

TEAMING WITH WILDLIFE: AN UPDATE^{TWS}

Dr. Dan Pletscher
The University of Montana, Missoula 59812

Non-game programs have traditionally been woefully underfunded; Teaming With Wildlife is an attempt to address this problem. Initially, the idea was to provide the states with approximately \$350,000,000 annually from a small, federal excise tax on hiking, camping, and bird watching equipment (similar to what Pittman-

Robertson does with hunting equipment). Each state would receive their share of this money through a formula based on the size and population of the state. Every 3 dollars of federal money would have to be matched by 1 dollar from the state. While most conservation organizations supported this approach, it was strongly opposed by parts of the recreation industry. A new funding proposal would use a portion of the proceeds from the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas revenues to fund the program. Senate Bill 25 would allocate 7 percent of those revenues for state-run, non-game programs. A competing House proposal would allocate 10 percent of those revenues to non-game programs. Most other aspects of the original Teaming With Wildlife proposal are intact. Some environmentalists argue that this bill would encourage future off-shore drilling for oil and gas and therefore oppose the approach; others argue that sufficient safeguards are already in place to prevent this from occurring. I will discuss the merits of the OCS proposal and provide an update on its current status in Congress.