

Colorado Department of Natural Resources

Species Conservation Trust Fund

FY 2021-22 Annual Report to the General Assembly

Species Conservation Trust Fund

The Colorado General Assembly created the Species Conservation Trust Fund (SCTF) in 1998 through the passage of HB 98-1006. This legislation provides ongoing funding to implement cooperative agreements, recovery programs, and other programs designed to meet Colorado's obligations under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The SCTF is also intended to promote practices designed to conserve species currently listed as threatened or endangered under state law, recover or protect candidate species in order to avoid the need to list those species under the state or federal ESA, and improve the scientific understanding governing federal or state species listing and delisting.

Statute (24-33-111 (3), C.R.S.) directs the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to report to the General Assembly on the progress and status of activities undertaken to conserve and recover Colorado's native species. This report covers activity in FY 2021-22 and includes a summary of appropriations and changes to funding structure.

Summary of SCTF FY 2021-22 Appropriations

Each year, the Executive Director of DNR prepares a species conservation eligibility list (SCEL) after consultation with the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) and its Director, and the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Commission and its Director. The SCEL identifies programs (and associated costs) that are eligible for funding from the SCTF. Once finalized with the Board and the Commission, the SCEL is sent to the General Assembly for review and modifications as appropriate prior to the passage of the annual SCTF bill.

Due to significant constraints on severance tax revenue in 2020, the Department of Natural resources did not put forward any SCTF legislation to authorize new appropriations for FY 2021-22. However, starting in FY 2021-22, Senate Bill 21-281 made significant changes to the funding structure of the Severance Tax Operational Fund in efforts to stabilize funding for severance tax supported programs. Under the new Operational Fund structure, SCTF will receive infusions of revenue via an annual appropriations of up to \$5 million. It's important to note that this is only a transfer mechanism, and annual legislation will still be required to secure legislative authorization of species conservation eligibility list. Activities under multi-year projects with prior appropriations were able to continue in FY 2021-22, including non-native fish control, research and monitoring activities, water acquisition and protection, and White River planning efforts. Endangered species recovery programs continued to make sufficient progress and serve as the reasonable and prudent alternative for water users to avoid jeopardizing the continued existence of the listed species or modifications to critical habitat.