



Migratory Bird Joint Ventures The Three Billion Bird Decline Habitat Response

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Acting Director Williams,

The 3 Billion Bird Decline (3BBB) is a loud call to action for the avian conservation community. The Migratory Bird Joint Ventures (JVs), an ongoing North American conservation success story, are prepared to play an active role in the US Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) conservation response. The JV collaborative approach, landscape-scale public-private partnerships, "all bird" mandate, and a 30-year proven record of bird habitat conservation is clear substantiation of the JVs' ability to lead and coordinate the Service's on-the-ground response to this urgent need.

The JVs are poised to lead the habitat conservation elements of the Service's 5+1 response to the 3BB decline. The upward trajectory of wetlands and waterfowl populations – the impetus and primary focus of most JVs over the last three decades – is testament to the JV program's capability to lead the habitat response.

The JVs stand prepared to intensify and expand our priorities. Yet, deficient funding remains the primary constraint. Despite recent marginal increases, the Service's current Line 1234 budget allocation barely allows many JVs to operate at baseline effectiveness, as articulated in the JV Performance Matrix, and is far short of what is needed to successfully lead the 3BBB habitat conservation response effort.

Numerous bird conservation plans identify **what** to do, but an effective 3BBB habitat response requires retooling **how** to do conservation. The North American Bird Conservation Initiative's white paper on Five Game Changing Paradigms to scale-up conservation efforts clearly illustrates that "just do more" will not increase impact. We must expand partnerships, leverage additional funding, and adapt to a new world.

The COVID pandemic did not change the need for JV-led habitat conservation. In fact, our country's re-awakening to the joy and need for outdoor recreation makes conserving our natural areas an even higher priority for our citizenry. The health crisis provided an opportunity for JVs to collaborate on how best to lead the 3BBB habitat response. The AJVMB asked the JVs to perform a gap analysis and assessment of annual funding needed to intensify current priority conservation efforts and truly become "all bird" by scaling-up to respond to the 3BBB. **From that effort, the AJVMB requests an annual JV program budget of \$41 million to successfully lead the Service's on-the-ground 3BBB response.**

Our view is the Service should not be the sole funding source, rather remain the leader. The JVs represent the primary Service program nexus where the funding of the Service and other Interior agencies, USDA via Farm Bill conservation programs and the U.S. Forest Service, state funding, corporate investments, NGOs, and private landowner efforts all coalesce into highly effective, on-the-ground conservation. **We ask you to work with us to leverage our network connections to make the JV program reach its full potential.**

The AJVMB looks forward to collaborating with you on how to best to lead the habitat conservation elements of the Service's 3BBB habitat conservation response. Thank you!

Jeff McCreary, Chair

Association of Joint Venture Management Boards

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