

Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act / Pittman-Robertson Act

In the early 1900s, sportsmen's organizations and state wildlife agencies—concerned with unprecedented declines of wildlife populations in the United States—urged Congress to pass the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act. The Act, passed in 1937, designates an excise tax on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment to be used by states to fund wildlife restoration. Today, the Act is often referred to as the Pittman-Robertson Act (P-R Act) after its two key champions: Senator Key Pittman of Nevada and Congressman Willis Robertson of Virginia.

Methods

The P-R Act generates funds through an 11 percent excise tax on long guns, ammunition, and archery equipment and a 10 percent excise tax on handguns. The revenue from this tax goes into the Wildlife Restoration Account administered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).



Funds are then apportioned annually to state wildlife agencies for wildlife restoration programs and hunter education. An additional \$3 million is also allocated to projects that involve cooperation among states through the Multistate Conservation Grant Program¹ (Figure 1). State wildlife agencies use P-R funds to cover up to 75 percent of a project's cost. The

remaining 25 percent of a P-R funded project generally comes from state hunting license revenues: P-R Act requires that all state hunting license revenues go to administering state wildlife agencies.

Results

Since 1939, the Wildlife Restoration Account has generated over \$10 billion, leading to the purchase of approximately 4 million acres of land to support wildlife.¹ Moreover, an additional 40 million acres are being managed for wildlife under agreements with land owners through the use of P-R funds.² P-R funds have also been used to support wildlife research, thereby building scientific capacity and understanding within state agencies.

Discussion

The original purpose of the P-R Act was to provide funding for restoring wildlife populations and to acquire, develop, and manage their habitats.³ The Act was amended in 1970, to include funding for hunter education programs and the development, operation, and maintenance of public shooting ranges.³

The P-R Act is fully funded by sportsmen, but benefits hunters and non-hunters alike. Nearly all lands purchased with P-R money are managed for wildlife production and other public uses like hiking and bird watching. Recent estimates indicate that 70 percent of people using areas conserved by the P-R Act are not hunting.²

Implications for Wildlife Professionals

Funding from the P-R Act provides state wildlife agencies with a continuous, secure, and substantial source of funding. This benefits wildlife professionals working in or with state agencies, by ensuring that they have adequate resources to implement important projects to research, manage, and conserve public trust wildlife for the benefit of society.

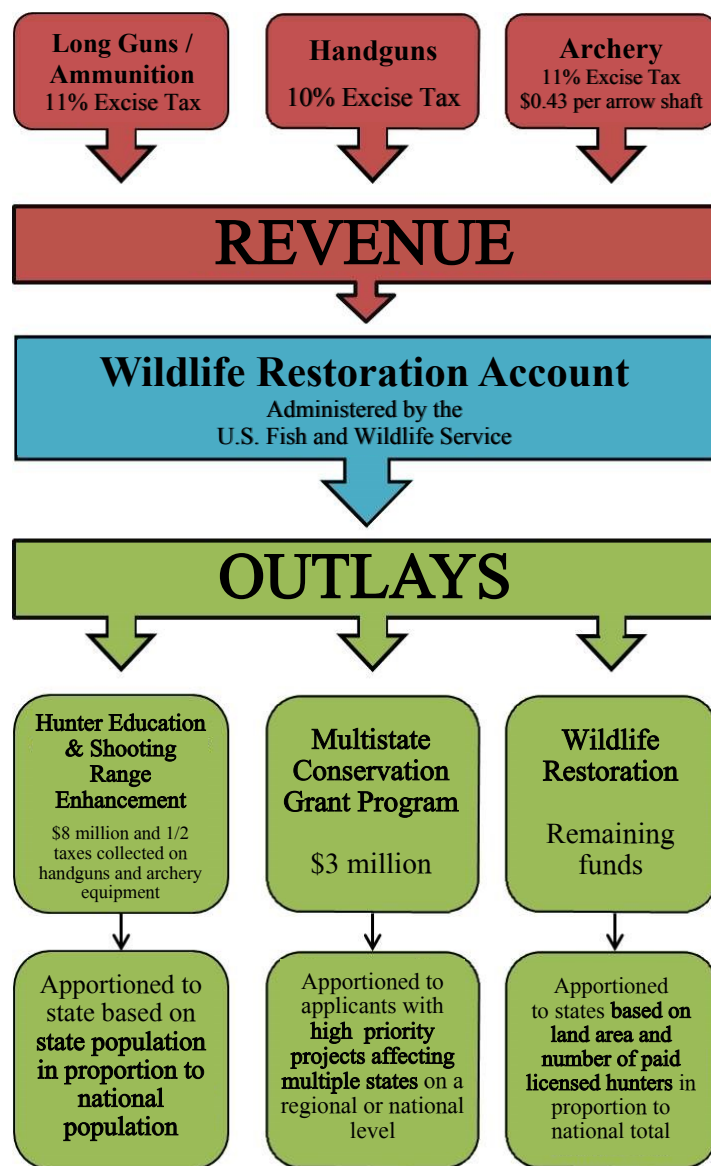


Figure 1. The funding process for excise taxes being apportioned to state wildlife agencies through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act

Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act: Features



Bobwhite Research^{4,5}

The National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI) began in 2002 as a unified strategic effort across numerous U.S. states to restore wild populations of northern bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*), also known as bobwhite quail. The bobwhite has become a symbol of the need for conservation for a myriad of grassland species facing similar declines due to habitat loss at the continental scale. In 2006, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) was awarded \$240,000 through the Multistate Conservation Grant Program to further develop and expand NBCI. With this funding, TWRA effectively developed landscape-level, step-down plans for bobwhite habitat conservation that take into account the needs of other priority grassland species. These plans have proved essential to facilitating the development and implementation of NBCI programs.

Male and female northern bobwhite (Credit: Steve Maslowski, USFWS)

Summer Lake Wildlife Area^{6,7}

The Summer Lake Wildlife Area in Oregon was established in 1944 to protect and improve waterfowl habitat and provide a public hunting area. Acquisition of the land, in addition to various habitat development and infrastructure projects, were partially financed through P-R funds. Today, Summer Lake Wildlife Area is a popular destination not just for hunting, but also wildlife viewing and environmental education. Through the use of P-R funds wildlife biologists and land managers have been able to restore and maintain over 3,000 acres in the wildlife area, which is home to more than 250 species of birds and at least 40 species of mammals, fish, reptiles, and amphibians.

Habitat improvement project at Summer Lake Wildlife Area (Credit: ODFW)



Wildlife Restoration Program⁸

The Wildlife Restoration Program, authorized under the P-R Act, provides grant funds to state fish and wildlife agencies to develop projects that restore, conserve, manage, and enhance wild birds and mammals and their habitats. The Wildlife Restoration Program symbol (see reverse) is used to identify those projects and properties that have utilized P-R funds. Variations of this symbol may also be used by businesses that manufacture or sell guns, ammunition, and archery equipment that contribute excise taxes to the Wildlife Restoration Account. For example, the symbol to the left is often used by businesses associated with the manufacture or sale of products that contribute to wildlife restoration through the P-R Act and sport fish restoration through the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act (also known as the Dingell-Johnson Act).

Sport Fish & Wildlife Restoration Program Symbol (Credit: USFWS)

1. National Shooting Sports Foundation. 2013. Pittman-Robertson Excise Tax.
2. USFWS Southeast Region. 2014. Federal Aid Division – The Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act. <<http://www.fws.gov/southeast/federalaid/pittmanrobertson.html>> Accessed 27 Aug 2014.
3. Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife. 2014. Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration. <http://wdfw.wa.gov/grants/wildlife_restoration/> Accessed 27 Aug 2014.
4. Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. 2010. Funding Critical Conservation Needs. <http://www.fishwildlife.org/files/AFWA_MSCGP-Case-Studies.pdf>
5. National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative. 2016. Status. Retrieved June 9, 2017, from <https://bringbackbobwhites.org/bobwhites/status/>
6. Thomas, M. 2010. Summer Lake Thrives on P_R Funds. The Wildlife Professional. 37.
7. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2014. Summer Lake Wildlife Area. <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/visitors/summer_lake_wildlife_area.asp> Accessed 15 Sept 2014.
8. USFWS. 2017. Wildlife Restoration P-Rogram Overview. <<https://wsfrPrograms.fws.gov/subpages/grantPrograms/wr/wr.htm>> Accessed 07 Jun 2017.

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