

Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956

[Chapter 1036 of the 84th Congress, Enacted August 8, 1956; 70 Stat. 1119]

[As Amended Through P.L. 117–328, Enacted December 29, 2022]

[Currency: This publication is a compilation of the text of chapter 1036 of the 84th Congress. It was last amended by the public law listed in the As Amended Through note above and below at the bottom of each page of the pdf version and reflects current law through the date of the enactment of the public law listed at <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/comps/>**]**

[Note: While this publication does not represent an official version of any Federal statute, substantial efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of its contents. The official version of Federal law is found in the United States Statutes at Large and in the United States Code. The legal effect to be given to the Statutes at Large and the United States Code is established by statute (1 U.S.C. 112, 204).**]**

AN ACT To establish a sound and comprehensive national policy with respect to fish and wildlife; to strengthen the fish and wildlife segments of the national economy; to establish within the Department of the Interior the position of Assistant Secretary for Fish

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the “Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956”.

* * * * *

POLICIES, PROCEDURES, RECOMMENDATIONS

SEC. 7. (a) The Secretary of the Interior, with such advice and assistance as he may require from the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife, shall consider and determine the policies and procedures that are necessary and desirable in carrying out efficiently and in the public interest the laws relating to fish and wildlife. The Secretary, with the assistance of the departmental staff herein authorized, shall—

(1) develop and recommend measures which are appropriate to assure the maximum sustainable production of fish and fishery products and to prevent unnecessary and excessive fluctuations in such production;

(2) study the economic condition of the industry, and whenever he determines that any segment of the domestic fisheries has been seriously disturbed either by wide fluctuation in the abundance of the resource supporting it, or by unstable market or fishing conditions or due to any other factors he shall make such recommendations to the President and the Congress as he deems appropriate to aid in stabilizing the domestic fisheries;

(3) develop and recommend special promotional and informational activities with a view to stimulating the consumption of fish-

ery products whenever he determines that there is a prospective or actual surplus of such products; and

(4) take such steps as may be required for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources including, but not limited to, research, development of existing facilities, and acquisition by purchase or exchange of land and water, or interests therein.

(b)(1) In furtherance of the purposes of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior is authorized to accept any gifts, devises, or bequests of real and personal property, or proceeds therefrom, or interests therein, for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude, if such terms are deemed by the Secretary to be in accordance with law and compatible with the purpose for which acceptance is sought.

(2) USE OF GIFTS, DEVISES, AND BEQUESTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Any gifts and bequests of money and proceeds from the sales of other property received as gifts or bequests pursuant to this subsection shall be deposited in a separate account in the Treasury and shall be disbursed upon order of the Secretary for the benefit of programs administered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

(B) GIFTS, DEVISES, AND BEQUESTS TO PARTICULAR REFUGES.—

(i) DISBURSAL.—Any gift, devise, or bequest made for the benefit of a particular national wildlife refuge or complex of geographically related refuges shall be disbursed only for the benefit of that refuge or complex of refuges and without further appropriations.

(ii) MATCHING.—Subject to the availability of appropriations and the requirements of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.) and other applicable law, the Secretary may provide funds to match gifts, devises, and bequests made for the benefit of a particular national wildlife refuge or complex of geographically related refuges. With respect to each gift, devise, or bequest, the amount of Federal funds may not exceed the amount (or, in the case of property or in-kind services, the fair market value) of the gift, devise, or bequest.

(3) For the purpose of Federal income, estate, and gift taxes, property, or proceeds therefrom, or interests therein, accepted under this subsection shall be considered as a gift or bequest to the United States.

(c)(1) The Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Commerce may each recruit, train, and accept, without regard to the provisions of title 5, United States Code, the services of individuals without compensation as volunteers for, or in aid of programs conducted by either Secretary through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

(2) The Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Commerce are each authorized to provide for incidental expenses such as transportation, uniforms, lodging, awards (including nominal cash awards) and recognition, and subsistence of such volunteers without regard to their places of residence.

(3) Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, a volunteer shall not be deemed a Federal employee and shall not be subject to the provisions of law relating to Federal employment, including those relative to hours of work, rates of compensation, leave, unemployment compensation, and Federal employee benefits.

(4) For the purpose of the tort claim provisions of title 28 of the United States Code, a volunteer under this subsection shall be considered a Federal employee.

(5) For the purposes of subchapter I of chapter 81 of title 5 of the United States Code, relating to compensation to Federal employees for work injuries, volunteers under this subsection shall be deemed employees of the United States within the meaning of the term “employees” as defined in section 8101 of title 5, United States Code, and the provisions of that subchapter shall apply.

(6) SENIOR VOLUNTEER CORPS.—The Secretary of the Interior may establish a Senior Volunteer Corps, consisting of volunteers over the age of 50. To assist in the recruitment and retention of the volunteers, the Secretary may provide for additional incidental expenses to members of the Corps beyond the incidental expenses otherwise provided to volunteers under this subsection. The members of the Corps shall be subject to the other provisions of this subsection.

(d) COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP ENHANCEMENT.—

(1) DEFINITION OF PARTNER ORGANIZATION.—In this subsection, the term partner organization means an organization that—

(A) draws its membership from private individuals, organizations, corporations, academic institutions, or State or local governments;

(B) is established to promote the understanding of, education relating to, and the conservation of the fish, wildlife, plants, and cultural and historical resources of a particular refuge or complex of geographically related refuges; and

(C) is described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and is exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of that Code.

(2) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding chapter 63 of title 31, United States Code, the Secretary of the Interior may negotiate and enter into a cooperative agreement with a partner organization, academic institution, State or local government agency, or other person to implement one or more projects or programs for a refuge or complex of geographically related refuges in accordance with the purposes of this subsection and in compliance with the policies of other relevant authorities, regulations, and policy guidance.

(B) **PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS.**—Subject to the requirements of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.) and other applicable law, and such terms and conditions as the Secretary determines to be appropriate, the Secretary may approve projects and programs for a refuge or complex of geographically related refuges that—

(i) promote the stewardship of resources of the refuge through habitat maintenance, restoration, and improvement, biological monitoring, or research;

(ii) support the operation and maintenance of the refuge through constructing, operating, maintaining, or improving the facilities and services of the refuge;

(iii) increase awareness and understanding of the refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System through the development, publication, or distribution of educational materials and products;

(iv) advance education concerning the purposes of the refuge and the mission of the System through the use of the refuge as an outdoor classroom and development of other educational programs; or

(v) contribute financial resources to the refuge, under terms that require that the net revenues be used exclusively for the benefit of the refuge, through donation of net revenues from the sale of educational materials and products and through encouragement of gifts, devises, and bequests.

(C) **FEDERAL FUNDING AND OWNERSHIP.**—

(i) **MATCHING.**—Subject to the availability of appropriations and the requirements of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.) and other applicable law, the Secretary may provide funds to match non-Federal funds donated under a cooperative agreement under this paragraph. With respect to each project or program, the amount of funds provided by the Secretary may not exceed the amount of the non-Federal funds donated through the project or program.

(ii) **USE OF FEDERAL FUNDS.**—Any Federal funds used to fund a project or program under a cooperative agreement may be used only for expenses directly related to the project or program and may not be used for operation or administration of any non-Federal entity.

(iii) **OWNERSHIP OF FACILITIES.**—Any new facility, improvement to an existing facility, or other permanent improvement to a refuge constructed under this subsection shall be the property of the United States Government.

(D) **TREASURY ACCOUNT.**—Amounts received by the Secretary of the Interior as a result of projects and programs under subparagraph (B) shall be deposited in a separate account in the Treasury. Amounts in the account that are attributable to activities at a particular refuge or

complex of geographically related refuges shall be available to the Secretary of the Interior, without further appropriation, to pay the costs of incidental expenses related to volunteer activities, and to carry out cooperative agreements for the refuge or complex of refuges.

(e) REFUGE EDUCATION PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT.—

(1) GUIDANCE.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this subsection, the Secretary of the Interior shall develop guidance for refuge education programs to further the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System and the purposes of individual refuges through—

(A) providing outdoor classroom opportunities for students on national wildlife refuges that combine educational curricula with the personal experiences of students relating to fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitat and to the cultural and historical resources of the refuges;

(B) promoting understanding and conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants and cultural and historical resources of the refuges; and

(C) improving scientific literacy in conjunction with both formal and nonformal education programs.

(2) REFUGE PROGRAMS.—Based on the guidance developed under paragraph (1), the Secretary of the Interior may develop or enhance refuge education programs as appropriate, based on the resources of individual refuges and the opportunities available for such programs in State, local, and private schools. In developing and implementing each program, the Secretary should cooperate with State and local education authorities, and may cooperate with partner organizations in accordance with subsection (d).

(f) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this subsection and every 5 years thereafter, the Secretary of the Interior shall submit a report to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate—

(1) evaluating the accomplishments of the volunteer program, the community partnerships program, and the refuge education programs authorized under this section, and of the National Volunteer Coordination Program and volunteer coordination strategy under section 4(a) of the National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998 (16 U.S.C. 742f-1); and

(2) making recommendations to improve the effectiveness of such programs, including regarding implementing subparagraphs (A), (B), and (C) of paragraph (1) of subsection (e).

(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of the Interior to carry out subsections (b), (c), (d), (e), and (f), \$2,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2023 through 2027.

* * * * *