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The Voice of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

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REP. SAXTON AWARDED FOR EFFORTS TO HELP CONSERVE WILDLIFE

Congressional leaders presented with awards during a two-day event to highlight State Wildlife Grants

WASHINGTON, DC (March 2, 2007) — This week, Representative Jim Saxton (R - NJ) was presented an award for his leadership in championing federal funding for state-based wildlife conservation under the State Wildlife Grants Program. The award recognizes his role in leading an effort to secure greater funding for the State Wildlife Grants Program, which remains our nation's core program for preventing wildlife from becoming endangered in every state. The award was presented at a breakfast this morning sponsored by Teaming with Wildlife Coalition and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation.

"Wildlife habitat up and down the coasts have been disappearing at an alarming rate over the last 10 years," said Saxton, whose New Jersey district includes nearly 30 miles of barrier islands, three large bays, a National Wildlife Refuge and a half-million acres of federally-protected Pinelands. "Overdevelopment is a problem everywhere along the Jersey Shore. State and federal cooperative efforts to preserve wildlife habitat areas are a good way to stabilize or increase species populations. It's easier and effective and far less expensive to prevent a species from declining than to attempt a last-ditch effort to bring them back from the brink of extinction. Land preservation not only helps wildlife, it helps curb development and creates open space for people, too."

Representative Saxton and other members of Congress were honored during the *Teaming with Wildlife Fly-In Days*, an annual event held by the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition to educate Congress about the State Wildlife Grants Program. Each was honored for their "exceptional leadership in advocating state wildlife conservation funding" and "commitment to America's wildlife (that) will leave a lasting legacy for generations to come."

During the three-day "Fly-In" event, more than 150 conservation leaders from 42 states, including representatives from state fish and wildlife agencies and dozens of other conservation organizations, ranging from environmental and hunting and fishing groups to wildlife-based

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businesses met with their lawmakers to inform them about the State Wildlife Grants Program. Teaming with Wildlife, a national coalition of 5,000 conservation-minded organizations and businesses, works to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered by supporting increased state and federal funding for wildlife conservation.

“State agencies leverage State Wildlife Grants funding to help restore habitat, reintroduce wildlife, and work with private landowners to help keep wildlife from declining,” said Ed Parker, president of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Bureau Chief of the Bureau of Natural Resources for the Connecticut Dept. of Environmental Protection. “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure is the perfect adage for this program. This is a wise use of taxpayer dollars that delivers on-the-ground results for wildlife.”

The State Wildlife Grants Program provides federal money to every state and territory for cost-effective conservation aimed at preventing wildlife from becoming endangered. This program continues the long history of cooperation between the federal government and the states for managing and conserving wildlife. Funds appropriated under the State Wildlife Grants Program are allocated to every state according to a formula based on each state’s size and population.

The President’s Budget is calling for \$69.5 million in 2008 for State Wildlife Grants, an increase from last year’s final appropriation of \$67.5 million, but the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition feels this number remains well below the amount it will take to conserve the nation’s wildlife and their habitats. The coalition has called for \$85 million, recognizing that this also is too low. Already, the coalition is working to help wildlife agencies secure additional funding through several recently-introduced climate change bills. These bills would, in part, fund the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program of the Pittman-Robertson Act.

"Sportsmen have always been leaders in conserving wildlife in America," says Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation President, Jeff Crane. "Working with our allies in the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, we are proud of the funding that the State Wildlife Grants Program has received, and I hope that this year, the program expands to do even more good for wildlife conservation."

Despite historical successes in bringing many wildlife species back from the brink of extinction, other species have continued to decline as evidenced by the staggering numbers listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. State hunting and fishing license dollars, federal excise taxes on hunting and fishing gear, and motorboat fuel taxes have provided the backbone for funding the nation’s state wildlife conservation programs over the past century. However, there has always been a gap in funding for species that are not hunted or fished. State Wildlife Grants has provided state fish and wildlife agencies with the resources they critically need to fill that gap.

To learn more about the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition, visit www.teaming.com and www.wildlifeactionplans.org.

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The **Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**—the organization that represents all of North America’s fish and wildlife agencies—promotes sound management and conservation, and speaks with a unified voice on important fish and wildlife issues. Found on the web at www.fishwildlife.org.