



Resolution No. 10C, 2007

**SUBJECT: WILDLIFE HABITAT & GREENSPACE ACQUISITION TRUST FUND**

WHEREAS, Louisiana's ecosystems are diverse and productive components of the natural and cultural heritage of the state, and are important economic assets supporting outdoor recreation activities including hunting, fishing, birding, boating and ecotourism that generate billions of dollars annually in expenditures, and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's natural ecosystems have been dramatically altered by industrial development including agriculture, forestry, mineral exploitation, navigation, manufacturing complexes, waste "disposal," urban sprawl, and uninformed land use practices that have resulted in degradation and loss of hundreds of thousands of acres of some of the most productive wildlife habitat on the continent, and

WHEREAS, due to the wisdom and vision of past leaders in conservation, nearly 2 million acres of important wildlife habitat in Louisiana have been secured through acquisition and management as wildlife management areas, refuges, forests and parks but there remain thousands of acres of habitat that are of critical importance to species conservation and recovery efforts that are unprotected and at risk to degradation and conversion to other uses, and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's State Wildlife Action Plan developed under the federal State Wildlife Grants Program and released in 2005, generally identifies habitat conservation needs statewide, and

WHEREAS, due to the astonishing rate of new residential development in communities around the state converting rural landscapes to subdivisions, strip malls and urban sprawl, and the planning imperative for redevelopment of community housing and infrastructure damaged by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, there is a critical need for local greenspace assessment, and the strategic establishment of greenspaces within communities to preserve community integrity, culture, heritage and quality of life that can reasonably be considered an emergency, and

WHEREAS, many states including South Carolina (28,000 acres [\$29 million]), Georgia (53,000 acres [\$130 million]), Alabama (59,000 acres [\$33 million]), and Arkansas (11,000 acres [\$4 million])\* have established wildlife habitat and greenspace acquisition programs and trust funds to conserve wildlife habitat, water quality, public outdoor recreation, and to preserve and enhance the quality of life that is important not only to the well-being of their citizens but to the recruitment of business and industry into their states, and

WHEREAS, despite wide recognition that there are significant unprotected tracts of wildlife habitat in Louisiana and that opportunities to acquire these areas from willing sellers routinely become available, Louisiana has no strategic plan, process or funding in place to convert these opportunities into conservation action that will provide longterm benefits to the state's fish and wildlife resources and the industries and public enjoyment they support, and

(Over)

WHEREAS, Louisiana's current fiscal situation, the prospect of a steady stream of funding from sharing revenue generated by leasing and production of minerals off the Louisiana coast with the federal government and the appropriateness of investing such funds for the longterm benefits of land conservation, makes now an opportune time for the State of Louisiana to establish a wildlife habitat and greenspace conservation program and trust fund, and

WHEREAS, believe it or not, most of Louisiana is located above I-10, as are many of its citizens and important, unprotected wildlife habitat, and it is appropriate that sources of state revenue like OCS revenue sharing with the federal government be made available, either directly or via alternative state revenue sources that are eligible to be used for the purpose of land conservation, to fund a statewide habitat and greenspace acquisition program, and

WHEREAS, based on the premise of the federal Land and Water Conservation Act that revenue from the depletion of nonrenewable public resources like oil and gas should be invested in the conservation of renewable natural resources like fish and wildlife habitat and water conservation and quality that a state wildlife habitat acquisition would accomplish, it is appropriate to dedicate a portion of state mineral revenues to land conservation, in addition to other sources that may be established via Act of the Louisiana Legislature.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF) supports the establishment of a state wildlife habitat and greenspace acquisition trust fund to acquire and preserve important unprotected habitats and greenspace on a prioritized basis, and the establishment of a commission to oversee the administration of the fund.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that LWF urges the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the Louisiana Office of State Parks and other appropriate land conservation and management organizations and agencies to develop a master list of priority unprotected habitats and a process for prioritizing greenspace needs statewide.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that LWF supports the use of state mineral revenues derived from energy production on state lands and waterbottoms to support the aforementioned wildlife habitat and greenspace acquisition trust fund as well as other appropriate sources of revenue.

\* 2001-2005 expenditures

*Adopted by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation in convention assembled, 4 March 2007, in Gonzales, Louisiana.*