

Sportsmen spoke up, action was taken and nature was preserved.

How The Pittman-Robertson Act helped save America's wildlife and habitat.

A close call.

In the early 1900s, enthusiastic settlers had completely eliminated some animal species in North America and came startlingly close to wiping out many others. The original abundance of wildlife was suddenly part of our past.

The Pittman-Robertson Act.

Then something remarkable happened. Sportsmen spoke up and Congress extended a 10 percent tax on ammunition for sport hunting, designating the proceeds for wildlife restoration. It was called the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration act, better known as the Pittman-Robertson Act after its main sponsors, Senator Key Pittman of Nevada and Representative A. Willis Robertson of Virginia. The measure was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on September 2, 1937.

Since then, numerous species have rebuilt their populations from thousands to millions and have extend their ranges far beyond what they were in the 1930s. Among them are the wild turkey, white-tailed deer, pronghorn antelope, wood duck, beaver, black bear, giant Canada goose, American elk, desert bighorn sheep, bobcat, mountain lion and several species of predatory birds.

Guaranteed funds for long-term projects.

Federal funding from the Pittman-Robertson act pays up to 75 percent of program and project costs with the States contributing the rest. The assurance of a steady source of earmarked funds has enabled administrators, both State and Federal, to plan projects that take years to complete and provide enduring solutions.

Benefits all nature lovers and wildlife.

Many Americans may not realize the enormous contribution hunters make in preserving the nature they enjoy. Almost all the lands purchased with Pittman-Robertson funds are managed for both wildlife production and public use. Wildlife management areas acquired by the States for winter range also support substantial use by hikers and fishermen, campers and picnickers. Wetlands for summer waterfowl nesting are useful to outdoor enthusiasts in other seasons. Recent estimates reveal that 70 percent of the people using these areas are not hunting, and in some areas the ratio may be as high as 95 percent.

Many non-game species have benefitted as well. Ground cover for game birds is used by a wide range of other birds and small animals. Bald eagles benefit greatly under careful management of forested areas where they typically nest. The Pittman-Robertson act does not restrict use of funds to game species, but allows their use to protect and preserve all species of birds and mammals.

How the money is used.

Of funds available to each state, more than 62 percent is used to buy, develop, maintain and operate wildlife management areas. Approximately 4 million acres have been purchased since the program began and nearly 40 million acres are managed for wildlife under agreements with landowners.

Various types of land have been acquired, including winter rangelands necessary for big game animals in the North and West, and wetlands essential to ducks and geese for nesting and stopover feeding and res during migrations.

Along with land acquisition, improved management methods have yielded impressive results. Some examples include creating small waterholes for wildlife in the Southwest; planting trees and shrubs in the Great Plains for cover to shelter pheasants, quail and other animals; creating clearings in heavily wooded areas of the Northeast to provide more varied food and shelter for deer, woodcock, rabbits and ruffed grouse; and controlled burning of brush and tall grass in the South to stimulate growth of seed-producing plants for wild turkey and quail.

Using science to boost conservation.

The funds provided by the Pittman-Robertson Act have helped immensely to enlist science to more effectively implement conservation efforts. About 26 percent of funding given to the States is used for surveys and research.

Surveys, now using computers and other advance technology, provide reliable information on the location and activities of species, the make-up of their population by age and sex, and whether their numbers are rising or declining.

Research has providing answers to former mysteries regarding wildlife's needs—food, shelter, breeding environment, etc. Research findings have enabled managers to keep wildlife in balance with their environments and to permit more people to enjoy them without endangering the future of any species. State researchers have used Pittman-Robertson funds to develop tools such as tranquilizing darts to capture animals and miniature radio devices to track them.

You should be proud.

The next time you buy a hunting license or a few boxes of ammo, do it with pride. You're truly helping to preserve the beauty of America and the tradition of sport hunting for generations to come.

The History of the Pittman-Robertson Act

A complete timeline.

Late 1800s

- Once viewed as an inexhaustible resource, many wildlife species in North America were on the brink of extinction at the turn of the twentieth century. This included some of our country's keystone species such as bison, elk, and wolves.
- Market hunters flooded the West in search of fur, feather and meat which were extremely valuable at the time.
- The influx of new immigrants to the newly founded United States created a strong demand for fur, hides, feather and meat and consequently the hunting business grew rapidly.
- More and more people flooded North America to partake in the seemingly endless bounty of game—jeopardizing wildlife populations and habitat.
- The wildlife legacy that had once defined America was slowly evaporating with no end in sight. In the absence of any formal laws, unregulated hunting and trapping continued well into the early 1900s.

Early 1900s

- North American wildlife's darkest hour. Complete annihilation was a looming possibility.
- While many people realized action had to be taken, it was ultimately the hunters and anglers (sportsmen) that started the recovery.
- Many of these sportsmen abhorred the slaughter by market hunters and believed a strict ethic should be followed.
- Sportsmen saw it as crucial to protect and conserve America's wildlife for the use and enjoyment of future generations. The conservation movement was born.
- In 1900, the Lacey Act made it illegal to transport game animals across state lines. This was effective in ending "market hunting."
- With the presidential appointment of Theodore Roosevelt, the conservation movement made huge strides.

1910 – 1920

- The ideas of "wildlife as a common good" and "user pay, user benefit" were adopted and laid the groundwork for today's model of wildlife conservation.
- Hunting and fishing clubs were formed and publications promoted the North American model and ethics.
- Hunting laws began to be instituted by politicians in Washington D.C. and quickly became more prevalent and restrictive.
- However, there was still concern for the future and the need to fund restoration efforts for America's crippled wildlife populations.

1937

- The idea of placing an excise tax on hunting and fishing equipments was born. This money would be collected and distributed through federal law to preserve and manage American wildlife and habitats.
- On September 2, this idea became a reality when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (known as the Pittman-Robertson Act) into law.
- The Pittman-Robertson Act placed an 11 percent excise tax on hunting equipment and ammunition. These funds are collected for the restoration of wildlife populations, acquisition and enhancement of habitat and other wildlife conservation and education activities that benefit all species of wildlife.

Today

- In 2009, over \$830 million was apportioned to state fish and wildlife agencies for conservation.
- Hunting continues to be regulated by law and wildlife conservation is still funded through license fees and excise taxes.
- The North American model of wildlife conservation continues to get stronger and wildlife populations continue to reach healthy, sustainable numbers.