

Multinational Species Conservation Fund: FY2020 Appropriations

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International species conservation is addressed by several funds, including those under the Multinational Species Conservation Fund (MSCF) and the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (NMBCF). This report provides a brief overview of MSCF and NMBCF and their funding and legislative status.

Multinational Species Conservation Fund

The MSCF is separated into several sub-funds that support conservation efforts benefitting certain species, often in conjunction with efforts under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), to which the United States is a party.¹ In particular, the MSCF provides funding in the form of technical and cost-sharing grants to range countries for the conservation of African and Asian elephants; rhinoceroses; tigers; great apes (gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos, orangutans, and the various species of gibbons); tortoises; freshwater turtles; and marine turtles.² The grants target species and address habitat conservation, law enforcement, and technical assistance for conserving species under the MSCF.

Efforts to conserve species under the MSCF benefit from additional funding and in-kind support provided by partners and collaborators. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), which runs the program, almost \$92.0 million was provided by partners and collaborators for efforts under the MSCF from FY2013 to FY2017. This figure is nearly double the amount appropriated (\$47.0 million) for these efforts during the same period. Since its inception, the MSCF has engaged nearly 600 domestic and foreign partners in over 54 countries, according to FWS. The MSCF also addresses wildlife trafficking of target species. For example, the African Elephant Conservation Fund provided funding to protect elephant habitat in Africa and support efforts to detect, confiscate, and manage elephant parts and ivory in range states. The Rhino and Tiger Conservation Fund has funded efforts to combat the trafficking of tiger skins and bones, rhino horns, and other rhino products.³

In addition to appropriations, funds for conservation come from purchases of the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp⁴ (authorized under P.L. 111-241).⁵ On September 22, 2011, the U.S. Postal Service introduced the “Save Vanishing Species” semipostal stamp.⁶

¹ For more information, see CRS Report RL32751, *The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)*, by Pervaze A. Sheikh.

² Range countries are countries where a certain species resides. For example, Tanzania is a range country for African elephants.

³ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Justifications*, Department of the Interior, Budget Justification, 2019.

⁴ Semipostal stamps are first-class letter stamps that are sold with a surcharge over their postage value. The additional charge is recognized by the stamp purchaser as a voluntary contribution to a designated cause. For example, a first-class stamp may be purchased for 49 cents, but a first-class semipostal stamp costs 60 cents. USPS sells a semipostal stamp and then transfers a portion of the proceeds (less USPS's administrative costs) to the U.S. Treasury, which allocates funding to the federal agency designated to administer the funds. The agency then expends or distributes the funds for the statutorily designated purpose.

⁵ Under the act, proceeds from the sale of certain postage stamps were to be used to help implement the MSCF. According to P.L. 111-241, funds from the stamps are not offset annual appropriations to the MSCF, nor are they to be taken into account in any decision related to funding MSCF or FWS. The stamps were to be available to the public for at least two years.

⁶ For more information, see CRS Report R44809, *Multinational Species Conservation Fund Semipostal Stamp*, by Pervaze A. Sheikh, Michelle D. Christensen, and Kalyn R. Dorheim.

Since its issuance, more than 50 million stamps have been sold, raising approximately \$5.7 million for activities that conserve species supported by the MSCF.⁷

For FY2020, the Administration requested \$6.0 million for species programs under the MSCF, which is approximately \$5.1 million below the FY2019 estimated level of funding. Funding for these species programs comes to FWS from the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations act. **Table 1** shows funding levels for the MSCF and the NMBCF for FY2014–FY2019 and the FY2020 request. Funds from the MSCF are authorized to be expended under five acts, described below:

- The African Elephant Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. §4201) authorizes matching grants for conservation, research, management, and protection of African elephants. Projects are carried out in cooperation with African nations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Appropriations are authorized for \$5.0 million annually from FY2019 to FY2023.
- The Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund (16 U.S.C. §5301) assists in conserving tigers and the six species of rhinos. Matching grants support governments and NGOs in projects to conserve habitat, survey populations, improve law enforcement, and educate the public. Appropriations are authorized for \$10.0 million annually from FY2019 to FY2023.
- The Asian Elephant Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. §4261) is similar to the above programs in purposes and scope. An additional emphasis, where the elephants are draft animals, is to promote their humane treatment and encourage captive breeding. Appropriations are authorized for \$5.0 million annually from FY2019 to FY2023.
- The Great Ape Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. §6303) is similar to the above programs in purposes and scope. Species of interest are lowland and mountain gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos (a species closely related to chimpanzees), orangutans, and multiple species of gibbons (Genus *Hylobates*—about 8-10 species, according to anthropologists). Appropriations are authorized for \$5.0 million annually from FY2019 to FY2023.
- The Marine Turtle Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. §6601) was passed on July 2, 2004. This law provides grants for the conservation of marine turtle, freshwater turtle, and tortoise populations and their nesting habitats in the wild and establishes a turtle conservation fund within the MSCF. It also authorizes \$5 million in annual appropriations from FY2019 to FY2023 for conservation efforts.

The Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Act (39 U.S.C. 416 note, as amended) requires the sale of an MSCF semipostal stamp, the proceeds of which are divided equally among existing conservation funds. Authorization for the MSCF stamp expired in September 2017. This expiration does not preclude the U.S. Postal Service from continuing to issue and sell the stamp. According to the USPS, the stamp is in production.⁸

⁷ U.S. Postal Service at <https://about.usps.com/corporate-social-responsibility/semipostals.htm>, accessed April 4, 2019.

⁸ Ibid.

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund

The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. §§6101-6109) provides grants for the conservation of hundreds of bird species that migrate among North and South America and the Caribbean. The act requires spending not less than 75% of the funds on projects outside of the United States. The act was reauthorized in 2019, authorizing \$6.5 million in annual appropriations from FY2019 to FY2023. (See **Table 1.**)

Legislative Activity

In the 116th Congress, each of the multinational species conservation funds were reauthorized to receive appropriations from FY2019 to FY2023.⁹ Further, the Great Ape Conservation Act was amended to authorize a panel of experts to identify conservation plans for great ape conservation and to allow FWS to award multi-year grants for conservation activities.¹⁰ The Marine Turtle Conservation Act was amended to allow for freshwater turtles and tortoises to be eligible for grants and included in all authorized activities. Conservation activities for all turtles are now authorized to be implemented in U.S. Territories in addition to foreign countries.¹¹

S. 652 and H.R. 1446 would amend the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Act to remove any caps on its availability, and require the stamp be sold until the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) informs Congress that it has decided to no longer issue the stamps. The bills would also require USPS to sell the MSCF semipostal stamp until each printed copy is sold.

Table 1. Appropriations for Multinational Species Conservation Fund and Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, FY2014-FY2019, and FY2020 Request

(in U.S. \$ thousands)

	FY2014 Enacted	FY2015 Enacted	FY2016 Enacted	FY2017 Enacted	FY2018 Enacted	FY2019 Full Year CR	FY2020 Request
African Elephant	1,582	1,582	2,582	2,577	2,582	2,582	1,401
Tiger and Rhinos	2,440	2,440	3,440	3,433	3,440	3,440	1,865
Asian Elephant	1,557	1,557	1,557	1,554	1,557	1,557	845
Great Apes	1,975	1,975	1,975	1,971	1,975	1,975	1,071
Marine Turtle	1,507	1,507	1,507	1,505	1,507	1,507	818
Total MSCF	9,061	9,061	11,061	11,040	11,061	11,061	6,000
Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund	3,660	3,660	3,910	3,903	3,910	3,910	3,900

Source: Congressional budget justifications of the U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

⁹ P.L. 116-9, §7001.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

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