



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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The Honorable Bob Graham
SH-524 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0903

Dear Senator Graham:

On behalf of professional wildlife biologists in Florida, The Wildlife Society requests your support of the Teaming With Wildlife funding (TWW) initiative. The initiative would fund the conservation of species that are not hunted or endangered. The so called "non-game" species comprise 90% of wildlife yet they receive only 10% of available funding. America's game species are thriving today because, 60 years ago, hunters established a user fee system on their equipment to fund conservation efforts. Teaming With Wildlife is modeled after the sportsmen's highly successful Wildlife (Pittman-Robertson) and Sport Fish (Wallop-Breaux) Restoration Funds.

There is strong demand for outdoor recreation in America, with an estimated 63 million participants spending \$ 31 billion in 1996 according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. However, at a time of increasing urbanization, many people are losing a connection to nature. By providing increased outdoor opportunities to the public, states will be creating a positive opportunity to introduce millions of people to the outdoors through wildlife recreation, education and conservation. Under TWW Florida fish and wildlife and parks agencies would be able to supply citizens of our state 20 million dollars worth of fish and wildlife conservation and recreation. For example, new trails, nature and education centers, and bird watching areas would be built.

Teaming With Wildlife would place a minimal user fee (.25%-5%) on the manufacturers price of outdoor recreation equipment (such as canoes, binoculars, backpacks, feeders, field guides, camera equipment, birdseed, tents, mountain bikes) that would be dedicated to wildlife. Local communities and state wildlife agencies would retain control over the funds by designing projects funded by TWW. The cost is minimal to take preventative conservation measures before drastic declines cause species to become listed as threatened or endangered. Under TWW, funds will be used as a proactive tool to prevent declining species from becoming listed as threatened or endangered.

Teaming With Wildlife is a "user-pay, user-benefit" program that allows outdoor enthusiasts to play an active role in the conservation of fish and wildlife resources. By joining the national coalition, 2,140 businesses and conservation organizations representing millions of Americans, have made a commitment to create a wildlife-rich outdoors. The Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society urges you to sponsor the TWW bill. If you require further information, please call.

Sincerely,

Julie Hovis/President of the Florida Chapter of TWS