

Idaho Fish & Game News

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Funding Wildlife Management at Idaho Fish & Game

Though it is a publicly owned resource, wildlife gets little public funding.

In Idaho, funding for Fish and Game fish and wildlife management comes from a variety of sources that fall under one of four general categories: hunter and angler license, permit and tag sales; federal funds from excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment and motorboat fuel; mitigation agreements for hydro-electric projects and other commercial activities; and federal and private grants and donations.

For more than 70 years, fish and wildlife management in Idaho has benefited from federal trust funds since the U.S. Congress passed the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act – better known as the Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937. Subsequently, Congress passed the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act – better known as the Dingell-Johnson Act of 1950 – and the Aquatic Resources Trust Act – or the Wallop-Breaux Amendment of 1984.

Fish and Game also gets money for hydroelectric power mitigation from sources including the Bonneville Power Administration, Idaho Power Co., PacifiCorp and Avista. In 2012, it amounted to more than \$13 million, which went to fisheries and wildlife programs.

These sources, along with state hunting, trapping, and fishing license revenues have been critical to the establishment of state fish and wildlife management agencies and have provided the primary financial support for game management in Idaho and throughout the country.

But most wildlife species are not hunted or fished. Though Fish and Game is chartered to manage all wildlife species, it generally has limited funds available to study and manage nongame species.

So what about the species that aren't hunted or fished?

In 2000, the U.S. Congress launched an effort to help the states meet the need for conservation of all fish and wildlife through the State Wildlife Grants program. Idaho has embraced this program by developing its State Wildlife Action Plan.

Fish and Game does not use revenue from the sale of hunting or fishing licenses or any state tax for nongame management or to leverage State Wildlife Grants.

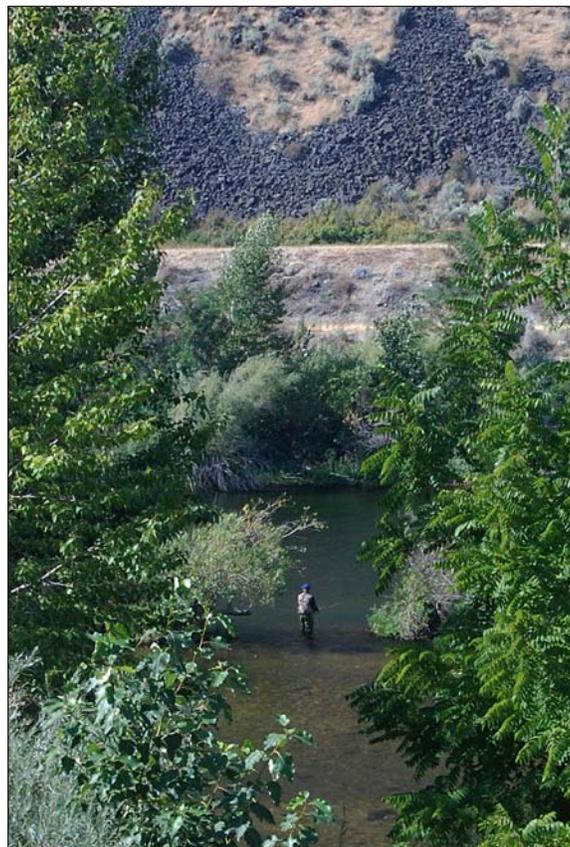
To leverage these federal grants and to pay for nongame species conservation, Fish and Game relies on donations, the sale of specialty wildlife license plates, and a state income tax check-off.

Some states use similar mechanisms to fund nongame species conservation and to meet the need to match federal grants, such as State Wildlife Grants.

Some states, such as Arkansas and Missouri, use revenue from a sales tax increase. Others, such as Arizona, Colorado and Maine, use revenues from a state lottery.

Some other states use a portion of existing sales tax revenues, and some use a portion of taxes on the sale of sporting goods to pay for the stewardship of this publicly owned resource.

The potential funding mechanisms for wildlife management are as diverse as the states and their wildlife.



Nearly half of Fish and Game's revenue comes from license and tag sales, like from this angler. *IDFG photo*

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Taxes on Fishing Equipment Sales Help Improve Fishing, Access and Habitat

By Paul Kline

As a result of federal legislation in 1950, anglers and boaters pay a little more for their equipment and motorboat fuel, but it means they enjoy better fishing and boating opportunities.

The Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act was passed in 1950; two years later Idaho Fish and Game initiated its Sport Fish Restoration program.

Fish and Game's first apportionment was \$44,639. The money primarily supported statewide fishery management, and to a lesser extent, land purchases to protect habitat and ensure access. Ten percent of the total was used to develop and maintain boating access, as required by the act.

With the passing of the Wallop-Breaux Amendment of 1984, Fish and Game's share went up. It grew to \$602,397 in 1985. Funds helped support statewide fishery management, a growing fishery research program, and the required boating access element, still at 10 percent of the total.

Fish and Game's share went to \$1,863,348 in 1996, and to \$2,438,294 in 1997. The revenue increase meant more money for fishery management and research programs, with added staff and increased operation and maintenance budgets. Funding for graduate studies also increased. Boating and fishing access programs, aquatic education programs, and a new technical assistance program also benefitted.

Dingell-Johnson grants require a 3:1 match with nonfederal money – that means for every \$1 Fish and Game spends on fish management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service pays \$3 for the same



This boat ramp on the Snake River is one of many maintained by Idaho Fish and Game.

IDFG photo by Evin Oneale

purpose. Matching funds are generated by using volunteers or with fishing license revenues.

In 2012, Fish and Game got \$6,046,296. Twenty-three states received higher payments while 31 states and territories received lower apportionments.

Sport Fish Restoration funds go to:

- Fishery management - 37 percent.
- Fishery research - 13 percent.
- Fish hatchery production/fish health management - 10 percent.
- Boating and fishing access - 22 percent.
- Aquatic education - 9 percent.
- Technical assistance - 9 percent.

The Sport Fish Restoration Program, a cooperative effort among federal and state agencies, the sport fishing industry, anglers and boaters, is designed to increase sport fishing and boating opportunities through the wise investment of anglers' and boaters' tax dollars.

In Idaho, Dingell-Johnson funds account for 60 percent of spending on fishery management and fishery research and 75 percent of boating and fishing access, aquatic education and technical assistance program.

The money comes from taxes that equipment manufacturers pay on all the essential sport fishing items, such as rods, reels, lines, lures, hooks, sinkers and jigs. Nearly every imaginable fishing

accessory is taxed, including nets, creels, floats, downriggers, fighting chairs and rod holders. Boat hulls and trolling motors are taxed as well. And a portion of the fuel tax is attributed to motor boats based on boat registrations.

Fishing equipment is taxed at 10 percent. Boat hulls, trolling motors and fuel are taxed at different rates. The revenues are deposited in the U.S. Treasury and disbursed to state fishery agencies based on the area of the state and the number of licenses sold.

Hydroelectric Power Mitigation

Idaho Fish and Game gets more than \$13 million annually in mitigation for the effects of hydroelectric power projects on fish and wildlife from sources including:

- Bonneville Power Administration.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- NOAA Fisheries.
- Private companies, such as Idaho Power Co., PacifiCorp and Avista Corp.

Most of the money is spent on fisheries programs, such as fish hatcheries, and some is spent on wildlife and habitat restoration projects.

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Fish and Game Commission:

Chairman: Randy Budge

Director: Virgil Moore

Published by Idaho Fish and Game

600 South Walnut

P.O. Box 25, Boise, ID 83707

(208) 334-3746

E-mail: idfginfo@idfg.idaho.gov

<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov>

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Pittman-Robertson Funding Helps Fish & Game Pay for Wildlife Management

By Brad Compton

The Pittman-Robertson Act passed in 1937, one year before Idaho voters created the Idaho Fish and Game Commission by voter initiative in 1938.

The act places a 10 to 11 percent excise tax on firearms and ammunition. The revenue is distributed to state wildlife management agencies for “wildlife-restoration projects.” The taxes are paid by the manufacturers who pass it on to the hunters who buy the firearms and ammunition. Through time, amendments to the act have added handguns and archery equipment, further bolstering “PR funding” for state wildlife management activities, and added hunter education as an activity for which PR funding can be used.

PR funding is dedicated to:

- Restoration, conservation, management and enhancement of wild bird and mammal populations.
- Acquiring and managing wildlife habitats.
- Providing public use that benefits from wildlife resources.
- Educating hunters on conservation ethics and safety.
- Constructing, operating, and managing recreational firearm shooting and archery ranges.

PR funding can be used for a variety of wildlife management activities, including projects to benefit nongame species. Idaho Fish and Game has long maintained the commitment to the user-pay, user-benefit model and dedicated

PR funding to game management activities. PR funding cannot be used for law enforcement, public relations, depredation management, or put-and-take programs, such as pheasant stocking. These Fish and Game activities are funded solely by license dollars.

PR funding is distributed to states through apportionments based on the size of the state and the number of licensed hunters. Idaho’s first apportionment was \$17,841 in 1939. Apportionments have grown through time, and in 2012, Fish and Game received \$6,944,524.

Unlike license and tag fees that remain the same price unless the Idaho Legislature enacts a fee increase, PR funding has a built in inflation index because it is based on a percentage. As the price of firearms, ammunition and archery equipment increases, so does the amount of funding available to states for wildlife conservation.

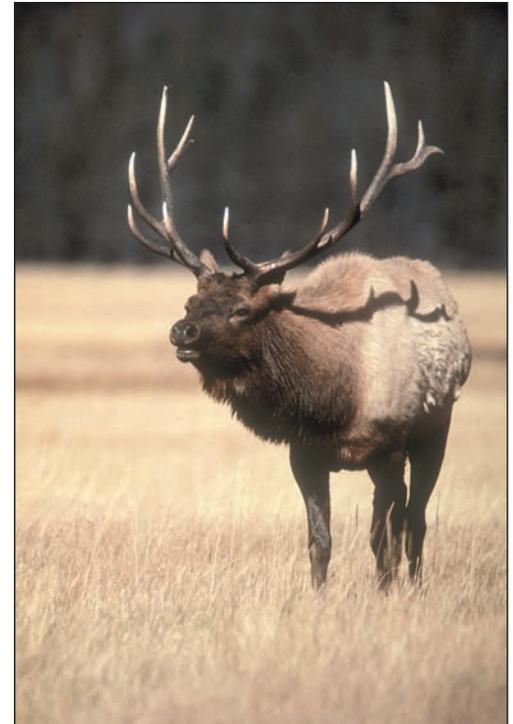
PR funding must be matched by the state wildlife agency at one state dollar for every three PR dollars. The most common form of match is state hunting license and tag dollars.

As hunting license and tag revenues have remained stable or declined through time, PR funding has been important to maintain current services hunters want from Fish and Game. For example, increased PR funding during the past few years has allowed Idaho Fish and Game to maintain aerial surveys for deer, elk, moose, mountain goat and bighorn sheep, and to acquire crucial habitat for wildlife. Fish and Game also has been able to maintain research on the effects of wolves on elk, in large part with PR funding.

Idaho Fish and Game has allocated the \$6,944,524 received in 2012 among six wildlife management functions:

- Habitat management - 33 percent.
- Population management - 32 percent.
- Wildlife research - 13 percent.
- Hunter education - 13 percent.
- Technical assistance - 6 percent.
- Wildlife health - 3 percent.

PR funding provides 30 percent of the



Rocky Mountain elk

IDFG photo

wildlife management funds for Idaho Fish and Game. More importantly, PR funding is the primary funding source for hunter education in Idaho. Match for the PR funding is made up by volunteer hunter education instructors as a form of “in-kind match,” so no state license or tag funding is needed.

Though Rep. A. Willis Robertson, a Virginia Democrat, was not an original author of the congressional bill, he did add the famous “29 words.” Those famous words are: “... and which shall include a prohibition against the diversion of license fees paid by hunters for any other purpose than the administration of said state fish and game department.”

These simple words require states, in order to continue receiving PR funds, to pass and maintain state laws that preserve the use of license and tag fees for wildlife management purposes, preventing use for other state purposes.

Idaho passed the necessary “assent language” in 1939 and has received PR funding since; allowing the agency to continue providing important wildlife management services to citizens.

Idaho Fish and Game Policy

Idaho wildlife management policy is set by seven volunteer commissioners. The Idaho Fish and Game Commission’s policy decisions are based on research and recommendations by the professional staff of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and with input from the governor’s office, the state Legislature, hunters, anglers and the public.

Federal Grants Help Conserve Idaho's Imperiled Wildlife

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that the pygmy rabbit did not warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act.

The decision was based in part on new information from Idaho Fish and Game – work funded by a “State Wildlife Grant.”

In 2000, Congress established the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program to assist states and their partners with the conservation of more than 12,000 species of fish and wildlife that are at-risk. It is the only federal program with the explicit goal of preventing ESA listings – and is critical for states to retain their management authority of wildlife.

The grant program continues the long cooperation between the federal government and states for conserving wildlife, dating to landmark laws, such as the 1937 Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and the 1950 Dingell-Johnson Sportfish Restoration Act.

To participate, each state and territorial fish and wildlife agency developed a State Wildlife Action Plan. Plans were approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and are being implemented with funding from the program.

Idaho submitted its wildlife action plan on September 30, 2005. It was accepted in February 2006 and identifies 229 “Species of Greatest Conservation Need.”

Each state gets 1 to 5 percent of the available funds. Territories get less. The exact amount is based on the state's land area and population – larger and more populous states get more funding. Nationally the program has awarded about \$367 million in grants for conservation efforts since its inception.

Idaho gets about \$560,000 annually under current apportionments. The funding provides money to conduct surveys and to monitor at-risk species to determine their conservation status and to take conservation actions to keep them off the endangered species list.

The money supports a nongame biologist in each of the department's regional offices who is responsible for conducting the surveys and monitoring of at-risk species at the local level and

coordinating these efforts with local conservation partners, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, non-governmental organizations, land trusts and private landowners in Idaho.

Voluntary public funding is crucial to Idaho's nongame programs.

The state wildlife grants require a 50-50 match, effectively doubling the state's resources for at-risk species conservation. Money for the match comes from a nongame trust account – state revenue from an income tax check-off, specialty wildlife license plate sales and donations. No state tax revenue goes into the trust fund or any other Fish and Game budget.

Formal funding of Idaho Fish and Game's Wildlife Diversity Program began when the Idaho Legislature approved a state income tax check-off on the 1981 tax form, which continues as an important source of program income.

In 1992, the Legislature passed the wildlife license plate bill that allowed a portion of the specialized license plate proceeds to benefit the diversity program. The bluebird plate became available in 1993. The elk plate was added in 1998 and the cutthroat trout plate in 2003. The license plate program is sponsored by the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Revenue from wildlife license plate sales provides most of the income to the nongame trust account and the critical match with which to leverage federal funds, such as the state wildlife grants.

In 2012, with \$45,000 from the nongame account and a \$155,000 volunteer match, Idaho Fish and Game received a \$950,000 Competitive State Wildlife Grant to launch the Multi-Species Baseline Initiative, involving a coalition of more than 20 organizations.

Fish and Game will lead the initiative that involves surveying the Idaho Panhandle and northeastern Washington for 20 high priority species identified in either Idaho's or Washington's State Wildlife Action Plans. Biologists will collect location data for these species, as well as baseline information on their microclimate needs.

All 20 species are described as “lacking essential information” on their status – something the initiative hopes to change. Specifically, this project will provide important distribution and abundance information for these species, which will help wildlife managers develop more specific conservation actions to improve their status.

Survey and inventory data on rare or poorly understood species are invaluable to managers when they make decisions about a species' status or classification.

State nongame funding also supports wildlife conservation, education and recreation programs, including:

- Habitat improvement.
- Wildlife viewing.
- Trail maintenance, interpretive signs.
- Wildlife rehabilitation.
- Publications and classroom materials.
- Nature Center materials and programs.
- Project WILD teacher training.
- The Idaho Birding Trail.

Idaho Fish and Game is responsible for about 10,000 species of fish, wildlife and plants. About 550 are vertebrate animals, 80 percent of which are classified as “nongame wildlife.”



Pygmy rabbit *IDFG photo by Rita Dixon*

Fish and Game Total Funding
Sources: (Approximate breakdown)
License and tag sales: 41 percent
Federal Grants: 34 percent
Mitigation: 14 percent
Donations: 11 percent