



Western Governors' Association Policy Resolution 13-04

Conserving Wildlife and Crucial Habitat in the West

A. BACKGROUND

1. Large intact and functioning ecosystems, healthy fish and wildlife populations, and abundant public access to natural landscapes are significant contributing factors to the West's economy and quality of life.
2. Wildlife-associated recreation — including hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching — generates over \$65 billion annually in 19 western states.
3. States possess broad trustee, police powers and primacy over the management of fish and wildlife within their borders. States work cooperatively with federal agencies on species and habitat issues throughout the West.
4. Federal and state agencies need data-driven science, mapping and analysis to manage species and habitat. That same information is needed to address other challenges, including the potential listing of species (such as the Greater Sage-Grouse), the spread of invasive species, the impacts of drought, water transfers, and energy development.
5. Western Governors established the Western Governors' Wildlife Council to identify key wildlife corridors and crucial wildlife habitats in the West. In December 2013, the Wildlife Council will launch a West-wide Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT) that will depict crucial wildlife habitat across 17 western states in a user-friendly GIS tool.
6. Providing these data and maps in one place through the CHAT offers efficient and effective analytical tools and information to industry and the public. The level of information available in this map will facilitate the pre-planning of energy and transportation projects, as well as inform land-use decisions.
7. Federal agencies are engaged in a broad array of initiatives that seek, in part, to address challenges to wildlife management. These efforts include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs), the USFWS Surrogate Species initiative, and the Bureau of Land Management's Rapid Ecoregional Assessments (REAs). Limited staff and funding resources make it difficult for states to fully engage in these federal efforts without sacrificing time spent on other wildlife management activities.

B. GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT

1. Western Governors direct the Western Governors' Wildlife Council to continue its guidance in the development, management and implementation with partners of the state and West-wide CHATs.
2. Western Governors urge federal agencies to use state fish and wildlife data and analyses as principal sources to inform their land use, land planning and related natural resource decisions, rather than spending scarce resources duplicating existing state data collection efforts.
3. Western Governors encourage federal agencies to provide their data to state wildlife mapping efforts, to ensure that the most complete data is available and incorporated into the state and West-wide CHATs.
4. The Governors encourage widespread use of CHATs by industry, the public, and state and federal agencies. Decision-makers at all levels in the public and private sectors can use state CHATs to better inform energy, transportation, and land use planning while providing for healthy and productive landscapes.
5. Western Governors believe funding should be made available to those states that are requested by federal agencies to participate in any Landscape Conservation Cooperative initiative or other federal landscape-level, drought planning and/or research efforts related to wildlife management.

C. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE

1. The Governors direct the WGA staff, where appropriate, to work with Congressional committees of jurisdiction and the Executive Branch to achieve the objectives of this resolution.
2. Furthermore, the Governors direct WGA staff to develop, as appropriate and timely, detailed annual work plans to advance the policy positions and goals contained in this resolution. Those work plans shall be presented to, and approved by, Western Governors prior to implementation. WGA staff shall keep the Governors informed, on a regular basis, of their progress in implementing approved annual work plans.

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