



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

2024 Annual Report



Sagebrush Montana
Photo Credit: Emily Downing /
Intermountain West Joint Venture

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Introduction

Director's Message

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Since the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's](#) enactment on November 15, 2021, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has dedicated the past three years to implementing a substantial portion of the five-year, \$455 million investment to restore habitats and enhance resilience for both people and nature.

The Service's core values – stewardship, integrity, respect, collaboration, and innovation – form the foundation upon which we prepare for the next century of conservation. These principles guide our decision-making to ensure responsible management of the nation's fish, wildlife, plants, and habitats. Achieving our mission is essential for the health and well-being of present and future generations, requiring significant investments in our communities to help them navigate mounting environmental challenges.

As we enter the fourth year of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, I reflect on the [remarkable work the Service has accomplished](#) across the nation. We've

actively engaged with partners, Tribes, states, and other key stakeholders to build on the proven projects, programs, and collaborations that protect our cherished wildlife and habitats.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law arrived at a pivotal time in our efforts to address critical conservation challenges such as invasive species, heightened wildfire risks in western states, devastating drought in the Klamath Basin, and urban encroachment in regions like the Delaware River Basin.

Since the law's signing, we have made significant strides in addressing these challenges through a grassroots approach driven by our partners and communities. While there are countless accomplishments to celebrate, I would like to highlight a few key successes from the last three years.

Our National Fish Passage Program has 122 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law projects aimed at removing barriers that fragment rivers, block fish migration, and increase

flooding risks for communities. Since 2021, the Service, alongside our partners and Tribal Nations, has successfully removed more than 50 barriers and restored nearly 1,700 miles and 580 acres of vital aquatic habitat, which is essential for maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem health.

In the West, we continue to collaborate with local communities, state and federal agencies, Tribal Nations, conservation groups, and individual private landowners to conserve core habitats within sagebrush country. This area spans over 175 million acres in western states that are home to biological, cultural, and economic resources of national significance. Our projects employ innovative science, including landscape-scale conservation design, to combat invasive grasses and wildfires, reduce encroaching conifers, and safeguard precious water resources, all of which bolster ecological and community resilience in the face of a changing climate.



Watercraft inspector showing how to connect an inspected boat tag.
Photo Credit: Sue Kerver / USFWS

Introduction Director's Message

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In the Delaware River Watershed, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law projects are improving public access, recreational opportunities, and water quality, while enhancing shoreline and wildlife habitat, particularly in underserved, disenfranchised, and disconnected communities. Through direct engagement with community members in project planning and implementation, we are seeing positive outcomes. Supported by the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund, these projects are contributing to the program-wide restoration of more than 25 miles of riparian habitat and the conservation of nearly 1,200 acres of wetlands, benefiting both wildlife and the communities that depend on these vital ecosystems.

Ecosystem Restoration is a vital aspect of our work, and to date, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has provided the Service with the resources to administer 96 projects aimed at achieving [restoration and resilience goals](#), including lessening the impacts of drought, wildfire, and coastal flooding. These projects focus on restoring healthy lands and waters – such as rivers, wetlands, grasslands, islands, and cultural resources – while enhancing community quality of life by improving outdoor spaces and tackling legacy pollution.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law presents us – and nature – with a remarkable opportunity for stewardship and a steadfast commitment to transforming challenges into pathways for brighter futures. We are witnessing the incredible ability of nature to heal itself when provided the opportunity.

It has been my privilege to lead the organization during a time when our collective efforts are making a meaningful difference in addressing climate change, restoring healthy lands and waters, and enhancing the quality of life for communities across the country by improving outdoor spaces and tackling legacy pollution.

As we enter the fourth year of support under this law, I am filled with optimism about our ability to sustain and amplify this momentum. Through the stewardship fostered by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, we are making significant investments in our shared future.

The positive and lasting impacts of these projects on communities across the country – and on the fish, wildlife, plants and habitats we are dedicated to conserving – truly inspire me. I am excited to see how the Service and our partners will continue to build on

this strong foundation, ensuring that our commitment to conservation and community resilience remains steadfast, creating a legacy of progress for generations to come.

Martha Williams
Director, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



Director Williams standing on top of a culvert that will be replaced with a fish-friendly option.

Photo Credit: Sue Kerver / USFWS

Sagebrush Ecosystem Conservation Program

Supporting Collaborative Sagebrush Conservation in the West

America's sagebrush ecosystem is the lifeblood of rural communities in the West and is the largest contiguous ecotype in the U.S., comprising one-third of the land mass of the lower 48 states. Sprawling across 175 million acres of western states, the sagebrush ecosystem supports Tribal lifeways; agricultural, energy, and mineral production; outdoor recreation; and contains biological, cultural, and economic resources of national significance.

Sagebrush country is home to more than 350 wildlife species, including pronghorn, elk, mule deer, and greater sage-grouse.

The Service is committed to working with local communities, state and federal agencies, Tribal Nations, conservation groups, and individual private landowners to ensure they have the tools they need to conserve high quality, functional sagebrush resources.

Since 2022, the Service has invested nearly \$40 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure funding for approximately 200 on-the-ground habitat restoration projects in nine states across the Western U.S. These projects tackle threats such as invasive annual grasses and wildfire through strategic, science-driven targeting and close coordination with local partners. These projects also help safeguard precious water resources for agricultural operations and wildlife and promote community and economic sustainability.

The infographic features a central map of the Western United States, shaded in green, with the title "The Sagebrush Ecosystem" overlaid. Above the map, a blue banner contains the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service logo and name. The map is surrounded by circular images of various species: a pronghorn, a pygmy rabbit, a mule deer, a greater sage-grouse, a sagebrush sparrow, a sagebrush trasher, and arrowleaf balsamroot. A text box at the bottom left of the map area states: "As we enter the fourth year of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, species across the range are seeing transformational benefits from these projects." The bottom right corner of the infographic includes the text "Big Sagebrush" and "Celeste Chen/USFWS".

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The sagebrush ecosystem of the Western United States is the largest continuous ecosystem in the lower 48, covering 175 million acres across 13 states.

The Sagebrush Sea

Pronghorn

Pygmy Rabbit

Mule Deer

Greater Sage-grouse

Sagebrush Sparrow

Sagebrush Trasher

Arrowleaf Balsamroot

Big Sagebrush

Celeste Chen/USFWS

As we enter the fourth year of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, species across the range are seeing transformational benefits from these projects.

Sagebrush Infographic
Credit: Celeste Chen / USFWS

Nature's Infrastructure S1:E7- Catalyzing a Network of Support for the Sagebrush Ecosystem

Hear more about how the Institute for Managing Annual Grasses Invading Natural Ecosystems (IMAGINE) is working alongside the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners Program to leverage existing partnerships and continue sagebrush restoration efforts in the West.



"We have this core team of people that are thinking about: How can we help landowners and land managers do better with managing their rangelands in the face of impacts from invasive annual grasses into the future? We're trying to really empower folks and provide them with support, not just from the scientific standpoint, but also from facilitating some of those discussions, and developing teams, and thinking through connecting people that have already done landscape-scale projects with people that are trying to get up and running."

Dr. Brian Mealor
Director of IMAGINE

Restoring Sagebrush Habitat by Combating Invasive Annual Grasses and Wildfire

Sagebrush funding is allocated to existing and new projects based on priorities established by the Service's Sagebrush Ecosystem Team (SET) and our partners, including Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) and member states, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other Department of the Interior (DOI) bureaus, nongovernmental organizations, and universities.

Additionally, the [Sagebrush Keystone Initiative](#) is enhancing ecological resilience in core sagebrush habitats by collaborating with federal, state and local agencies, private landowners, Tribes, and other stakeholders to make landscape-scale restoration investments across sagebrush country.

The SET, WAFWA, and others are using the [Sagebrush Conservation Design](#) – a landscape-scale tool to prioritize conservation investments in sagebrush – to collaboratively defend and grow intact, functioning

sagebrush geographies and mitigate the primary threats to sagebrush ecological health, namely invasive grasses and wildfire, drought, and encroaching conifers.

In recent years, sagebrush ecological integrity has been threatened by invasive annual grasses that, coupled with the onset of climate change and lengthy droughts, has resulted in increasingly destructive wildfire seasons.

By anchoring conservation in these areas, the Service and its partners can focus on working to restore degraded lands and habitat through the "[Defend the Core, Grow the Core](#)" approach, endorsed by the Western Governors Association and a growing number of partners working across the West.

Some examples of these new and ongoing projects include (next page):



Restoring sagebrush country in Wyoming.

Photo Credit: Sue Kerver / USFWS

Restoration of Stream and Riparian Habitat Conditions in Douglas County

(Washington)

The project aims to restore mesic and riparian habitats along Coyote Spring and McCartney Creek at The Nature Conservancy's Moses Coulee and Beezley Hills Preserves to extend seasonal water availability for sage-grouse and other sagebrush-dependent wildlife. The project will build resilience against drought and climate change while potentially serving as fire breaks or wildlife refuges during wildfires.

2024 **\$76,093**
2025 **\$23,081**



Photo Credit: D. Husband / USFWS

Ranch and Climate Resilience on the Northern Great Plains

(Montana)

This project will work directly with ranches enrolled in World Wildlife Fund's Ranch Systems and Viability Planning network in core sagebrush areas to improve ranch infrastructure, ensure drought resilience of operations, and promote managed grazing systems to provide financial and ecological benefits.

2024 **\$477,085**
2025 **\$87,974**



Photo Credit: E. Downing / WWF

Northwestern Nevada Large-Scale Rangeland Restoration

(Nevada and Oregon)

The goal of this project is to reduce the spread of invasive annual grasses through herbicide application and native seeding, which will improve overall rangeland conditions in and around core sagebrush habitats in northwestern Nevada. This project is in collaboration with the Summit Lake Paiute Tribe and Nevada Department of Wildlife.

2024 **\$303,000**



Photo Credit: H. Nikonov / WWF

Prioritizing Mesic Resources in High Value Watersheds

(Idaho)

This project aims to restore mesic stream habitats using a watershed-scale approach. The "Idaho Stream Team," comprising the Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and various private landowners, is developing standardized plans and practices to streamline the restoration of degraded stream systems.

2025 **\$172,113**



Photo Credit: USFWS

Invasive Annual Grass Management Collaborative

(Wyoming)

This project is a partnership among the Service, the state of Wyoming, Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribes, USDA agencies, local governments, and other partners to control invasive annual grass and defend approximately 100,000 acres of high-quality sagebrush habitat through on-the-ground treatments.

2022 **\$750,000**
2023 **\$630,000**
2024 **\$584,763**
2025 **\$1,095,000**



Photo Credit: S. Kerver / USFWS

Bodie Hills Sagebrush Ecosystem Enhancement Project

(California)

Core sagebrush upland and mesic habitat will be enhanced by implementing a grazing management system through virtual fencing, improvements to livestock water systems, and maintenance on already-completed pinyon-juniper removal project work.

2024 **\$212,268**



Photo Credit: S. Brooker / USFWS

National Fish Passage Program

Restoring Connectivity: The Impact of Fish Passage Projects on Ecosystems and Communities

Obsolete or poorly designed dams, culverts, stream crossings, and levees hinder the movement of fish and other aquatic species, preventing them from feeding, migrating, and reproducing. These barriers not only put fish populations at risk but also undermine the health of rivers and reduce fishing opportunities. Additionally, they fragment aquatic habitats, making them more vulnerable to flooding and drought.

In 2022, the Service was awarded \$200 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding over five years through the National Fish Passage Program to provide technical assistance and to fund local projects aimed at removing hundreds of barriers throughout the nation.

In the last three years, the Service awarded a total of \$143 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for 122 projects designed to eliminate obstacles that fragment rivers, block fish migration, and increase flooding risks for communities.

Nearly one-third of these projects are complete, successfully reconnecting almost 1,700 miles of aquatic habitat, removing over 50 barriers, and restoring 580 acres of vital ecosystems essential for maintaining biodiversity and overall ecosystem health.

When fully completed, these initiatives will enhance fish migration by reopening nearly 12,500 miles of streams and rivers and reconnecting almost one million acres of aquatic habitat while simultaneously improving the nation's infrastructure and natural resources. This reconnection of fragmented waterways will also bolster local economies.

Fish passage projects serve as a powerful engine for economic growth, generating jobs by employing local experts for technical assistance, consulting engineers for design, and construction crews for implementation.

Recent research indicates that for every \$1 million invested in fish passage projects, local economies see a return of between \$1.3 and \$1.5 million. This figure represents benefits such as job creation, increased labor income, and added value. Projects, on average,

create 13 new jobs, support local businesses, can reduce flood risks and insurance costs, sustain commercial and recreational fisheries, and boost tourism.

To learn more about the socioeconomic benefits associated with these projects, explore the Service's [Healthy Rivers, Communities, and Economies Report](#). This report features a variety of case studies that illustrate the significant impact of fish passage projects on communities across the nation.

Through the Service's engagement with communities across the country, we are committed to improving habitats and helping fish species thrive. With nearly half of these efforts being led by or involving Tribal partners, the National Fish Passage Program projects funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law are instrumental in restoring rivers, protecting wildlife, supporting communities, and enhancing climate resilience.

Visit our [National Fish Passage Program website](#) for a list of funded projects and their locations and continue reading to see how some of these initiatives are taking shape.



Little Tonsina River Bridge
Photo Credit: USFWS

Bull Trout In Washington

Washington's Snoqualmie Pass has long served as a vital trade route, historically used by Tribes for trade, hunting, and fishing. However, the construction of Interstate 90 in the 1950s disrupted natural migration pathways and introduced significant challenges for local wildlife, particularly the threatened bull trout and anadromous fish species.

With a \$5 million investment from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in fiscal year 2024 and 2025, and an additional \$11 million in federal and non-federal financing, the project seeks to address critical ecological problems such as dewatering and habitat fragmentation caused by the construction of I-90 and other human activities. By restoring natural water flow and reconnecting eight miles of upstream habitat, the project will enhance spawning

opportunities for bull trout and improve overall ecosystem health.

When completed, it will restore 245 acres of floodplain, which will benefit local wildlife and enhance recreational opportunities in the area. This project is just upstream of one of the nation's largest wildlife corridor crossings on I-90 and will provide synergistic benefits to create reconnected watersheds for a variety of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife.

The project is built on a foundation of extensive research, including the discovery that a gravel borrow pit created during the construction of I-90 is diverting essential water away from Gold Creek, exacerbating the challenges faced by fish populations.

To combat these issues, the project will involve refilling the borrow pit and restoring Gold Creek Valley to its

natural forested wetland landscape. More than 140 engineered logjams will be reintroduced to improve in-stream habitat complexity, while riparian zones will be restored to support diverse plant and animal life. This holistic approach aims to not only benefit bull trout but also enhance the overall ecosystem, preparing it for future challenges.

The Gold Creek Valley Restoration Project represents a transformational opportunity to restore vital habitats and improve resilience in the Yakima Basin. As fisheries agencies prepare to reintroduce salmon and steelhead above Keechelus Dam for the first time in over a century, Gold Creek will serve as a primary spawning tributary for these species. This project not only aims to revitalize fish populations but also to restore the ecological balance of the region, benefiting both wildlife and local communities for generations to come.

Gold Creek Restoration Project Quick Facts

Location: Washington

Species: Bull Trout

Investments:

- **Service Investment through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law:** \$5,000,000 (FY24-25)
- **Other Federal Investments (to date):** \$3,000,000
- **Non-Federal Investments (to date):** \$8,000,000

Total restoration costs: \$48,000,000

Type of barriers: Floodplain reconnection, instream flows

Reconstruction Techniques: Habitat/stream restoration

Accomplishments: 8 stream miles to be reopened

Acres to be Restored: 245

Project Lead: Kittitas Conservation Trust

Non-Federal Partners: The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan, State of Washington, Private Landowners,

Forterra, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, Conservation Northwest, Trout Unlimited, Kittitas Reclamation District, Kittitas County, Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group, Yakima Basin Bull Trout Working Group, Yakima Basin Fish & Wildlife Recovery Board

Federal Agencies Invested (to date):

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, and U.S. Forest Service

Additional Info: [Gold Creek Restoration Project | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#)

Bull trout underwater

Photo Credit: Joel Sartore / National Geographic & Wade Fredenberg / USFWS



Lake Sturgeon In Michigan

In Muskegon, Michigan, the Maple River is poised for a significant transformation. After being dammed for over 150 years, the Maple River Reconnection Project will allow for the release of water into the Maple River to help reduce flooding while creating vital habitats for plants and fish that are critical to the Little River Band of Ottawa Indian Tribe, including manoomin (wild rice) and nmé (lake sturgeon).

Thanks to a \$1,925,650 grant from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the project's completion – long awaited by community members – will be accelerated by over a decade and will restore a channel that has been disconnected from the Maple River since the 1800s. This restoration will not only reduce flooding and erosion but also provide high-quality habitats for fish, ensuring access to safe, cool-water environments as climate change impacts water temperatures.

Currently, three roads cross the Maple River, where existing culverts and a bridge frequently flood, necessitating constant repairs. These roads are essential for fire and emergency

Landscape-scale Maple River Reconnection Project Quick Facts

Location: Michigan

Species: Lake Sturgeon and Wild Rice

Service Investment through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law:
\$1,925,650 (FY23)

Restoration Techniques:

Culvert Replacement

Accomplishments: 5 stream miles reopened, 300 acres reopened

Project Lead: Muskegon River Watershed Assembly

Additional Info: [Landscape-scale Maple River Reconnection Project | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#)

access, as well as for residents. The project will include the construction of hydro-dynamic bridges. Additionally, plans are in place to design a community gathering space that reflects the area's cultural significance.

Species such as brook trout and lake sturgeon, along with various reptiles, birds, mussels, plants, and terrestrial wildlife, will also benefit from this effort through improved habitat and expanded opportunity for safe migration corridors.

Collaboration has been essential to the project's success. The Muskegon Watershed Assembly has partnered with the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians to create a design that honors both the river's natural character and the community's cultural heritage.

The project will feature multi-lingual signage that incorporates the Anishinaabe language and artwork to educate visitors about the river's history and its contemporary significance.

As the Maple River project progresses, the local community anticipates a revitalized river that symbolizes hope and diversity and improved community resilience through installation of bridges that accommodate high flows while ensuring safe and efficient transportation. The collaboration among the Service, local Tribes, and community members is not only restoring a vital waterway but also strengthening the connection between people, wildlife, and the natural environment.



Young Lake Sturgeon
Photo Credit: USFWS

Nature's Infrastructure S1:E8- Connecting the Flow: Bridging the Maple River and Its Cultural Legacy

Delve into the powerful intersection of community engagement, equity, and ecological restoration as we explore how this fish passage project is prioritizing local voices and historical context to reconnect the Maple River not only to the Muskegon River, but to the rich history of its community.



"There will be a dramatic change just in how people interact with the watershed. So, we're going to see through the restoration, just a reconnection of people with their environment again. We've seen on projects that do consider an equity-informed approach, the product is actually better. Bringing all those concepts to the table...really expands our knowledge base...where we have all these different pieces coming in, informing what we do, and making it just, and making it right, and making it sustainable."

Dr. Marty Holtgren

Project Coordinator for the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly

Apache Trout In Arizona

In September 2024, after more than five decades of recovery efforts by federal, state, and Tribal partners, and with the aid of funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Apache trout was removed from the federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife.

The restoration of Arizona's state fish marks the first sportfish and the first trout delisted due to recovery, a significant conservation success under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The Apache trout is found exclusively in streams of the White Mountains in the eastern part of Arizona. It is one of only two species of trout native to that state and is sacred to the White Mountain Apache Tribe. First described as a unique species separate from Gila trout in 1972, a year later it gained protection under the ESA due to habitat loss, overfishing, and introduction of non-native species. It was subsequently downlisted to threatened in 1975. By 1979, 14 known populations occupied 30 miles of habitat. Today, thanks to conservation efforts, 30 populations occupy 175 miles of habitat.

Crooked Creek Route 55 Culvert Project Quick Facts

Location: Arizona
Species: Apache Trout
Service Investment through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law: \$325,000 (FY23)

Reconstruction Techniques: Culvert replacement

Accomplishments: 8 stream miles to be reopened

Project Leads: Arizona Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, White Mountain Apache Tribe Game and Fish Department

Additional Info: [Crooked Creek Route 55 Culvert Fish Passage Project | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#)



Apache trout

Photo Credit: Jeremy Monroe / Freshwaters Illustrated

Apache Trout Recovery Project Quick Facts

Location: Arizona

Species: Apache Trout

**Service Investment through the
Bipartisan Infrastructure Law:**
\$2,310,000 (FY22)

Reconstruction Techniques: Culvert
replacement and barrier dam removal

Accomplishments: 52.4 stream miles
to be reopened

Project Lead: White Mountain
Apache Tribe

Additional Info: [Apache Trout Recovery
Fish Passage Infrastructure Project |
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#)

The gene pool was threatened by hybridization with non-native rainbow and cutthroat trout. Additionally, non-native brook and brown trout pose threats through competition and predation. Essential conservation actions, including removing outdated fish passage barriers, will reconnect fragmented habitat and increase genetic diversity.

The [2022 Apache Trout Recovery Fish Passage Infrastructure Project](#), funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, will remove seven barriers and replace six culverts, most of which are on Tribal land. The barriers were constructed decades ago to protect

against invasion by non-native predatory trout. But they now block Apache trout and are no longer needed due to improved protection measures far downstream. This project presents the opportunity to create larger meta-populations of Apache trout and re-open access to 52.4 miles of habitat. Removal of three of the culverts to be replaced was completed in 2024 after the White Mountain Apache Tribe approved the decommissioning of the road that bisected the Thompson Creek headwaters. This project provides access to an additional 2.5 miles of quality headwaters habitat for Apache trout and other native aquatic species.

The [2023 Crooked Creek Route 55 Culvert Fish Passage Project](#), also funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, will replace a culvert that prevents fish from moving freely on Crooked Creek. Crooked Creek is home to one of only 17 relic populations of threatened Apache trout, from which other populations were established through translocations. This project will enable Apache trout to move freely within their habitat.

Additionally, the [Salt & Little Colorado River Basins Project](#), which was announced in 2024 but will be funded in 2025, builds on the decades of devoted efforts to restore aquatic connectivity and organism passage in the headwaters of the Salt River Basin and adjacent Little Colorado River Watershed. Wet meadow restoration in headwater habitats will contribute to fire and drought resilience in the ecosystem, and this project will restore aquatic connectivity and enhance climate resiliency. Once complete, fish populations, including the Apache trout, will be able to expand into new habitat.



Paradise Creek Upper Culvert Barrier
Photo Credit: Zachary Jackson / USFWS

Trispot Darter In Alabama

In Springville, Alabama, a 70-acre community sports complex serves around 2,000 young athletes and their families each year. However, frequent rainstorms often flooded the fields, leading to game cancellations and significant expenses for the city's parks and recreation department. The situation took a positive turn when the threatened trispot darter, a small fish that thrives in the area's waterways, was discovered in Little Canoe Creek, highlighting the need for improved water quality and fish passage.

The trispot darter was found in the Left Prong of Little Canoe Creek, a small stream that runs adjacent to the sports complex, marking its first recorded occurrence in this part of the watershed. Unfortunately, the fish's urban habitat was impacted by a collapsed culvert that altered the creek's natural flow, restricted fish passage, and

Trispot Darter Culvert Replacements Project Quick Facts

Location: Alabama

Species: Trispot Darter

Service Investment through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law: \$1,125,000 (FY22)

Type of barriers: Culverts

Reconstruction Techniques: Habitat/stream restoration and road crossings

Stream miles reopened: 6

Project Lead: Cawaco RC&D

Non-Federal Partners: St. Clair County, City of Springville

Additional Info: [Trispot Darter Culvert Replacements](#) | [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#)

exacerbated flooding on the athletic fields. The deteriorating infrastructure caused erosion, which contributed to a lot of excess sediment entering the stream, negatively impacting water quality and restricting both upstream and downstream fish movement. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, the City of Springville utilized \$1,125,000 in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding from the Service to replace the old culvert with a new, environmentally

friendly bottomless arch-shaped culvert. This new structure had multiple benefits. It restored the creek's natural flow, enhanced fish passage, improved water quality, protected the six athletic fields from flooding, and provided a safe crossing on the property for pedestrians and city employees. The funding also allows for additional projects, including stream bank restorations and sediment controls, enhancing the overall sports complex.

Springville Culvert before replacement

Photo Credit: Lee Holt / USFWS



New culvert in Springville, Alabama

Photo Credit: Lee Holt / USFWS



The partnership between the city and the Service has proven to be beneficial not only for the trispot darter but also for the community. With this funding, Springville is poised to improve recreational facilities, including the addition of walking trails and a disc golf course.

As sports programs in Springville continue to grow by 10 to 20 percent each year, this collaborative effort serves as a model for other communities. Once all projects are complete, walking trails will weave through the complex, and parents will be able to drive safely from field to field, a plus if they have kids playing on separate fields at the same time.

By addressing environmental challenges while enhancing recreational opportunities, this project exemplifies how local and federal partnerships can effectively benefit both natural resources and community development for future generations.



Trispot Darters
Photo Credit: Alan Cressler / USGS

Nature's Infrastructure S1:E2- A Little Fish Saves a Big Sports Complex in Alabama

Discover how a little fish in the Little Canoe Creek helped create safer recreational access for Springville's youth sports teams, foster environmental education and community partnerships, mitigate unsafe flood conditions, and improve the quality of life for an entire community.



"What I can't stress enough is, there are real people who enjoy the benefits of this federal money. There are real kids out here. There are real moms. When all this project is done, there's going to be moms walking around this walking track that are going to enjoy the beauty of nature and stop by and read these plaques talking about the trispot darter. It's really going to be a beautiful sight for people to enjoy nature and just improve the quality of life of our community."

Rick Hopkins
Director of Springville's Parks and Recreation Department

Federal Interagency Fish Passage Task Force

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The Power of Transformational Aquatic Connectivity

Under the Investing in America agenda, which encompasses the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, a historic \$3 billion has been allocated for aquatic ecosystem restoration. Over the past three years, federal agencies and partners have directed more than \$1.1 billion of this funding toward nearly 600 projects across 45 states.

In 2022, the Federal Interagency Fish Passage Task Force was established to enhance coordination and maximize the impact of this significant investment. Chaired by the Service, the Task Force is comprised of 13 federal agencies working collaboratively to strategically implement fish passage funding while improving outcomes for ecosystems and communities. It promotes the advantages of fish passage projects, offers technical advice, and coordinates funding efforts, creating transformational impacts across the landscape.

The Task Force focuses on establishing common goals, sharing expertise, and coordinating the strategic deployment of funds. This collaborative approach

What is a Transformational Fish Passage Project?

- **Project Cost:** These projects typically range from \$10 million to \$50 million in total cost representing large, costly projects that require creative uses of funding from various sources to achieve their goals.
- **Project Type:** Projects can vary widely. They may involve removing a single dam or may address multiple barriers across a watershed, such as culverts (road-stream crossings) and reconnecting floodplains.
- **Project Benefits:** The goal is to benefit both wildlife and ecosystems, as well as local communities. This can include improving water quality or recreation, removing high-risk dams, and restoring

rights important to Tribal communities.

- **Project Timeline:** Projects should be feasible to complete within three to six years, regardless of their current stage of development (i.e., they don't need to be ready to start immediately).
- **Partnership:** Projects should involve collaboration with and advance the missions of more than one federal agency, and they should identify connections with state, Tribal, local governments, or non-governmental organizations.
- **Community Support:** Successful projects should have the backing of local stakeholders and the community. Those with significant support from residents, state officials, and Tribal leaders are particularly encouraged.

ensures that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely, amplifying community and environmental benefits beyond what any single initiative could achieve.

In 2024, the Task Force launched the Transformational Fish Passage Project Initiative, identifying over 70 projects that still require technical and financial support. This list includes [10 partially funded projects currently underway](#) that upon completion, will reconnect

over 4,500 miles of rivers and streams, stimulate local economic development, and enhance community resilience.

Explore these remarkable projects through this [interactive story map](#) and discover how they are reshaping our landscapes and futures.



Samson Creek fish passage construction
Photo Credit: Trav Williams/Broken Banjo

Improving Waterway Access for Wildlife and Community Resilience

Across the United States, millions of aging, obsolete, or poorly designed dams, roads, and levees are causing significant ecological damage and posing risks to communities. These barriers trap fish, preventing them from accessing food, shelter, and spawning habitats, while also creating flooding and public safety hazards for people who recreate on these waterways.

Barriers that pose a threat to fish often pose a threat to human communities. Undersized culverts that block fish passage are prone

to being clogged by debris, resulting in flooding that closes roads, imperiling local communities and contributing to significant property damage and other safety issues. The same dams and spillways that prevent fish from migrating can also pose threats for recreational boaters, swimmers, and anglers. Failed culverts and dams can block roads and access to emergency services, cause widespread property damage, and put human lives at risk.

The Task Force is working with various partners to reduce these barriers, allowing fish and other aquatic animals to reach their spawning grounds, food sources, and migration routes, thereby enhancing community resilience.

This includes support for the [National Aquatic Barrier Inventory and Prioritization Tool](#), which for the first time, displays the hundreds of thousands of barriers across the country that obstruct aquatic organisms, disrupt critical ecosystems, and potentially create safety risks for nearby communities.

Removing, or right-sizing, instream structures throughout our watersheds improves public safety, enhances community resilience to the risks associated with a changing climate and aging infrastructure, restores the cultural value of our natural systems, and provides new and improved recreational opportunities.



Middle Great Miami River Restoration Project Troy Dam
Photo Credit: USFWS

Delaware River Basin Restoration Program

15

Enhancing Ecosystem Resilience and Community Well-Being in the Delaware River Basin

The Delaware River Watershed spans parts of Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania, encompassing one of the most densely populated urban regions in the nation while maintaining 50 percent forest cover. Notably, 400 miles of the river are designated as National Wild and Scenic River, ensuring that shorelines remain largely undeveloped yet accessible in certain areas.

This vital resource provides drinking water to over 14 million people and serves as habitat for diverse wildlife, including red knots, shorebirds, and economically significant fish species such as alewives, American shad, and eastern brook trout.

In 2016, Congress passed the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act, empowering the Service to create the Delaware River Basin Restoration Program, a non-regulatory, voluntary, and incentive-driven approach to landscape-scale conservation,

amplifying existing collaborations among partners throughout the four-state watershed.

This program works together with communities to restore fish and wildlife habitats, reduce flooding and runoff, improve water quality, and expand safe recreational access. With a focus on historically underserved, disenfranchised, and disconnected communities, the program prioritizes meaningful engagement by involving residents directly in every stage of planning and implementation of conservation actions. This approach ensures that projects address community needs while fostering equity and environmental resilience.

In 2018, the Service and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation launched the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund as a key initiative to advance the goals of the act. Projects supported by this fund significantly benefit the millions who rely on the Delaware River and its tributaries by improving habitats, reducing flood risks, enhancing water quality, and increasing access to natural spaces. The projects aim to improve ecosystem resilience, facilitate fish

and aquatic species passage, reduce flood risk, and enhance community access to natural areas. Strong partnerships with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the states of Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania have been instrumental in advancing these conservation initiatives.

To date, the fund has awarded \$72.1 million to 239 projects that support recreation, water quality, water management, and habitat. As part of this larger investment, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law contributed \$26 million over five years. Together with \$100 million in matching funds generated by grantees, these efforts have created a total conservation impact of \$172.1 million.

Over the past three years, the Service has allocated more than \$14 million of the \$26 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding to support 24 projects, which will accelerate conservation and restoration efforts by expanding support for innovative green infrastructure and nature-based solutions that enhance both the health and economic vitality of regional communities.



Neversink Mountain Preserve
Photo Credit: Michael Stokes

The Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund projects have resulted in tangible conservation outcomes, including:

26 miles of riparian habitat and
77 miles of streams restored

1,176 acres of wetlands and
121 acres of floodplain conserved and enhanced

6,141 acres with new or improved public access

32,522 acres of forest under improved management

Nature's Infrastructure S1:E6- Improving Public Access and Recreation in the Delaware River Watershed

Hear more about how the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission is improving public access and recreation in the Pennsylvania portion of the Delaware River and restoring free-flowing conditions for migratory fish and other aquatic organisms in the Delaware River Basin.



"These projects are making natural resource conservation relevant to a broader audience. There are more and more people becoming interested in access to the outdoors for recreation all the time. What we're interested in doing with this investment, or this set of investments, is to provide this kind of access for all people."

Tim Schaeffer

Executive Director for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Transforming Philadelphia's School Grounds into Green Spaces

With support from the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund, four elementary schools in Philadelphia – one in South Philadelphia and three in Southwest Philadelphia – will transform their grounds into vibrant green spaces that benefit students, teachers, and the surrounding communities.

In partnership with the School District of Philadelphia, The Nature Conservancy has received a \$1 million grant to replace asphalt and concrete schoolyards with shade trees, outdoor classrooms, pollinator gardens, and green stormwater infrastructure, such as rain gardens. The project is one of six

awarded in fiscal year 2024, supported by funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, that was directed to the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund for community-driven, green infrastructure projects.

The schools selected for this funding were chosen through a prioritization process that considered social and environmental equity, stormwater management potential, community support, and the condition of existing facilities.

Each school will feature water elements and gardens, significantly reducing pavement, while planting over 250 trees – at least 60 at each school.

This natural infrastructure, including trees, rain gardens, and bioswales, will

also benefit surrounding communities by managing 4.7 million gallons of stormwater annually that would otherwise flow directly into sewers and local waterways.

Philadelphia's combined sewer system is prone to overflows during rain and snowmelt, leading to the discharge of a mix of wastewater and stormwater into nearby waterways. This contamination can harm rivers and creeks, erode landscapes, create unsafe health conditions, and degrade habitats for native plants and animals.

By filtering stormwater through natural features like plants, soil, and stone, these projects will improve water quality and aquatic habitats while reducing the risk of flooding – an increasingly urgent need due to more frequent intense storm events.

The Nature Conservancy worked closely with the school district and the design team to ensure the project meets the specific needs of each school while actively engaging students in the design process.

Read more about this project [here](#).

Visit our [Delaware River Basin Restoration website](#) for a complete list of funded projects and their locations.



Lake Tahoe Basin Restoration Program

Protecting Lake Tahoe: Collaborative Efforts to Combat Invasive Species

Lake Tahoe, the world's 10th-deepest lake, is renowned for its remarkable clarity and stunning beauty. However, its native Lahontan cutthroat trout and other aquatic species are threatened by invasive species like Eurasian watermilfoil. These invasive plants not only jeopardize the health of the ecosystem but also impact the cultural and historical significance of native species, particularly for the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California. Invasive weeds can entangle boat propellers, diminish fish populations for anglers, and create dense mats of vegetation at the water's surface, ultimately threatening recreational boating and fishing opportunities that are vital to local economies.

Addressing the challenge of invasive species requires a coordinated and collaborative approach, which is the focus of the Service's \$17 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding dedicated to Lake Tahoe. The Service is partnering with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, the Washoe Tribe, and the multi-partner Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinating Committee to identify priority projects and support locally led conservation efforts.

To date, the Service has allocated \$10.2 million of this funding to support five active projects, creating associated job opportunities in the basin.

One of the stand-out initiatives is the Lake Tahoe Watercraft Inspection Program, which is supported by \$5.2 million from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, to establish two new permanent inspection stations that will facilitate

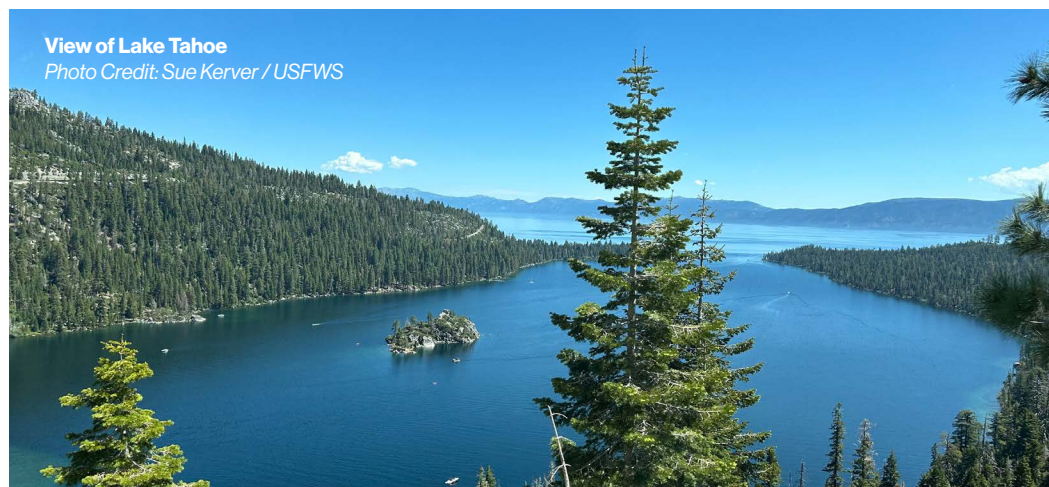
efficient long-term inspections. This enhancement will expedite the processing of recreational watercraft while preventing the spread of invasive species.

The Service is also committed to collaborating with the Washoe Tribe to manage these vital lands and waters. To this end, \$1.4 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding has been allocated to the Tribe for planning, monitoring, and controlling aquatic invasive plants and fish, while also focusing on the recovery of native species, including Lahontan cutthroat trout.

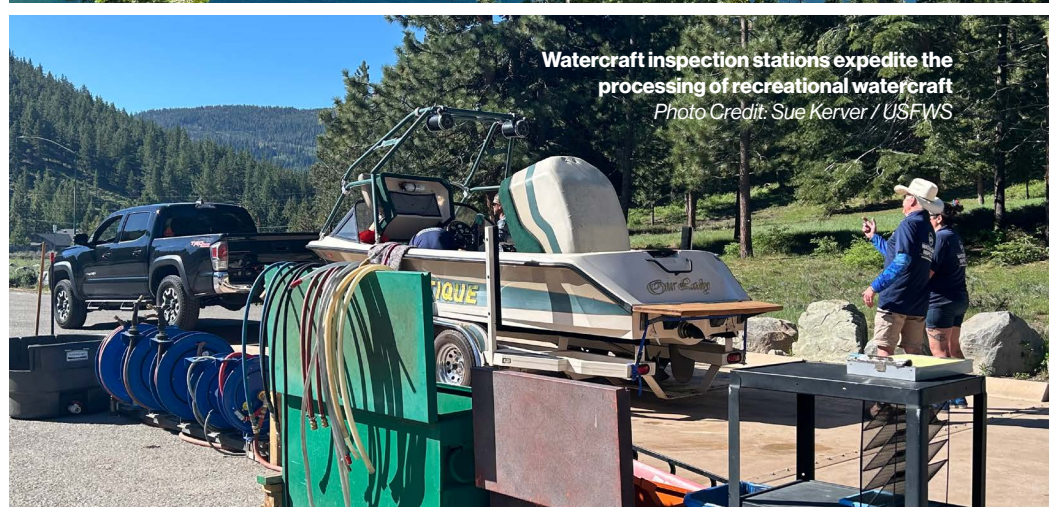
Additionally, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is utilizing \$2.3 million of this funding to combat aquatic invasive species in the Taylor-Tallac ecosystem, the largest functioning



Watercraft inspector on the job
Photo Credit: Sue Kerver / USFWS



View of Lake Tahoe
Photo Credit: Sue Kerver / USFWS



Watercraft inspection stations expedite the processing of recreational watercraft
Photo Credit: Sue Kerver / USFWS



Lahontan cutthroat trout
Photo Credit: Joanna Gilkeson / USFWS

"The Tribes have worked diligently over the last decade and a half to really advance and move forward with restoration...and rehabilitation of this area with the goal of making sure that we have a strong and pristine ecosystem for the future. Something that's healthy and incorporates both people and place, that restores the cutthroat trout. This partnership between the Tribe, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the funding coming forward to build capacity, allows the Tribe to participate, and allows us to once again lead these conversations, to envision a better future, to make sure that people are integrated - Washoe people, Indigenous peoples, and all of the peoples in the Tahoe Basin."

Herman Fillmore
Culture and Language Resources
Director for the Washoe Tribe of
Nevada and California

wetland at Lake Tahoe. This area has the potential to provide habitat for nearly every native species in the basin; however, Taylor and Tallac creeks and marshes are currently infested with Eurasian watermilfoil. This investment funded the installation of 17 acres of

benthic barriers that smother invasive aquatic plants by blocking sunlight and preventing photosynthesis. This project represents the largest eradication effort implemented in the basin to date and will serve as a model for future ecosystem restoration initiatives in the area.

Through these collaborative efforts, we aim to protect Lake Tahoe's unique ecosystem, ensuring its health and vitality for generations to come.

See our [Lake Tahoe Basin Restoration website](#) for a complete list of funded projects and their locations.



Installation of benthic barriers for invasive weed removal
Photo Credit: Sue Kerver / USFWS



Tags for inspected boats prevent the spread of invasive species
Photo Credit: Sue Kerver / USFWS



The Taylor Tallac aquatic invasive species restoration project area
Photo Credit: Sue Kerver / USFWS

Klamath Basin Restoration Program

Klamath Basin Water Management and Conservation Efforts

For two decades, the Klamath Basin has relied on collaboration and partnerships to meet its diverse water needs amid intermittent droughts and supply limitations. Clean, healthy water and fertile land can support Tribal communities, productive agriculture and ranches, and abundant populations of migratory birds, suckers, salmon, and other vital aquatic and terrestrial species.

The Klamath Basin's fragile ecosystem depends on collaborative partnerships among a wide variety of stakeholders and the development of holistic solutions.

Using Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding, the Service has worked closely with the states of California and Oregon, the Klamath Tribes, the Yurok Tribe, the Karuk Tribe, the Hoopa Valley Tribe, Quartz Valley Indian Reservation, Pulikla Tribe of Yurok People (formerly Resighini Rancheria), private landowners, farmers, ranchers, and local sportsmen and women to enhance conditions for fish, birds, and communities.

Since 2022, the Service has allocated almost \$123 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds as part of the \$162 million, five-year Bipartisan Infrastructure Law investment in the Klamath Basin. Funding is being used for [56 ecosystem restoration activities and projects](#) that address high-priority Klamath Basin water-related challenges in southern Oregon and northern California and for the construction of the Klamath Falls National Fish Hatchery. These initiatives,

Sugar Creek Coho Salmon Refugia Restoration Project

The Sugar Creek Coho Refugia Project restored over an acre of highly disturbed Yuba dredge mine tailings into high-quality, cold-water rearing habitat for Coho salmon. The Scott River Watershed Council, private landowners, the Quartz Valley Indian Reservation, and many other project collaborators integrated the best available western science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge in the planning and implementation of this restoration project. Restoration activities included planting over 10,000 stems of native riparian vegetation species on a constructed floodplain to provide food and cover for fish and other aquatic and terrestrial species - especially beavers who are expected to quickly populate the project habitat. Within days of connecting the off-channel aquatic habitat, scientific monitoring detected juvenile Coho salmon moving into the newly available high-quality water.

"This newly restored habitat was made possible by collaborative efforts between four private landowners, the Quartz Valley Indian Reservation, and many other local stakeholders, and is a living example of significant ecological uplift in a highly degraded landscape. Thank you, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for supporting the project through Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding and your continued partnership."

Betsy Stapleton
Scott River Watershed Council



Sugar Creek Coho Salmon Refugia Restoration Project
Photo Credit: Hannah Moore / USFWS

supported by Tribes, farmers, ranchers, and other stakeholders, demonstrate the power and potential of collaboration and cooperation to restore the Klamath Basin.

These conservation projects aim to create fish habitat, monitor water quality, quantify ecosystem recovery, improve hydrologic models, and track salmon and sucker populations. Additionally, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding is being used to install pumping stations to enhance water availability for national wildlife refuges and farms, support post-fire stream restoration in the Sprague River Watershed, and restore natural springs.

Together, we are building a more resilient basin that can sustain the communities that call it home.



Scott River, Klamath Basin
Photo Credit: Jake Sisco / USFWS

Nature's Infrastructure S1:E3- Klamath Basin Part 1: Sprague River Collaborative Restoration

Learn more about the Sprague River Collaborative Restoration project, which is providing instream and floodplain restoration along 26 miles of headwater streams in the Sprague River Watershed, developing landscape-level design plans and baseline monitoring for instream and floodplain restoration of the mainstem Sprague River, and developing a landowner incentive program to encourage landowner participation in restoration programs and retain economic viability for family farms and ranches in the Upper Klamath Basin, in Oregon.



"There's a lot of common interests in doing this kind of a project in raising the shallow groundwater table. If we can put the river back on the landscape again and get it where you raise the shallow groundwater table, that benefits everybody. We're excited about the prospect of finding solutions and a pathway forward collaboratively."

Larry Nicholson

Executive Director, Upper Klamath Basin Agriculture Collaborative

"It's a community building effort that really is going to fulfill the needs of the Tribe, and also our neighbors. It's extremely important to the Klamath Tribes to be part of this and continue in this process. Instead of going into this looking at what we can accomplish, or what we could get out of it, I think we've taken a different approach in what can we accomplish together?"

Brad Parrish

Water Rights Specialist,
the Klamath Tribes

Expansion of the Klamath Falls National Fish Hatchery

The expansion of the Klamath Falls National Fish Hatchery is also underway, allowing the Service to address the pressing needs of endangered Lost River (c'waam) and shortnose suckers (koptu) and complementing Service funding for the Klamath Tribes' sucker rearing and salmon reintroduction programs. This hatchery investment has garnered support from both Tribal and agricultural communities, representing a key point of consensus.

The Service is committed to preventing the extinction of two federally listed species, c'waam and koptu, which are endemic to the Klamath Basin. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is providing full funding to complete the construction of the hatchery. Facility construction has started, with all expansion efforts expected to be completed by 2027. Once construction is finished, the hatchery will have the capacity to rear up to 60,000 suckers annually in support of the recovery of these highly imperiled species.



Agency-Barnes Wetland Restoration

In 2024, \$13 million was allocated to complete restoration of the Agency-Barnes wetland units of Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge and provide fish habitat access in Fourmile and Sevenmile creeks. This complements a previous \$10 million investment to begin the project and ensures completion of the full restoration and reconnection of these important wetlands. Covering 14,356 acres, the restored wetland will create vital habitat for waterfowl, federally endangered Lost River and shortnose suckers, and other species, making it one of the largest wetland restoration initiatives in the United States. Partners include Ducks Unlimited and the Klamath Tribes.

See our [Klamath Basin Restoration website](#) for a complete list of funded projects and their locations.

Ecosystem Restoration Program

Ecosystem Restoration and Conservation Planning

Through Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Ecosystem Restoration funding, the Service is working to support the [Department of the Interior's Restoration and Resilience Framework](#). The framework supports and guides restoration programs across agencies and prioritizes addressing climate change impacts, restoring healthy lands and waters, and enhancing communities' quality of life.

The framework includes a commitment to nine Keystone Initiatives (KIs), each focused on targeting a single conservation challenge across the country through coordinated restoration and conservation efforts.

The KIs represent specific geographic or thematic conservation challenges. By focusing investments, funds can be leveraged for strategic and impactful restoration. In selecting these initiatives, the Department considered key ecosystems where restoration efforts:

- Align with priorities, including improving biodiversity, climate resilience, and advancing co-stewardship and equity.
- Are driven by a locally led, collaborative restoration strategy in place or in progress.
- Leverage funds from other sources or programs and can be coordinated with multiple partners.

Since 2022, the Service has received more than \$66.5 million for 96 projects in five Ecosystem Restoration activity areas that will lead to better outdoor spaces and habitats for people and wildlife for generations to come.

The Service's ecosystem restoration projects and conservation actions are focused to advance these goals by addressing climate change impacts



Moose Creek in the Mat Su Valley, Alaska
Photo Credit: Katrina Liebich / USFWS



Airport in Emmonak, Alaska
Photo Credit: Katrina Liebich / USFWS

including drought, wildfire, and coastal flooding, restoring healthy lands and waters including rivers, wetlands, grasslands, islands, and cultural resources, and improving outdoor spaces.

See our [Ecosystem Restoration website](#) for a complete list of funded projects and their locations.

Gravel-to-Gravel Initiative

In Alaska, the Service is supporting the interagency Gravel-to-Gravel initiative with Alaska Native communities to restore salmon habitats and populations over a massive geographic area covering 419,274 square miles – larger than Texas and New Mexico combined. These projects are investing in co-stewardship with Tribes in the Yukon, Kuskokwim, and Norton Sound region (sometimes referred to as the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim or AYK) to restore degraded streams and expand habitat restoration practices that replenish native vegetation.

With Gravel-to-Gravel investments, the Service is actively supporting and funding a variety of projects that will ensure safe, resilient, and equitable futures for people, salmon, land, and waters. We are working to shape the Gravel-to-Gravel initiative with local and regional partners, including the Tanana Chiefs Conference, Association of Village Council Presidents, Kawerak, Inc., the Kuskokwim Inter-tribal Fish Commission, the Yukon River Inter-tribal Fish Commission, the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Geological Survey, National Park Service, the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association, State of Alaska, and nonprofit partners like Trout Unlimited.

On October 16, 2024, the partners came together to [sign a memorandum of understanding](#) (MOU) agreeing to the following priorities:

- Collaborate across jurisdictional and geographic boundaries through co-stewardship and co-management to restore the health of, and relationships between, salmon, people and place.
- Build and maintain trust and communication, strengthen relationships between Tribes and federal agencies and increase capacity and knowledge-sharing around the care of salmon.
- Honor Tribal sovereignty and self-governance by advocating for Tribal stewardship and recommendations regarding decision-making and regulatory authority in wildlife ecosystems and fisheries management.
- Work in partnership on ecosystem restoration and resilience, salmon conservation, and other projects that are within and adjacent to the Gravel-to-Gravel Initiative and include expertise from Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge.



Gravel to Gravel MOU signing
Photo Credit: Katrina Liebich / USFWS



Chinook Salmon in Alaska
Photo Credit: Ryan Hagerty / USFWS

Read more about the [Gravel-to-Gravel initiative](#) for people, salmon, and the land.

Nature's Infrastructure S1:E5- Gravel to Gravel Keystone Initiative: For People, Salmon and the Land

Hear more about the MOU and the incredible partnerships that are catalyzing the future of salmon conservation, healing the broader ecosystem, and serving Alaska's people and wildlife.

"The ultimate goal for Tribes is to become the rightful stewards of their lands and resources. And it's always been our responsibility to be good stewards, protect our animals and fish relatives. We were obligated to ensure their survival for our future generations. So, it's really important...that we're empowering and



building the capacity of our Tribes to be able to be at the table because they have the right to be there, and it's the first step toward co-stewardship."

Amber Vaska
Executive Director,
The Tanana Chiefs Conference

"The salmon is the most important subsistence resource on these rivers. And the only way forward is the vision of our elders, which is to work together. The Gravel-to-Gravel Keystone Initiative is working toward that – this vision of working together. And so this initiative, it's a really important step towards the recovery of salmon."

Kevin Whitworth
Executive Director, Kuskokwim River
Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

Addressing the Threat of Aquatic Invasive Species

Aquatic invasive species pose significant threats to our environment, economy, and health. They can displace native plants and wildlife, spread diseases, and damage infrastructure. The U.S. spends billions of dollars annually to manage and control these invaders and protect the nation's waters. While prevention is the most effective strategy for mitigating the threat of aquatic invasive species, Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) serves as a crucial backup when prevention measures fall short.

Recognizing the urgent need for action, the Department of the Interior has prioritized the advancement of a National EDRR Framework for invasive species as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding.

One essential component of this initiative was establishing a pilot Rapid Response Fund for Aquatic Invasive Species. This fund is designed to assess and support rapid response actions for the quick

containment or eradication of newly detected species, thereby avoiding costly long-term control efforts.

Since 2022, through the Ecosystem Restoration Program, the Service has announced a total of \$4 million to address early detection and rapid response efforts for aquatic invasive species. In the past year alone, nearly \$2 million has been awarded for nine projects across states including Alaska, California, Hawai'i, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, North Carolina, and Rhode Island.

These rapid response funds are distributed quarterly through a [competitive funding opportunity](#), allowing

for timely action against emerging species threats while ensuring a fair, transparent, and competitive process. The Rapid Response Fund operates within the existing authorities of the Service's Fish and Aquatic Conservation program and is coordinated through the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force.

Through these efforts, the Service aims to strengthen our capacity to combat aquatic invasive species, thereby protecting our natural resources and ecosystems for future generations.

Read more about the projects being funded through the [EDRR for Aquatic Invasive Species Initiative](#).



Elodea Lake rake surveys on Delong Lake Anchorage, Alaska
Photo Credit: Deborah Kornblut / USFWS

Sagebrush Ecosystem Conservation

Projects funded
About 200

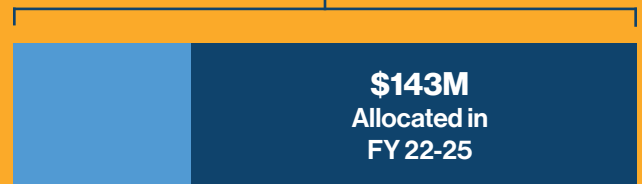
Total 5 Year Commitment
\$50M



Fish Passage

Projects funded
122

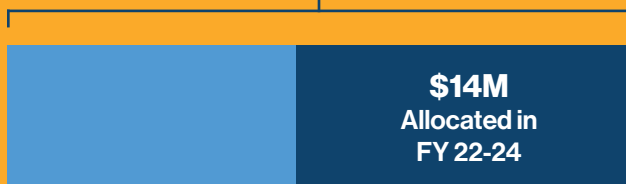
Total 5 Year Commitment
\$200M



Delaware River Basin Restoration

Projects funded
24

Total 5 Year Commitment
\$26M



Lake Tahoe Restoration

Projects funded
5

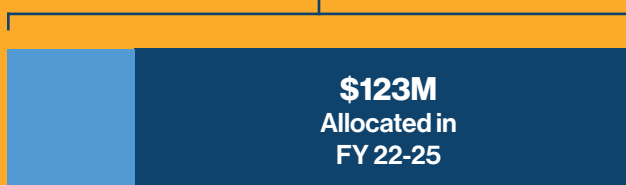
Total 5 Year Commitment
\$17M



Klamath Basin Restoration

Projects funded
56

Total 5 Year Commitment
\$162M



Ecosystem Restoration Program

Projects funded
96



**Project numbers and amounts may change (or may have changed) due to adjustments made during implementation*