

Testimony of Roy Blunt
United States Senator for Missouri
Before the Senate Committee on Environment & Public Works
Hearing on S. 2372, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act
December 8, 2021

As Prepared For Delivery

Chairman Carper and Ranking Member Capito, thank you for inviting me to participate in today's legislative hearing on critical legislation – S. 2372, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act.

I would also like to thank my colleague, Senator Heinrich, who I have partnered with to advance this legislation along with the 32 other bipartisan co-sponsors of this bill. This legislation would be the most significant investment in wildlife conservation in a generation— it would fund proactive, voluntary conservation efforts to address the nation's wildlife crisis.

Enactment of this legislation into law would boost our economy, create more outdoor recreation opportunities, provide regulatory certainty to landowners across the country facing costly and burdensome impacts to potential threatened and endangered species listings, and conserve our natural heritage for future generations.

Also, I am pleased to introduce one of the panel's witnesses testifying today, who hails from Missouri.

Ms. Sara Parker Pauley is testifying on behalf of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies where she served as the organization's president until September of this year. She currently serves as the ninth director of the Missouri Department of Conservation, a position she has held since November of 2016.

Sara previously served as Director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources from 2010 to 2016, and began her professional career as a Policy Analyst with the Missouri Department of Conservation from 1993 to 1996. A native of Columbia, Missouri, Sara received both her law degree and bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Missouri – Columbia, and did post-graduate studies in Australia as a Rotary Fellow.

Just last month, Sara and I held events across the state of Missouri highlighting the Recovering America's Wildlife Act.

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act establishes a new program, the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program, within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, to promote voluntary conservation efforts to restore and protect at-risk, threatened, or endangered species.

This new program would provide approximately \$1.3 billion annually to states, territories, and tribes for activities related to proactive and collaborative habitat restoration efforts to increase wildlife populations or prevent species from being listed under the Endangered Species Act.

This bill would help fund critical conservation habitat in Missouri's grasslands to help promote species like the bob-white quail, meadow larks, and greater prairie chickens. It will also help protect and restore wetlands that support species like the wood ducks.

This legislation would boost Missouri's outdoor recreation economy, which supports 93,000 jobs in our state and contributes \$7.4 billion to the local economy, and depends on healthy fish and wildlife populations. The bill would ensure more wildlife viewing opportunities, which directly contributes to millions of jobs and billions in annual consumer spending.

Based upon the legislative proposal, Missouri is estimated to receive \$22 million annually, including the state matching funds, compared to \$1 million the state receives in federal funding under current law.

I look forward to working with the Chairman and Ranking Member on advancing this bill through the Committee.

This bill, as drafted, has broad, bipartisan support in the Senate along with a diverse group of stakeholder support as well, including the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, the Congressional Sportsmen Caucus, the National Wildlife Federation, and 1,500 organizations representing state fish and wildlife agencies, industry associations and businesses, conservation groups, and sportsmen and women. Thank you again and I look forward to working together to advance this important legislation.