions such as the wildfire funding fix and a permanent solution for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF); and funding for natural infrastructure solutions as complementary to traditional clean water, drinking water, transportation and water resources infrastructure.

2017 Conservation Funding Packages ó There are two large funding proposals that are being circulated in the hopes of being passed into law in 2017 or after. The first is called the American Heritage and Conservation Trust Act and includes nine separate titles, all of which would be taken off budget. Included in the bill is full funding for LWCF at the \$900 million level. Depending on the final language, this legislation would cost \$3.5-\$4.8 billion annually and would be funded by oil and gas revenues on federal lands and waters. The second effort is called The Recovering America's Wildlife Act, introduced by Representatives Don Young (R-AK) and Debbie Dingell (D-MI). This legislation would dedicate \$1.3 billion annually to the unfunded Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Account, which is designed to help states manage non-game species. The funding would come from existing revenues from energy development on the outer continental shelf (\$650 million) and from existing revenues from mineral development on federal lands (\$650 million). These funds currently go into the U.S. Treasury.

- **Policy Recommendations**
 - *Support Congressional approval of the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act to end the practice of fire borrowing.*

TRCP Recommendations for the Trump Transition Team

- *Support strong conservation funding levels in the President's FY2019 Budget proposal, including an increased Function 300 level within Administration statements to Congress during budget negotiations, and opposing reductions to voluntary private lands conservation programs through changes in mandatory program spending (CHIMPS), a tactic supported by the previous administration.*
- *Support the inclusion of funding for conservation and natural infrastructure within an Administratively-supported Infrastructure Package. This would include policy changes and funding for the following priorities:*
 - *A Conservation Trust Fund with an expanded role to ensure public access to and the long-term sustainability and maintenance of all the nation's public lands from the national parks to the nation's national wildlife refuges and lands under Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Forest Service management.*
 - *The Recovering America's Wildlife Act and the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Account.*
 - *The American Heritage and Conservation Trust Act to provide full and permanent funding for the LWCF; address the needs of U.S. Fish and Wildlife conservation programs such as the North American Wetlands Conservation Act; and infuse funding into a Public Lands Access & Infrastructure Maintenance Fund.*
 - *Natural infrastructure solutions for clean water, drinking water, transportation and water resources infrastructure.*

By Year 2:

Issue Overview: By the second year of the new Administration and the second year of a budget deal, a more fully flushed out budget process will be possible and an opportunity to streamline certain programs and elevate other programs within the federal agency budgets where conservation programs are housed. Further, the new administration's first year emphasis on infrastructure would be continuing to work its way through Congressional consideration.

• Policy Recommendations

- *Develop a forum to roll out the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis' assessment of the outdoor economy as a sector of the larger U.S. economy and issue a new vision for conservation and outdoor recreation in the President's FY2020 Budget proposal.*
- *Continue to advance a longer-term and sustained vision for conservation funding through the Infrastructure Package and support ongoing efforts to advance the American Heritage and Conservation Trust Act/Recovering America's Wildlife Act either as a stand-alone or part of this larger infrastructure package.*

TRCP Recommendations for the Trump Transition Team

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Our Nation's Public Lands

Issue Overview: America's 640 million acres of national public lands – including our national forests, wildlife refuges, parks and Bureau of Land Management lands – provide hunting and fishing opportunities to millions of Americans. They represent the uniquely American values of freedom and adventure that are the envy of the world. This is particularly true in the West, where, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 72 percent of sportsmen depend on access to public lands for hunting. Nationally, about half of America's hunters hunt on public lands some or all of the time. Without these vast expanses of prairie and sagebrush, foothills and towering peaks, the traditions of hunting and fishing as we have known them for more than a century would be lost, and America's \$646 billion outdoor recreation economy would be threatened.

First 100 Days:

- **Policy Recommendation:**
 - *We ask that the Trump Administration clearly and publicly reaffirm the importance of maintaining federal agency control of the nation's public lands, while also acknowledging the need for better management and better cooperation between federal land managers and the states. We believe that this cooperation should take the form of shared agreements between the states and federal government, not the transfer of management authority.*

Issue Overview: The sporting conservation community has been working with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) staff; state agencies; local, state and national elected decision-makers; and a wide-range of stakeholders to conserve important fish and wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation opportunities through individual Resource Management Plans (RMPs) in several Western states. Given the changeover in the administration, questions will likely arise at state and local BLM offices about future agency priorities. Strong national reinforcement is needed to assure state offices that the agency's Backcountry Conservation Area (BCA), migration corridor, and Master Leasing Plan (MLP) conservation priorities will continue. These policies represent broadly supported, moderate conservation tools that provide flexibility for active management and responsible development, while ensuring a positive future for conservation and access.

All of these policy tools enjoy bipartisan support from elected decision makers. BCAs have the support of over 100 hunting and fishing groups, 52 BLM retirees, 200+ hunting and fishing businesses, 200+ wildlife professionals, 150+ outdoor recreation businesses, landowners, and the Outdoor Industry Association. BLM backcountry conservation tools are also supported by the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council. Wildlife Migration Corridor conservation tools are supported by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council, and dozens of hunting and wildlife professional organizations. MLPs are supported by a coalition of more than 500 businesses, organizations and individuals.

- **Policy Recommendations:**
 - *BLM leadership contacts BLM state offices and requests that backcountry conservation areas, migration corridor protections, and master leasing plans be fully considered through the following resource management plans (RMPs) in 2017.*

TRCP Recommendations for the Trump Transition Team

1. *BCAs: Carson City final RMP; Rock Springs draft RMP; Southeast Oregon draft RMPA; Lakeview draft RMPA; Upper Snake draft RMP; and Eastern Colorado draft RMP*
2. *MLPs: Eastern Colorado draft RMP; Rock Springs draft RMP; and Carlsbad final RMP*
3. *Migration Corridors: Rock Springs draft RMP*

By Year 1:

Issue Overview: In May 2014, the BLM initiated "Planning 2.0," the first major overhaul of the agency's land use planning process since 1984. The final rule was issued on Dec. 1, 2016, and it increases transparency and upfront public engagement, while maintaining strong requirements for the BLM to work closely with state and local cooperators. Planning 2.0 also directs the agency to more thoroughly consider and plan for "areas of key fish and wildlife habitat such as big game wintering and summer areas, bird nesting and feeding areas, habitat connectivity or wildlife migration corridors, and areas of large and intact habitat." Now, as the BLM looks to revise its land use planning handbook, the agency has an important opportunity to ensure that fish and wildlife habitat are responsibly managed and that sportsmen and state fish and wildlife agencies play a large role in the BLM land use planning process.

- **Policy Recommendation**

- *The BLM finalizes its land use planning overhaul with a revised land use planning handbook that includes a commitment to state fish and wildlife management objectives, and clear guidance for areas of key fish and wildlife habitat such as big game wintering and summer areas, bird nesting and feeding areas, habitat connectivity or wildlife migration corridors, and areas of large and intact habitat.*

Issue Overview: Fire suppression, warmer weather patterns, past management practices, and administrative and legal roadblocks to active management have left many of our nation's public land forests in stressed, overstocked conditions. This is a problem recognized by a diverse set of lawmakers who have been working to advance common sense forest management reforms for the past several years. In order to improve the health of our public lands forests and increase the productivity of wildlife habitat, we encourage the Administration to be open and responsive to reasonable legislative forest management reforms. We also encourage the Administration to support collaborative processes where diverse interests come together to find common ground and reduce gridlock over public lands management.

- **Policy Recommendation**

- *Support bipartisan efforts to increase responsible active forest management on our national forests and BLM lands. This includes legislative action to refine and modernize federal laws, and administrative actions that expedite projects.*

Issue Overview: GPS technology has enabled scientists to gain an understanding of wildlife movements in ways that were never before possible. This information has also shined a light on the fact that adequate federal policies do not exist for the consideration and management of migration corridors, and many migration corridors are threatened by human development.

We define migratory corridors as:

- 1) Flyways and stopover habitats for all migrating birds (waterfowl, raptors, passerines, shorebirds), bats and pollinators (including birds, bats and insects); and

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- 2) An area of the landscape that a substantial portion of terrestrial mammals (e.g., elk herd) uses consistently to move between seasonal habitats.

Sportsmen, outdoor business owners, ranchers, oil and gas industry, grazing associations, county commissioners, conservation NGOs, and state and federal agencies all have been engaged in the conversation.

- **Policy Recommendation**
 - *The White House issues an executive order on migration corridors that directs all Federal agencies to explicitly recognize the importance of migratory corridors, stopover habitat, and fish passage, and directs those agencies to take specific actions to designate, manage, and conserve these important habitats.*

Issue Overview: As renewable energy development like solar, wind, and geothermal continues to increase in size and scope on our public lands, there is wide bipartisan agreement that some portion of revenue generated from that development should be held in an off-budget trust fund; a percentage of those funds should be used for the mitigation of impacts to fish and wildlife related to the development, and a percentage should be provided to the county and the state in which the development occurs to fund local and state needs. This legislation, which has been introduced favorably in both chambers, has come to be known as the Public Lands Renewable Energy Development Act (PLREDA) and is supported not only by fish and wildlife conservation stakeholders, but also by the renewable energy industry, and state and county leaders.

- **Policy Recommendation:**
 - *The Administration takes steps to ensure the conservation of important fish and wildlife habitat in the face of increased renewable energy development by actively supporting the Public Lands Renewable Energy Development Act.*

TRCP Recommendations for the Trump Transition Team

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Sage Grouse and Sage Grouse Habitat

Issue Overview: In recent years, an unprecedented effort has been underway across the West to conserve habitat for the long-term protection of the greater sage grouse and more than 350 species that use the sagebrush ecosystem. Sportsmen and women and conservationists have made a longstanding investment in maintaining productive populations of sage grouse. We are working with local and state governments, federal agencies, private landowners and business interests in the West to maintain the September 2015 not-warranted decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) well into the future by supporting the existing set of state and federal management plans to ensure sage grouse and sagebrush habitat are managed and conserved based on balanced approaches and strong science. Sportsmen and women have contributed over \$130 million to sage grouse management and conservation since 2000. Many landowners are working to conserve sage grouse on their lands through voluntary actions under the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Sage Grouse Initiative, which restores sagebrush habitat and customizes grazing plans that conserve wildlife habitat while also creating more nutritious and abundant forage for livestock. Through this program, participants are reaping benefits to their land, their forage and production, and their bottom line. Success for the greater sage-grouse was achieved in 2015 through the combination of strong conservation plans on federal public lands, coupled with state conservation plans and the voluntary efforts from private landowners. Future success depends heavily on immediate and consistent implementation of all these combined efforts. Congressional efforts to eliminate federal plans would negate effectiveness of all efforts and result in a waste of both state and federal funds expended to date and almost guarantee the eventual listing of sage grouse and a host of other sage-dependent species. It is important to note that the 2015 agreement was announced by Secretary Jewell with four western governors, including two Republicans: Matt Mead of Wyoming (which has the greatest number of birds) and Brian Sandoval of Nevada (which has more federal land than any other state outside Alaska). TRCP strongly recommends the Trump Administration stay the course on all fronts on sage grouse conservation and management.

First 100 Days:

- **Policy Recommendations**
 - *Finalize all outstanding Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administrative policies including BLM Planning 2.0 and handbook revisions.*
 - *Support for a strong federal funding level for on-the-ground sage grouse conservation in the FY2018 Budget request.*
 - *Senior Political and Administration Leadership should consider holding “reaffirmation” meetings with U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) staff and relevant agency staff (BLM, USFWS, U.S. Geological Services (USGS), NRCS, and U.S. Forest Service (USFS)) internally and externally based on the following recommendations:*

Internal:

- *Send an Executive Order or Memorandum to all agencies on sage grouse plan implementation and coordination within and among federal agencies and with state agency partners.*

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- *Ensure Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) prioritizes sagebrush and sage grouse conservation in the next 3 years prior to the approaching USFWS status review.*

External:

- *Call and meet with Western Governors, state fish and wildlife agency directors, in-state BLM Directors and USFS Forest Supervisors and clearly communicate to them the new Administration's commitment to continued collaboration on sage grouse conservation with state and local partners.*
- *Continue strong engagement in Western Governors Association summer and winter meetings and briefing sessions.*
- *Agree to consider common-sense amendments to federal plans that help with implementation without threatening the overall integrity of the agreement.*
- *Host stakeholder gatherings to commit to continued collaboration and partnership in sage grouse country. The full range of engaged stakeholders should be invited to these meetings including private landowners, industry, sportsmen, NGOs, etc.*
- *Ensure funding is secure for implementing the federal plans and NRCS initiatives for private lands. Also, the new Administration should consider a ramped up funding campaign for the USFWS Partners for Conservation Program and other private landowner programs and ensure their long-term viability.*
- *Ensure that Secretarial Order 3336 and associated reports and policies on fire remain in effect and fully funded, in coordination with the states, counties, private landowners, and others to combat fire and restore habitats in the sagebrush ecosystem.*

By Year 1:

- **Policy Recommendations**
 - *Renew NRCS funding for NRCS Sage Grouse Initiative to ensure seamless voluntary conservation implementation on private lands for sage grouse (NRCS funding renewed in 2016 expires in 2018).*
 - *Ensure BLM and USFS regional, state and local staff continue to move forward with full implementation of federal sage grouse conservation plans.*
 - *Mitigation: the White House and CEQ should consider development of an Executive Order to be issued by the new President as the next step in support of mitigation on federal lands. This would complement earlier Presidential Memorandum and DOI Policy, directing all agencies to adhere to finalized mitigation policies derived from DOI Secretarial Order 3330.*
 - *A strong FY2019 funding request for coordinated federal sage grouse conservation among key federal agencies.*

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By Year 2:

- **Policy Recommendations**
 - *Continued sage grouse conservation plan implementation.*
 - *Issuance of the Presidential Memorandum on Mitigation.*
 - *A strong sage grouse conservation funding request for FY2020 as the USFWS status review approaches.*

TRCP Recommendations for the Trump Transition Team

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Water and Drought

Issue Overview: The current drought in the western United States reveals serious threats for meeting the needs of agricultural and urban water users, the \$646-billion outdoor recreation economy and fish and wildlife. Reservoirs in the Colorado River Basin, in particular, are at historic lows, and the Bureau of Reclamation projects that by 2060 the basin's water demand may exceed supply by almost 25%. This imbalance puts at risk the drinking water supplies of 36 million people, much of the country's winter vegetables and the basin's outdoor recreation economy, with its quarter millions jobs. The Colorado River already rarely flows to the sea and increased water supply-demand imbalances threaten many native and resident fish and wildlife species that hunters, anglers and others value.

The ongoing weather-pattern shifts in the Southwestern U.S. coupled with growing populations create more demand for water than ever before; both will exacerbate the existing water supply-demand imbalances. Sportsmen and conservation organizations, including the TRCP and many of its partners, have advocated in support of water conservation solutions that sustain irrigated agriculture while reducing the risk of water shortages to cities and protecting rivers and stream habitat.

There has been recent progress. For example, Reclamation's WaterSMART Program provides money for water conservation and newly proposed criteria should better target multiple-benefit projects that reduce shortages and improve stream flows. The 2016 Presidential Memorandum, *Building National Capabilities for Long-Term Drought Resilience*, and its Action Plan recommended six policy goals, and progress has been made toward each one. In June 2016, the U.S. Department of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture announced increased coordination between the departments and key agencies on water use efficiency efforts, and committed additional funding to water conservation programs. Finally, Colorado River Basin drought contingency planning and its System Conservation Program have demonstrated that water users are willing to participate in water demand management programs. As a result, Lake Mead did not fall below a level that would have triggered water delivery cuts in Arizona.

Because there is still much more to do, the TRCP requests the Trump Administration focus on drought resilience by coordinating across agencies to reduce the risk of water shortages, creating more flexibility in water management, improving the reliability of water systems, and restoring hydrologic function and ecosystem services to our watersheds. In particular, federal efforts should support, to the maximum extent possible, water projects that will deliver water for multiple sectors, including fish and wildlife.

First 100 Days:

- **Policy Recommendations**
 - *The Bureau of Reclamation should seek an increase in the WaterSMART funding cap to \$400M to fund creative collaboration water conservation and other water management programs through the FY2018 budget request.*
 - *Reclamation should ask Congress to reauthorize and expand the Emergency Drought Relief Act, which expires in 2017. The West cannot afford to lose these important authorities for drought contingency plans, loans & flexibility at Reclamation facilities. An expansion of §102, for example, would allow water from Reclamation projects to be leased to improve system reliability without reimbursement of project costs or amendment of project contracts, and would clarify that forbearing diversion of Reclamation project water to improve system*

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reliability, where done within a state law program, would not adversely affect water rights.

By Year 1:

- **Policy Recommendations**
 - *Reclamation should use §4(a) of the SECURE Water Act to start systematically, basin-by-basin, updating reservoir operations manuals to increase management flexibility during drought, a process that may take several years to complete.*
 - *Reclamation should convene the signers, water users and other interested parties, including conservationists, sportsmen and recreational businesses of the System Conservation Program in the Colorado River Basin to discuss how to build on the success of the program by extending and expanding it. The last two years have demonstrated that water users will agree to water demand management programs for the good of the basin as a whole, and in particular stabilization of the two largest mainstem reservoirs, Mead and Powell, that currently sit only half full.*

By Year 2:

- **Policy Recommendations:**
 - *Reclamation should ask Congress to reauthorize the SECURE Water Act, which sunsets in 2018. SECURE, passed in 2009, created important programs to increase water efficiency, expand data gathering, analyze water resources to improve their management and enhance our understanding of climate change impacts to water availability.*

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Issue Overview: Federal policies that affect private and agricultural lands are a critical part of our country's conservation equation: more than 70 percent of America's total land is in private hands, and more than 50 percent of the total is in agricultural use. As a result, private land provides much of our critical habitat for resident game species and contributes to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic migration corridors. Unfortunately, privately-owned wetlands, grasslands, and forests are being converted to cropland and other uses at an alarming rate, and many producers on lands with a long agricultural history have not done their part to conserve our nation's soil, water, and fish and wildlife habitat. The result is the loss of 95 percent of our native prairie and over 50 percent of the nation's wetlands; western U.S. communities and ecosystems suffering from extreme drought; and, waterways everywhere polluted by farm runoff and choked by toxic algae—reducing the quality of wildlife habitats and the sustainability of agriculture production. Dead zones in the Gulf of Mexico, the Great Lakes and other water bodies are a direct result of upstream runoff and have a direct impact on the recreation economy.

Sportsmen and conservationists have long sought to better balance the needs of production agriculture and private landowners with the needs of fish, wildlife, and sportsmen, and the TRCP and our partners have advocated through comments to agencies, as participants in national conversations, and via engagement on the Hill in support of habitat and water conservation solutions that sustain agriculture while reducing risks to cities, such as water shortages and tainted drinking water.

Notably, the sportsmen's community has also helped to direct billions of dollars to qualified landowners to incentivize voluntary, sustainable practices on working lands. Much of this support is delivered through the Farm Bill, the single-largest source of federal funding for conservation on private lands.

The current five-year Farm Bill (the Agricultural Act of 2014) was signed by President Obama in February 2014. The majority of the 2014 Farm Bill's 450+ provisions have been fully implemented by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), but troubleshooting is now underway, and the sportsmen's community urges USDA's new leadership to reconsider regulations which dissuade landowners and stakeholders from participating in voluntary conservation or which undermine the Farm Bill's effectiveness. Additionally, sportsmen encourage the incoming Trump Administration to support full mandatory funding of Farm Bill conservation programs and to submit an ambitious discretionary budget request for Conservation Technical Assistance for FY18. Sportsmen also encourage the new Administration to take measures which improve drought resilience and which encourage interdepartmental and multi-stakeholder investments in conservation.

At the same time, we must look ahead to the next Farm Bill, which we expect Congress to pass before the current bill expires in September 2018. The Administration should put forth its recommendations for the Farm Bill by the end of its first year, and should plan to promote and defend— with allies, especially those in the conservation and sportsmen's community— those recommendations in year two. Finally, America's hunters, anglers, farmers, and ranchers depend on the resources offered through the Farm Bill, and we urge the Administration to work with Congress to secure the bill's timely passage to ensure continuity of programs and funding.

TRCP Recommendations for the Trump Transition Team

2014 Farm Bill—Implementation and Funding

First 100 Days:

Issue Overview: The 2014 Farm Bill consolidated or eliminated nearly a dozen conservation programs and reduced mandatory conservation spending by \$4 billion, \$6 billion under sequestration. Since then, additional, repeated annual cuts by appropriators have prevented thousands of qualified farmers, ranchers, and foresters from enrolling in important voluntary conservation programs, even as USDA has requested the full amount authorized under the Farm Bill. In addition, USDA's ability to deliver conservation to producers depends heavily on on-the-ground Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA), paid for through discretionary spending. We must not hamstring our investment in soil health, water quality, and wildlife habitat by under-funding CTA.

- **Policy Recommendation**

- *Support full mandatory funding of 2014 Farm Bill conservation programs by Congress in FY17 and FY18, and match or increase the Administration's \$760.7 million budget request for Conservation Technical Assistance for FY18.*

Issue Overview: The FY17 Senate Agriculture Appropriations bill approved \$150M of new funding for the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations Program (Watershed Operations). This program provides technical and financial assistance to states, local governments, and Tribes to plan and implement authorized plans for watershed protection, flood mitigation, erosion reduction and other purposes. Projects eligible for this funding include dams, reservoirs, and other conservation measures that will improve water quality, water efficiency, and wildlife habitat.

- **Policy Recommendation**

- *If the FY17 Omnibus includes funding for Watershed Operations, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) should develop national guidelines for how to spend these funds strategically to enhance drought resilience while also protecting rivers and riparian areas.*

Issue Overview: When attempting to access programs under the 2014 Farm Bill, stakeholders across the spectrum have struggled with slower-than-usual delivery or reimbursement of funds and cumbersome application requirements. For instance, landowners and small business owners must meet requirements intended for military contractors in order to apply to NRCS programs; NGO and state partners often have to front significant resources for technical assistance work—sometimes by using unrelated sources, such as Pittman-Robertson funds—which NRCS depends upon to be effective; and NRCS has instituted a policy which uses technical assistance funds to pay itself in the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), rather than partner-applicants as intended. At the other end of the spectrum, the Office of the Inspector General has reported that USDA, because of insufficient compliance checks, may be wrongly issuing payments to landowners who have violated wetlands or highly erodible land compliance requirements. These and other issues disincentivize voluntary conservation and undermine the legitimacy of USDA programs in the eyes of the American taxpayer, and the Administration should initiate a review of these problem areas.

- **Policy Recommendation**

- *Initiate a cross-agency review (including NRCS, the Farm Service Agency, Risk Management Agency, and others as appropriate) of conservation program delivery,*

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and report on steps to improve transparency, contracting, monitoring, and enforcement.

By Year 1:

Issue Overview: The 2016 Presidential Memorandum, *Building National Capabilities for Long-Term Drought Resilience*, and its Action Plan recommended six policy goals. The current Administration has made progress toward each one. In June 2016, the Secretary of Agriculture and the Commissioner of Reclamation announced increased coordination between the Bureau of Reclamation and the Natural Resources Conservation Service on water use efficiency efforts, and committed additional funding to water conservation programs. The Memorandum also includes a recommendation for the Rural Opportunity Investment Initiative (ROI) to increase NRCS engagement with private sector lenders for bundling financing for infrastructure projects at the watershed level.

- **Policy Recommendation**

- *USDA should review existing programs for ways to prioritize environmental benefits, and in particular the ROI should prioritize landscapes where infrastructure improvements will increase drought resiliency while also benefiting rivers and riparian habitat.*

Issue Overview: The current drought in the western United States reveals serious threats for meeting the needs of agricultural and other water users including metropolitan areas, the \$646-billion outdoor recreation economy, and fish and wildlife. Reservoirs in the Colorado River Basin, in particular, are at historic lows, and the basin's water demand already exceeds its supply, with projections that the imbalance will worsen over time. This imbalance puts at risk the drinking water supplies of 36 million people, much of the country's winter vegetables and the basin's outdoor recreation economy, with its quarter million jobs. The Colorado River no longer flows to the sea and increased water supply-demand imbalances also threaten many native and resident fish and wildlife species that hunters, anglers and others value. The Administration should advance NRCS focus on drought resilience and should support, to the maximum extent possible, investments that deliver benefits to both growers and fish and wildlife.

- **Policy Recommendation**

- *With the research results from the Subcommittee on Water Availability and Quality, USDA should advance the agricultural water efficiency technologies and practices identified that provide benefits not only to growers, but also improve drought resilience and can benefit fish and wildlife.*

Issue Overview: NRCS launched the Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) initiative in 2012 as a way to work with partners and private landowners to deliver voluntary conservation to working landscapes, using target species as the barometers for success. This novel partnership has been highly successful, for instance through WLFW's Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI), which helped landowners restore sage brush habitat across the West and ultimately led to the Department of Interior's September 2015 not-warranted listing for the greater sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Through WLFW, landowner-participants are reaping benefits to their land, their forage and production, and their bottom line, while earning assurances that they can keep their working lands working, regardless of future ESA listing decisions.

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- **Policy Recommendation**
 - *Affirm support for the Working Lands for Wildlife partnership between NRCS, USFWS, and other partners to ensure seamless, voluntary, ecosystem-scale conservation implementation on private lands for greater sage-grouse, lesser prairie-chicken, northern bobwhite quail, cutthroat trout, Kenai Peninsula salmon, and other species which can thrive as a part of working landscapes.*

Drafting the 2018 Farm Bill

By Year 1:

Issue Overview: The Administration should draft its version of the 2018 Farm Bill and build upon the conservation gains made in the 2014 Farm Bill, when spending on conservation programs exceeded spending on commodities for the first time. It is essential that the Administration openly supports conservation in the 2018 Farm Bill. As we near Farm Bill reauthorization, several years of low commodity prices and extreme weather events will increase competition between separate Farm Bill stakeholder groups for the limited funding available to draft the next bill. Yet, working land conservation practices, including restored prairies and wetlands, cover crops, and more efficient water infrastructure, often provide the strongest proactive protections against market fluctuations and weather-related risks. Additionally, the Administration should make a special effort to ensure that federal policy outside of the Conservation Title does not inadvertently incentivize the conversion of wetlands, grasslands, and other private lands habitats, thereby compromising the taxpayer's return on the 2014 Farm Bill's significant investment in conservation.

- **Policy Recommendation**
 - *The Administration's version of the 2018 Farm Bill should include:*
 - *A Conservation Title authorization that matches or exceeds 2014 baseline spending, not the reduced baseline amounts in 2018;*
 - *Robust conservation compliance requirements and enforcement ability;*
 - *A Conservation Reserve Program that functions as a key component of the farm safety net, with an acreage cap determined by landowner demand and natural resource goals, not based on an arbitrary budget;*
 - *Provisions which elevate wildlife and fish conservation on working lands to the same priority level as soil health and water quality/quantity and which prioritize projects with "stacked" benefits and which contribute to landscape- or ecosystem-scale conservation goals;*
 - *A solid investment in sportsmen's access and opportunity through the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP), easement, and forestry programs;*
 - *Working lands programs that help growers conserve water and foster wildlife, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Regional Conservation Partnership Program, and Watershed Operations;*
 - *An enhanced investment in science and research for use in decision-making, particularly through NRCS' Conservation Effects Assessment Project;*
 - *Recognition of the importance of the \$646 billion annual outdoor recreation economy, much of which is dependent upon recreational access to rural areas, and which injects billions of dollars into rural communities each year; and*

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- *Recognition of the ability of voluntary conservation programs to deliver certainty and relief from regulation.*

By Year 2:

Issue Overview: One of the biggest threats to conservation in the Farm Bill is a perennial call by some lawmakers to separate the bill's agriculture and nutrition programs, a move which would shatter the rural-urban coalition that is critical to the Farm Bill's passage. An agriculture-only bill would threaten upwards of \$5 billion in annual conservation investments on private lands. These investments have been shown to have a high return on investment, helping to create productive lands, healthy wildlife, and clean, naturally flowing waters, all through voluntary, incentive-based practices rather than regulation. Furthermore, a delayed Farm Bill is generally regarded by agricultural producers as just as damaging as *no* Farm Bill—many financial decisions made by family farmers are dependent upon guaranteed support from USDA, and that includes for conservation. It is essential that the Trump Administration supports the Farm Bill as a coalition effort in order for it to succeed.

- **Policy Recommendation**
 - *Work with Congress and stakeholders to pass a Farm Bill by September 30, 2018 that includes conservation gains and that does not separate farm programs from nutrition programs.*

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NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION - FISHERIES

Issue Overview: The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and its sportfishing partners and many others have been working with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries and Congressional staff for the last four years to advance fisheries policy and law that recognizes the conservation, cultural and economic importance of saltwater angling. The Magnuson-Stevens Act focuses almost entirely on commercial fisheries, however, and in many cases, forces recreational fishing to be managed with the same approach as commercial fishing. Commercial and recreational fishing are fundamentally different activities; trying to manage both activities in the same way is at the root of ongoing distrust and frustration with federal fisheries management among anglers. In 2014, The TRCP and its marine partners released the landmark report “A Vision for Managing America’s Saltwater Recreational Fisheries.” The report, developed by a panel of experts in state and federal fisheries management, conservation, economics and public policy includes six recommendations for improving federal management of recreational fishing while emphasizing conservation and wise use of the resource. Those recommendations include: 1) Establishing a national policy for recreational saltwater fishing; 2) Adopting a revised approach to saltwater recreational fisheries management; 3) Allocating marine fisheries for the greatest benefit to the nation; 4) Creating reasonable latitude in stock rebuilding timelines; 5) Codifying a process for cooperative management; and 6) Managing the forage base.

NOAA Fisheries has worked closely with angling groups to help advance and incorporate the recommendations in agency policy. These important steps by NOAA must be furthered by the Trump Administration in order to make substantive, necessary improvements to current federal recreational fisheries management.

First 100 Days:

Issue Overview: NOAA Fisheries has made significant improvements in recent years in building the agency’s relationship with the anglers and recreational fisheries’ advocacy and conservation organizations. Some of those improvements include the creation of staff positions within NOAA Fisheries dedicated to working directly with anglers and addressing the recommendations made by the Commission on Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Management. It is vital that the incoming administration recognize the need for NOAA Fisheries to move away from its history of focusing solely on commercial fishing and continue to develop relationships and policies that recognize the management needs and economic importance of recreational fishing.

- **Policy Recommendation**

- *The appointment of a NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries with experience in recreational and commercial fisheries management.*

Issue Overview: The Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) is used by federal fisheries managers to determine effort and harvest in recreational fisheries. Though it was never intended to be used as a tool to manage in-season catches and determine season lengths, NOAA Fisheries has used it for those purposes. Anglers, state fisheries managers and the scientific community have often questioned the accuracy of the data collected by MRIP and how it is applied. The National Academies of Sciences is conducting an extensive review of MRIP while states fisheries agencies are developing data collection programs that significantly improve accuracy of angler effort and harvest. NOAA Fisheries should quickly incorporate any recommendations to improve MRIP from the National Academies of Sciences and consider using state-developed systems that are more proficient and accurate.

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- **Policy Recommendation**
 - *Support for extensive revisions to the federal Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP).*

By Year 1:

Issue Overview: A new advisory council to the Secretary of Commerce and the NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries should be created to address the specific needs of angling. The current Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee emphasizes commercial fishing. Commercial fishing and recreational fishing are fundamentally different activities and the differing perspectives should be shared with the Department of Commerce.

- **Policy Recommendation**
 - *Creation of a Recreational Fishing and Conservation Advisory Council.*

Issue Overview: The TRCP and its sportfishing partners will make a concerted effort to engage the House and Senate on an effort to write and pass legislation to reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Act that includes specific language recognizing the differences between recreational and commercial fishing. A reauthorized Magnuson Act that includes recreational-fishing specific provisions instructs NOAA Fisheries and the regional fisheries management councils to use alternatives to current federal management approaches including managing to a harvest rate based on annual recruitment of fish into the stock, incorporates state data collection methods that are often more accurate in determining angling effort and harvest, allows for more regional and state-based management and allows unused harvest quota to be carried over to subsequent years to build consistency in seasons and access.

- **Policy Recommendation:**
 - *Support of a bipartisan effort to reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Act.*

By Year 2:

Issue Overview: The next Administration should be supportive of signing into law legislation that reauthorizes the Magnuson-Stevens Act that, for the first time in the history of the act, recognizes the specific conservation, cultural and economic needs of recreational fishing and prescribes management approaches that recognize commercial and recreational fishing are fundamentally different activities that require differing management approaches.

- **Policy Recommendation**
 - *Support and sign into law a revised Magnuson-Stevens Act that includes specific provisions recognizing the differences between recreational and commercial fishing.*

TRCP Recommendations for the Trump Transition Team

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Issue Overview: The Clean Water Act is one of the country's most successful environmental laws. Since its passage in 1972, the federal government has poured billions of dollars into helping local governments build wastewater treatment facilities, while cities, states and private industry in many regions in the U.S. have stepped up to construct, maintain and modernize new and existing treatment facilities. With standards set to limit pollutant levels in rivers and streams, as well as discharge permits needed not only for these treatment facilities but also for development activities including road and dam building that discharge dredge and fill materials, the quality of many of our rivers has improved. Still, there is more work to be done.

First 100 Days:

Issue Overview: Much of the infrastructure built to capture and treat contaminated sewage and industrial effluent is decades old, in some cases operating beyond its design life. As demonstrated by the disasters in Flint and Toledo, this is also the case for federally-funded drinking water system infrastructure built to secure public health and safety under the 1974 Safe Drinking Water Act. Too many of both water and wastewater systems do not have the technologies to remove all of the pollutants we now recognize as necessary to protect public health, rivers, fish and wildlife. In some cases the systems have begun to fail or were built so long ago that they contain toxic materials themselves, like Flint's lead pipes.

- **Policy Recommendation**

- *The Trump Administration should propose to Congress, as part of a broader critical infrastructure investment, a substantial increase in funding to modernize water and wastewater infrastructure including both traditional pipes and plants as well as natural infrastructure using expanded revolving loan programs and public-private partnerships.*

Issue Overview: The Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) was created in 2005 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, expand the nation's renewable fuels sector, and reduce reliance on imported oil; it was never intended to spur wide-scale conversion of native prairie or other at-risk ecosystems. Yet, independent studies have documented massive land-use change across the country resulting from the growth of the corn ethanol industry, threatening public and private hunting grounds nation-wide. In addition, higher ethanol blends in our fuel supply negatively impact recreational boaters and anglers, as gasoline containing 15% or more ethanol is proven to damage marine engines and raises costs for these users, who contribute millions of dollars annually to America's \$646 million outdoor recreation economy. To limit the RFS's adverse impact on sportsmen, in 2017, the Administration should not increase total renewable volume requirements that will require ethanol use at a level beyond the E10 blendwall, and should not actively promote further incorporation of conventional ethanol into the fuel supply; all future increases should come from cellulosic or other advanced biofuels. Additionally, the Administration should expedite delivery of the now-overdue second triennial report to Congress on environmental impacts and unintended consequences of U.S. biofuel policy including the RFS.

- **Policy Recommendation**

- *Commit to a renewable fuels policy that rejects higher ethanol blends in the fuel supply, specifically E15, which adversely impacts recreational boaters and anglers, and which works at cross purposes with other explicit Administration goals for healthy habitat and clean water.*

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By Year 1 and 2:

Issue Overview: After several confusing US Supreme Court opinions that threw into question the scope of the Clean Water Act, in 2015, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Army Corps of Engineers finalized the Clean Water Rule to clarify which rivers, streams and wetlands the Act protects. Sportsmen, the conservation community, recreation businesses and several states strongly support the need for clarification of waters of the United States (WOTUS) consistent with current law, recent Supreme Court findings and science-based assessments such as the one released by the EPA Science Advisory Board addressing the "significant nexus" test. Currently, the Clean Water Rule is not in effect as the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals reviews it. Losing the clarity contained in the Clean Water Rule, either through adverse judicial decision or legislation, would be detrimental to healthy fish and wildlife habitat as well as to greater certainty for the regulated community. TRCP believes clarity must be provided at the federal level for a WOTUS rule based on strong science and a forward-thinking approach to watershed conservation.

- **Policy Recommendation**

- *Support the 2015 Clean Water Rule to maintain the protections of the Clean Water Act for rivers, streams and wetlands.*
- *If the Clean Water Rule is rejected, the Trump Administration should initiate a process to develop a new rule that recognizes the scientific connection between navigable streams and headwater streams and wetlands.*