and conserve the natural resources they appreciate and love.

The Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1998 also has some merit. Taxes will be paid on federal offshore oil and gas development regardless of our stance on the issue. Teaming With Wildlife was often criticized because it did not penalize organizations that caused environmental degradation. Realizing that offshore oil and gas revenue will be collected and that Congress will not support additional taxes to fund wildlife agencies, it seems logical that we should use these funds for wildlife conservation. However, we should exercise caution and fully understand the provisions of this bill.

Our major concern over the use of oil and gas revenue is that the wildlife profession may be at the mercy of these companies. Because these companies will be partially funding research projects and paying salaries, oil and gas companies may have some leverage on wildlife issues. Other concerns revolve around the fact that the oil and gas leases will be driven by the economy, causing revenue fluctuations. However, more importantly, we should concern ourselves with the allocation of the oil and gas revenue and potential incentives for further development by oil and gas companies into protected areas. Because the revenue would come from existing and new leases, Title I of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act bill may create incentives for state and local governments that it benefits to support offshore oil and gas development. A state’s proximity to OCS production is directly linked to 50% of its allocated funds. This link creates a major incentive for coastal states to support such development. Further, there is no provision that mandates 100% of OCS impact aid be used to ameliorate OCS impacts. Finally, the bill does not provide for federal oversight to ensure that the funds are spent consistent with the bill or existing environmental laws.

Developing a bill that would incorporate both funding sources seems logical. Nonconsumptive users would help support nongame research and management while oil and gas companies could provide additional funding for state agencies to use for nongame purposes. However, provisions must to be incorporated where environmental damage caused by oil and gas companies would be corrected and overseen. All too often oil companies do not clean drilling sites after explorations or development. Currently, oil companies must leave areas as “close to the original condition as possible,” but this is left to the discretion of the companies.

Oil and gas companies will continue exploration and development regardless of the outcome of this bill. We believe that by consolidating TWW and CARA, the wildlife profession and natural resources will receive the greatest benefit. However, we need to be sure that the new bill incorporates provisions to oversee environmental restoration by oil and gas companies and provide penalties for negligence along with assisting nongame wildlife funds.—**Fidel Hernandez, Margaret Hoover, Irma Negrete, Cynthia Kollar, Cynthia Martinez, and Daniel Nellis**, Department of Animal and Wildlife Sciences, Department of Agronomy and Resource Sciences, and Department of Biology at Texas A&M University–Kingsville.

---

### An example of the starving man syndrome

As the 21st century draws near, we face a pivotal decision that will affect future generations of outdoor enthusiasts. For decades, American hunters and anglers have supported the conservation and management of game species through voluntary user-pay fees. This funding has provided for the needs of game species, while largely ignoring those nongame species in need of conservation. Although considered an afterthought in the early years of wildlife management, we now understand the importance of nongame species in the application of a holistic approach to managing ecosystems.

Teaming With Wildlife (TWW) is a unique funding initiative developed to address deficiencies in funding for 85% of wildlife species in the United States. Under this proposition, a user-fee tax would raise $350 million for the conservation of nongame species not funded by the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531–1544), Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. 669–6691), or Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act of 1984. Unfortunately, the TWW initiative was stymied by lawmakers reluctant to introduce new tax legislation.

Support for nongame conservation was renewed with the introduction of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1998 (CARA; H.R. 4717). The goals of this proposition mirror those of TWW and would generate an estimated $300–$400 million for nongame research and education. Although this new legislation is appealing, controversy surrounds CARA and stems not from the initiative’s objectives but from its funding source. While TWW funding would be generated from a user-pay excise tax on outdoor recreation items, CARA relies upon revenue generated from offshore oil and gas leases. A small percentage (7–10%) of this revenue would be allocated to states...
for essentially the same purposes as the original TWW initiative. Although most have remained strong in their support for nongame wildlife by backing the new CARA bill, several organizations have been reluctant to sponsor the new initiative. The Conservation and Reinvestment Act should be supported as a course of action for the following reasons.

The Conservation and Reinvestment Act will generate much-needed funds for nongame research and education. This is the crux of CARA and TWW; sadly, it has been overlooked as debate continues to develop over the funding source. It seems contradictory that professionals would petition legislators for nongame funds, then bemoan the funding source upon Congressional compliance. Granted, we are taking what we can get. Likewise, a starving man would sooner eat stale bread than wait for a 7-course banquet. Failure to support CARA due to the funding source weakens the sense of urgency of the situation and may prevent passage of similar legislation in the future.

As wildlife biologists, we have been taught that natural resource conservation is a multi-disciplinary field, requiring cooperation and compromise between various parties. It seems logical that those engaging in environmentally harmful practices do their share to improve present circumstances through taxation of offshore extraction. Initially, a "polluter’s tax" was proposed to fund TWW and was widely supported. It also seems logical that those in the wildlife field take advantage of these funds, though some professionals view this as "endorsing" oil development. Oil development will occur regardless of endorsement by wildlife advocates through CARA, and use of oil taxes as a funding base for CARA should not be viewed as promotion for extraction.

The Conservation and Reinvestment Act will prevent species from reaching critical population levels. If passed, CARA will be the first step towards a proactive conservation approach. Traditionally, conservation efforts have been reactive; protective measures are only taken after species reach critical population levels. Success of the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544) is limited at best, due largely to this reactive approach. The Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1998 would allocate funds for research on migratory songbirds, land turtles, and other declining species that have not yet fallen to the critically low numbers meriting protection under current legislation. Through research and education programs, CARA will reduce dollars spent on costly court hearings and recovery plans, precluding the listing of a species.

The Conservation and Reinvestment Act will provide a stepping stone for future conservation efforts. Funding for nongame legislation through oil and gas leases is unstable as oil prices fluctuate over time. Although we support CARA, the ultimate goal for wildlife and natural resource enthusiasts should be stability in funding. The Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1998 will serve as a springboard for future conservation legislation, catapulting development and discovery of new funding sources. A portion of CARA funds may be used to explore new avenues to make stable funding a reality in the future. Numerous other possibilities would exist for exploration under CARA.

Ultimately, CARA will serve as a backbone for nongame conservation programs in the future. This legislation has the potential to impact nongame species in the same way the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. 669-6691) benefited game species. It will provide an important foundation for future research while maintaining stable populations of native species. The Conservation and Reinvestment Act will allow us to take the first step towards a holistic approach to the conservation of our natural resources.—Jacob R. Goheen, James W. Rivers, and Jessica Brunson, Division of Biology, Kansas State University, Manhatten, KS 66506-4901.

Teaming With Wildlife or Teaming With Oil?

Don’t be in such a rush to celebrate a victory on this one, fellow wildlifers. Is the Conservation and Restoration Act of 1998 (H.R. 4717) really what we want to support, or is it just a means for us to claim victory after such a long road of traveling? I don’t think many of us will deny the need for Teaming With Wildlife (TWW) and the programs and funding it would provide, but do we really need to lie down with the enemy to obtain such funding? It seems that many of us are not seeing the full picture here.

I admit that this new bill sounds good (e.g., “While we cannot replenish the Earth’s oil supply, we can reinvest in natural resources…”); who wouldn’t agree with such an argument. However, we need to ask what are we losing by supporting these bills, and who will gain the most from these bills being passed through the House and Senate. It seems as though this is yet another attempt by certain members of Congress to obtain more of the outer continental shelf (OCS) funds for their own states. The Title III inclusion was only added because of pressure from constituents in Alaska to have something done about TWW. Because of the widespread support for TWW,