

News Release



FRIENDS of
Great Salt Lake

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MASSIVE CUTS TO CONSERVATION PROGRAMS COULD HAVE DEVASTATING IMPACTS ON UTAH

*Hunters and conservationists call on Rob Bishop and the Utah
Congressional delegation to reverse course and support
continued funding of programs that have created jobs
and greatly benefited the Great Salt Lake*

Salt Lake City, UT – The US House of Representatives is scheduled to vote on a major appropriations bill next week. The current funding bill contains dramatic cuts to two key conservation programs – the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Both programs have had enormous positive impacts on Utah, especially in the 1st Congressional District, which contains the Great Salt Lake and is represented by Congressman Rob Bishop.

Representative Bishop earlier this year proposed a resolution to completely defund the two programs, despite the benefits the programs provide the 1st Congressional District. Today, conservation and hunting groups joined to call on Representative Bishop and the entire Utah delegation to reverse course and not slash these two remarkable programs.

Referring to the proposal, Lynn de Freitas of FRIENDS of Great Salt Lake said, “The House of Representatives proposed budget would seriously jeopardize efforts to preserve important land and habitats in Northern Utah. Investments Utahns have made in wildlife refuges, parks and recreation areas where people hunt, fish, hike, and watch wildlife will be set back, and the jobs people enjoy in the recreation and tourism industry will be put at risk.”

Groups Oppose Cuts to Conservation Programs (Page 2)

The bill cuts funding for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) in 2012 from \$37.5 million in 2011 to \$20 million in 2012, a 47% decrease. The program was already cut by 21% last year. NAWCA has helped preserve 55,298 acres of important wetlands in the 1st District, including prime hunting areas and wildlife habitats on the Great Salt Lake.

“These programs are critical for restoring and maintaining wetlands in Northern Utah and also for creating and preserving jobs in the outdoor industry,” said Joel Ferry, and member of the Utah Waterfowl Association who owns and manages several duck clubs on his family’s ranch in Corinne.

In addition, the \$3.6 million in NAWCA funds that have come to Utah have stimulated local and private contributions of \$10.4 million, a nearly 290% leverage of the federal funds.

“NAWCA funds matched with state and private funds to restore wetlands in state managed Waterfowl Management Areas have benefited public hunters, as well as the public in general” said Steve Earley, a Davis County duck hunter and board member of the Utah Waterfowl Association. “Public events like the Bald Eagle Day are held on these state properties that have directly benefitted from NAWCA matching funds. In recent years, NAWCA, state and private funds were used to restore wetlands at Farmington Bay Waterfowl Management Area in Davis County. The project was named for the late Doug Miller, whose family joined with hunters and non-hunters to raise money for the project”.

The bill also proposes an 80% cut to funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) for the 2012 fiscal year, after funding was slashed 30% the year before. Bishop supported these cuts, even though the LWCF has funded more than 450 projects around Utah, including improvements to the Golden Spike National Historic Site, Antelope Island, Farmington Bay Waterfowl Management Area, and Bear Lake State Park. The LWCF has also funded the Bonneville Shoreline Trail and community parks in nearly every northern Utah community including Layton, Bountiful, Brigham City, Willard, Logan, Smithfield, Providence, Randolph, Tooele, Grantsville, Ogden, Roy, Riverdale, and Salt Lake City.