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Contact: John Shepperd, 210-823-8002, JS@texasfoundationforconservation.org
Janice Bezanson, 512-327-4119, bezanson@texas.net

Action Needed to Restore America's Declining Wildlife

A [new report](#) issued by the National Wildlife Federation, the American Fisheries Society, and The Wildlife Society sounds the alarm that one-third of our nation's wildlife are facing increased risk of extinction, and that action is needed now to reverse this trend.

The report highlights more than 150 species that have already gone extinct, and 500 additional species have not been seen in recent decades. These declines are happening across all animal groups – birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fish. Invertebrates have been hit hard, with key pollinators such as native bees and butterflies in rapid decline, including the iconic Monarch butterfly. Seventy percent of the nation's freshwater mussels, which siphon pollutants and maintain water quality, are endangered or already extinct.

Texas' fish and wildlife species are facing unprecedented challenges from habitat loss, invasive species, disease, pollution, and extreme weather events. Experts have identified 1,310 [Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Texas](#) requiring action to prevent them from slipping closer to extinction. Once a species is placed on the federal Endangered Species List, it takes extensive public and private resources for recovery. And the listing poses additional constraints on industry and developers.

Hope is on the horizon. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act, House Resolution 4647, can avert this crisis by providing dedicated funds for wildlife conservation. This bipartisan legislation, introduced in Congress in December by Representatives Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE) and Debbie Dingell (D-MI), would direct that \$1.3 billion in existing royalties from energy and mineral production on federal lands and waters be placed in a special fund for restoring species at risk of becoming endangered. The funds would be funneled through state wildlife agencies to projects that protect and restore *Species of Greatest Conservation Need*. Texas would be eligible for more than \$63 million per year.

"H.R. 4647 would be a game-changer for fish and wildlife – in Texas and across the country," said John Shepperd, a spokesman for the Texas Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife. "These funds would create new jobs, stimulate the nature tourism economy, improve our understanding of fish and wildlife, and restore imperiled wildlife populations and habitats."

Texas' varied landscape supports a rich diversity of native plants and animals. Millions of geese, ducks, and sandhill cranes winter on the state's coastal prairies. Pileated woodpeckers dart through East Texas forests. Texas horned lizards hunt for ants on the Great Plains. The Big Bend area and South Texas host birds not seen anywhere else in the country, attracting tourists from all over the world.

“We’ve heard all our lives that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” continued Shepperd. “The Recovering America’s Wildlife Act is that ounce and the benefits are enormous. Healthy fish and wildlife populations benefit Texas’ booming outdoor recreation economy which includes hunting, angling, wildlife watching, kayaking, and hiking. Functioning ecosystems provide food, fiber, timber, and clean air and water. Avoiding listing species as endangered lets businesses focus on business. Spending time in nature helps children achieve and do better in school.”

The Recovering America’s Wildlife Act would implement the recommendations of the [Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America’s Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources](#). This panel, comprised of conservation organizations, oil and gas industry leaders, sportsman groups, representative of state and federal agencies, and outdoor recreation retailers, concluded that the provisions of the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act would benefit all Americans.

The Texas Alliance for America’s Fish and Wildlife was formed to give Texans a voice for wildlife. Every citizen can help, by urging their Member of Congress to co-sponsor H.R. 4647.

Texas Alliance for America’s Fish & Wildlife is a coalition of more than a hundred organizations that represent more than a million Texans dedicated to speaking with one voice in support of wildlife conservation in the state of Texas. The Texas Alliance works cooperatively with the national Alliance for America’s Fish & Wildlife to support conservation throughout the United States.

You can learn more about the Texas Alliance for America’s Fish and Wildlife and the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act by visiting www.txwildlifealliance.org. Photos for media use can be found [here](#).