

The Trump Administration's Assault on Wildlife Conservation

Assessing the damage of the first 20 months





DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE

Defenders of Wildlife is a national, nonprofit membership organization dedicated to the protection of all native wild animals and plants in their natural communities.

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Cover photo: Grizzly bear sow and cubs walk along an oil pipeline in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska. The Trump administration is determined to expand fossil fuel development across huge expanses of public lands and waters that are critical to wildlife conservation and watershed protection—including Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, one of the largest protected areas in the United States and one of the wildest places remaining on Earth. © Joel Sartore/www.joelsartore.com

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Introduction

As the 2016 presidential campaign drew to a close, Defenders of Wildlife published *A Wildlife Conservation Agenda for the Next Administration: 2017-2021*, a call to action for our next president to address urgent challenges—and embrace great opportunities—to conserve America’s wildlife, natural resources and unique systems of public lands. We reminded the incoming president of the nation’s deep conservation legacy and the continuing commitment of millions of Americans to preserving our natural environment. And we urged our future chief executive to build on the leadership of past presidents, Democratic and Republican, by advancing the federal commitment to wildlife conservation across eight priority conservation areas: imperiled species, public lands, renewable energy, climate change, collaborative conservation, international wildlife conservation, youth and community engagement and science-based conservation.

Donald J. Trump was elected the 45th president of the United States on November 8, 2016, and Defenders provided his team with our conservation agenda shortly thereafter.

Now, less than half-way through this presidential term, we can unequivocally state: The Trump administration fundamentally does not value wildlife, wild places, clean air and water, and a livable climate. Rather than build on America’s extraordinary conservation legacy, this administration has placed the power of the federal government at the disposal of those who seek to exploit and degrade our land, water, air, wildlife and people.

Across the federal government, President Trump has appointed officials who are hostile to the conservation missions and stewardship responsibilities of their departments and agencies. He has issued more than a dozen executive

“Our initial shock at the Trump administration’s shameless assault on our wildlife and wildlands has turned into determination to prevent this misguided team from destroying the decades of conservation progress this country has made.”

Jamie Rappaport Clark
President and CEO, Defenders of Wildlife

orders that undermine federal environmental agencies and programs and weaken or eliminate policies essential to managing and conserving our natural resources. He has brazenly revoked presidential and administrative protections for public lands and wildlife, and he continues to threaten decades of conservation achievement across the country. Moreover, his proposed budgets have invariably sought to starve the agencies that protect our wildlife and us.

Who benefits from this anti-conservation agenda? Mostly mining and drilling interests, chemical companies, loggers and polluters—certainly not wildlife, public lands or the American people.

This report revisits the eight conservation priorities we outlined in *A Wildlife Conservation Agenda for the Next Administration*, briefly summarizing the Trump administration’s attacks on each one during its first 20 months, our responses and the anti-conservation moves we expect next. Our agenda envisioned working together to protect and restore wildlife and habitat for current and future generations. Instead, we are in the fight of our lives to defend the Endangered Species Act and other bedrock environmental laws, protect federal lands and waters and our climate, and maintain science-based, public decision-making and management of our natural resources.



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1 Imperiled Species

Protect and restore our endangered and threatened plants and wildlife.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is the world's most visionary and important law for the conservation and restoration of threatened and endangered plants and animals and their habitats. The ESA is the cornerstone of our nation's commitment to preserving life on Earth. The protection it provides to our rarest and most imperiled species also benefits people, communities and economies, as these plants and animals serve essential roles in the ecosystems that provide drinkable water, breathable air and healthy soil. Despite the long-standing failure of Congress to provide adequate funding, the ESA has rescued hundreds of species from the brink of extinction and set many more on the path to recovery. Because of the ESA, we have gray wolves again in the Northern Rockies, manatee and sea turtle populations increasing in Florida, American alligators recovered throughout the South, sea otters rebounding in California, and California condors back in southwestern skies.

We urged the next president to uphold this conservation legacy by defending the ESA against legislative attacks, investing in species recovery, and using a transparent and scientifically defensible approach to decision-making that integrates data and new technologies in conservation planning and implementation.

THE TRUMP ASSAULT

The Trump administration ignored our recommendations for protecting imperiled species. The administration has not only failed to take a strong stance against relentless Congressional attacks on the ESA, but has demonstrated overt hostility toward species conservation. The slew of orders and directives from the president and Department of the Interior have treated imperiled species conservation as a burden to the industries this administration seeks to serve, rather than a responsibility to future generations.

The administration has withdrawn previous policies and proposals to protect wildlife from toxic pollution, including certain pesticides and lead used in fishing tackle and ammunition. It struck down a critical rule that protected

Going for the heart and soul of the ESA

The Department of the Interior is now targeting the long-standing regulations for implementing the ESA as part of its "unified agenda" for deregulating the federal government. The department has proposed weakening rules governing species listing and designation and regulation of critical habitat and diminishing wildlife agencies' ability to provide feedback, or "consultation," on actions that could impact listed species. These provisions are the heart and soul of the ESA.

our streams from toxic coal mining runoff and is relentlessly working to reduce clean water protections to make it easier to dump sewage, manure, pesticides and other toxins into small streams and springs—even though these pollutants will flow downstream and degrade aquatic habitat and drinking water in larger waterways.

The Trump administration canceled a rule that would have placed limits on the number of endangered whales, dolphins and sea turtles that can be killed or injured by sword-fishing nets in the Pacific Ocean. The administration also made controversial listing decisions, denying ESA protections to the Pacific walrus, which is threatened by climate change, and the Northern Rocky Mountain fisher, which is imperiled by ongoing trapping and logging. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) issued seriously flawed recovery plans for both the Mexican gray wolf and the red wolf. Finally, the administration submitted a formal legislative proposal to Congress through the Department of the Navy that would undermine the Marine Mammal Protection Act and subject critically endangered North Atlantic right whales and other sensitive marine mammals to harmful Navy training exercises.



USFWS/JIM CLARK

DEFENDERS' RESPONSE

Defenders is vigorously opposing the administration's attacks on the ESA, as well as the endless legislative attempts to undermine the law. We will work to ensure that proposed regulatory changes, like the forthcoming changes to the ESA implementing regulations, do not compromise the law's essential procedures and protections. Through our Center for Conservation Innovation, we continue to develop new ideas, data and applications to more effectively implement the ESA. The center regularly publishes new information about how the law is administered, identifies ways to improve our understanding of species' long-term conservation needs, and provides new tools to federal and state agencies, scientists, managers, stakeholders and the public to recover federally protected species. Finally, Defenders is working through partnerships across the country to restore habitats, promote coexistence with wildlife, and help prevent species from declining to the point where ESA protections are required.

Mexican gray wolf. The latest recovery plan for these rare wolves is seriously flawed.

North Atlantic right whale and calf. President Trump supports offshore oil and gas drilling along the entire Atlantic coast—the range of these critically endangered whales.



NOAA/NMFS

2 Public Lands

Defend and responsibly manage our federal public lands.

America's public lands are the envy of the world, and our nation's foresight in setting aside these special places where people, nature and the public interest come first has inspired conservation in nations throughout the world. Beginning with President Lincoln, who preserved Mariposa Grove and Yosemite Valley in California in 1864, Americans have recognized the profound social, ecological and economic benefits derived from public lands, including clean water, wildlife and recreation.

The conservation agenda we presented to our new president urged him to maintain the integrity of the laws, policies and agencies that protect wildlife and habitat on our federal lands—national wildlife refuges, national forests and grasslands, national parks and preserves, and entire landscapes administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). We advanced a precautionary approach to resource use that included managing for climate resiliency and implementing landscape-scale conservation strategies to protect species strongholds and enhance habitat connectivity.

THE TRUMP ASSAULT

Completely ignoring our recommendations, the Trump administration has focused with almost monomaniacal intensity on turning our public lands and waters over to fossil fuel development and other extractive uses in the name of “energy dominance.” President Trump has taken the unprecedented and illegal step of shrinking and stripping protections from two national monuments at the behest of oil, gas, coal and uranium interests and has rescinded President Obama's withdrawals of sensitive offshore waters in the Arctic and Atlantic oceans from oil development. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke greased the skids for mineral extraction, reversing the ban on new federal coal leases, directing agencies to expedite drilling on public lands and vastly expanding waters available for offshore drilling. What the administration is not serving up for mining and drilling, they are handing over to the timber industry, pushing for increased logging—even in sensitive and irreplaceable old growth like the coastal temperate rainforests of Tongass National Forest in Alaska, where the

administration is also considering a petition from the state to open vast areas to damaging new road construction. Topping off a recent spate of activity, BLM revoked its compensatory mitigation policy, which required developers to offset the impacts of drilling, mining and other activities on public lands and wildlife.

The Trump administration is also running roughshod over our National Wildlife Refuge System, the only network of public lands and waters whose primary purpose is wildlife conservation. Fueled by fringe politics, the Trump administration, abetted by Congress, is rushing to drill in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, plow a destructive road through Izembek National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, erect a border wall through Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge in south Texas and expand military combat exercises in Desert National Wildlife Refuge in Nevada—threatening irreparable damage to essential wildlife habitat, blocking crucial wildlife migration routes and jeopardizing the survival of imperiled species.

The administration has even targeted collaborative conservation efforts like the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy that strived to balance energy development and other multiple uses with conservation stewardship responsibilities on 65 million acres of BLM and U.S. Forest Service lands. Astonishingly, the Department of the Interior is scrapping this extensive effort and “revising” the plans, despite significant opposition from diverse stakeholders. The “revisions” are expected to vastly increase energy development and jeopardize years of investment in conserving sage-grouse and the hundreds of other wildlife species that share its sagebrush habitat, as well as communities and sustainable economies that depend on these resources.

And in a repulsive reversal of policy, President Trump endorsed a Congressional override of wildlife protections in Alaska to allow the killing of bears with cubs and wolves with pups in their dens and to permit trapping, baiting and using airplanes to scout and shoot bears in federal national wildlife refuges across the state. Now the administration has proposed

rescinding regulatory protections for carnivores to allow the same practices on national preserves, protected areas managed by the National Park Service (NPS), in Alaska.

DEFENDERS' RESPONSE

Defenders challenged the Trump administration's spurious "review" of more than thirty national monuments and national marine sanctuaries, filing comments that detail how these designations provide essential habitat for thousands of species, including hundreds of federally protected plants and animals. We have sued in federal court challenging President Trump's illegal downsizing of Bear's Ears National Monument, his withdrawals of President Obama's protections for sensitive offshore waters, and his waivers of environmental laws to construct his border wall. We are also responding to an endless series of administrative and legislative assaults on the National Wildlife Refuge System and staunchly opposing industry-driven revisions to the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy. At the same time, we are working with federal agencies wherever possible to advance conservation of species strongholds and habitat connectivity on public lands.

Braced for more shrinking and drilling

Having already decimated two national monuments in Utah—Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante—there is still a risk that President Trump may act to downsize or reduce protections for up to eight more national monuments and marine national monuments, as recommended by Secretary of the Interior Zinke. These public lands and waters conserve rare and vital habitats, preserve habitat connectivity and act as climate refugia for thousands of fish, wildlife and plant species. The Department of the Interior is also pressing forward with plans for seismic exploration and drilling in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and off the Atlantic Coast.

Sage-grouse near a natural gas development site in Wyoming. The current administration has prioritized drilling and mining over wildlife conservation and other values on public lands and waters.



3 Renewable Energy

Invest in responsible renewable energy development that minimizes impacts to wildlife.

Wind and solar energy are an indispensable and rapidly growing part of America's energy future. To maintain a livable climate, we must transition quickly from dependence on fossil fuels, with their heavy carbon emissions, to clean renewable energy. Development on both public and private lands will be an important part of this transition, but even renewable energy projects can have serious impacts on wildlife, habitat and other natural values. Careful planning is essential to avoid conflicts and lessen adverse effects.

Our conservation agenda urged the next president to continue an approach to renewable energy development that is "smart from the start." This strategy ensures that new facilities and supporting infrastructure are sited in low-conflict and degraded areas—while implementing policies and supporting the development of technologies to minimize and mitigate wildlife impacts from new wind and solar energy projects.

THE TRUMP ASSAULT

Wildlife-friendly renewable energy development is a win-win-win for species conservation, energy production, and our climate, but apparently not for the Trump administration. In addition to heavily favoring fossil fuel development, both Secretary of the Interior Zinke and Secretary of Energy Rick Perry have openly disparaged renewable energy, the latter even arguing (falsely) that renewable generation destabilizes the electric grid.

The Trump administration's actions threaten to undermine comprehensive planning and partnerships that are key to advancing low-impact renewable energy development. The president signed a Congressional resolution rescinding a new planning regulation that improved BLM resource management by codifying a landscape-level approach to planning for renewable energy and other uses. The administration also revoked and is now revising new mitigation policies, creating uncertainty among planners and renewable energy companies about whether and how they can offset impacts from development.

Next target: landmark California renewable energy plan

The Trump administration has announced it intends to revise the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP), a comprehensive, landscape-level strategy—the result of a six-year federal and state planning process—that balances renewable energy development and other land uses with wildlife conservation, wild lands protection and other public values on 22 million acres of the California desert. Reopening the DRECP, which was just completed in 2016, could jeopardize years of collaborative conservation planning and science-based protections for fragile desert wildlife and habitats.

In a stunning reversal, the Department of the Interior's Office of the Solicitor issued a new legal opinion on the century-old Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) that repudiated the long-standing interpretation under both Republican and Democratic administrations that the act's prohibitions against unpermitted killing of birds extended to incidental take by industrial activities. Under the new interpretation, the administration will no longer prosecute industries that incidentally kill migratory birds—leaving migratory birds without protection and undercutting decades of collaborative efforts to develop reasonable approaches to avoid and reduce unnecessary bird deaths from oil and gas development, cell towers, transmission lines, wind energy facilities and other industries and activities.

Opposite, wind turbines on BLM land in California. Climate-change deniers in the Trump administration are promoting fossil fuel development over wind, solar and other clean, renewable energy sources nationwide.

DEFENDERS' RESPONSE

Working with partners, Defenders has continued to drive progress on developing responsible renewable energy at the pace needed to mitigate climate change without jeopardizing our country's wildlife heritage. We have advanced smart-from-the-start renewable energy development, despite a slowdown in federal policymaking, planning and permitting over the past year. We have also begun applying our federal policy expertise to key state programs and initiatives, creating new models for supporting wildlife-responsible renewable energy development at state and regional scales. Defenders is continuing its productive collaborations with renewable energy companies to develop and apply new technologies to avoid and mitigate for impacts on wildlife. Finally, Defenders is challenging the Trump administration's reckless, misguided and erroneous reinterpretation of the MBTA in federal court.



USFWS PEDRO RAMIREZ, JR.

American coot on an evaporation pond in a Wyoming oilfield. Oil waste ponds and pits claim an estimated 500,000 to 1,000,000 migratory birds each year, but the Trump administration is no longer prosecuting industries for incidental kill of these birds.



BLM CALIFORNIA

4 Climate Change

Protect wildlife from the impacts of climate change.

Climate change poses profound and increasingly palpable challenges to human and natural systems already threatened by habitat loss, overexploitation and pollution. President Obama made climate change a central issue of his administration's agenda, focusing on the critical need to reduce the nation's greenhouse gas emissions and the equally urgent need to plan for and address the impacts of climate change on our lands, waters, wildlife and other resources. The Obama administration promulgated a suite of policies on climate change mitigation and adaptation and endorsed the Paris Climate Agreement—setting up the succeeding administration to advance climate change policy at home and abroad.

Defenders recommended that the incoming president phase down fossil fuel development and account for greenhouse gas emissions on federal lands and waters; ensure that federal planning and decision-making fully address and accommodate climate change impacts; increase science capacity within the federal government to forecast, plan and adapt to these effects; and maintain global leadership on adaptation and emissions reductions.

THE TRUMP ASSAULT

Rather than accept the evolving and unequivocal findings of climate scientists and build on the progress of the previous administration, the Trump administration has ignored the facts and moved to systematically dismantle those achievements, reversing years of work on policies to reduce greenhouse gas pollution and prepare for and respond to the current climate change impacts. The reversal in direction was clear from the early days of the administration, as President Trump announced his nominees for key offices: former ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson for secretary of state; Scott Pruitt, industry proponent and outspoken foe of the Environmental Protection Agency as administrator of that agency; and fossil fuel enthusiast Ryan Zinke to helm the Department of the Interior.

President Trump wasted no time in courting climate chaos, announcing his intention to withdraw from the Paris Climate

Beware the “dream team”

Even though Tillerson and Pruitt have left the administration, fossil fuel interests still have a “dream team” in place with Secretary Zinke and Administrator Pruitt's successor, former coal lobbyist Andrew Wheeler. Add President Trump's nominations for the Supreme Court and powerful lower courts, and any number of agency efforts to protect the climate, air, water and wildlife could be undercut, even as the very real impacts of climate change—rising seas, larger storms and devastating droughts and fires—threaten people and wildlife.

Agreement and issuing an executive order that cripples America's ability to take urgent action needed to address the global threat of climate change. The order directed federal agencies to undo foundational components of our national climate policy, and the president's department heads responded zealously. The EPA is moving to replace the Clean Power Plan with a much weaker regulation that will barely reduce carbon dioxide emissions from existing electricity generation facilities; is weakening rules meant to reduce emissions of methane, a potent greenhouse gas; and is even planning to loosen fuel economy standards for cars and trucks. The Department of the Interior has restarted the federal coal leasing program, vastly expanded areas for offshore oil drilling, and eliminated guidance for reducing emissions and accounting for climate change effects in natural resource planning and management. Most recently, the president replaced the National Ocean Policy with an executive order that emphasizes resource extraction and scraps biodiversity conservation and combating threats from climate change, sea level rise and acidification as national priorities.

Meanwhile, climate change and its associated impacts continue. The first year of the Trump administration, 2017, was the second hottest on record (after 2016). Since his inauguration, damages from climate disasters have cost Americans more than \$320 billion.

DEFENDERS' RESPONSE

Joining a rising nationwide chorus of dissent, Defenders has repeatedly and effectively messaged on the dangers the Trump administration poses to domestic and international climate change policy. We have also been a leading voice in connecting the threat of climate change to wildlife and habitat. President and CEO Jamie Rappaport Clark offered keynote remarks highlighting the importance of responding to climate change before thousands of people at the first March for Science in Washington, D.C. on Earth Day 2017. Defenders has also developed new materials to educate and activate Americans to defend our climate and support restoration of federal climate policies in more favorable political environments. For example, our interactive field guide to climate change features more than 50 species and how each one is



PIKA © SYDNEY CABLE

American pika. This high-elevation species is particularly vulnerable to rising temperatures and is already declining in some places.

Below, Defenders President Jamie Rappaport Clark speaks on the importance of science in addressing climate change and other issues at the March for Science, Earth Day 2017.

already affected by climate change impacts. And we continue to work with scientists to forge and promote policies at the federal, regional and local levels to help wildlife survive and adapt to changing conditions.



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5 Collaborative Conservation

Encourage initiatives by private landowners, states and tribes to conserve imperiled species and habitats.

Nearly two-thirds of our nation's 2.3 billion acres are privately owned; in some states, such as Illinois and Texas, nearly all land is private. Private lands support two-thirds of the species listed under the ESA, and 10 percent of listed species occur only on private lands. The last remnants of key imperiled ecosystems, such as tallgrass prairie, longleaf pine and bottomland hardwood forests, are primarily in private ownership. Conserving the full range of America's biodiversity requires collaboration among federal, state, tribal and private landowners to identify and protect species and habitat across all ownerships.

Our recommendations to the new administration included fully funding voluntary conservation programs, like those offered through the Farm Bill—the largest single source of federal funding for private land conservation—and using these programs and other resources to strategically address species of greatest conservation need. We also called for coordinating with and incentivizing best practices by state, private and tribal landowners to manage wildlife habitat.

THE TRUMP ASSAULT

President Trump demonstrated a disdain for tribal priorities from the start, immediately ordering expedited review and approval for the construction of the Dakota Access pipeline. In doing so, he ignored the strenuous objections of the Standing Rock Sioux, who are concerned about potential impacts of the pipeline on their water supply and certain destruction of their sacred burial grounds. The president also insulted tribal interests with his proclamation downsizing Bears Ears National Monument in Utah by 85 percent, exposing spiritual, cultural and historic sites and artifacts important to tribes and pueblos in four states to theft and mismanagement. He has also rejected calls from the Gwich'in people of northern Alaska to protect Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from drilling and ignored the Tohono O'odham Nation's opposition to building a wall on tribal land that stretches 75 miles along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Trashing years of collaborative planning, the Department of the Interior's proposed revision of greater sage-grouse

conservation plans not only jeopardizes habitat conservation and restoration on public lands but also federal and partner investments on adjacent private lands valued at \$760 million.

To date, the administration's outreach to individuals and communities has been stunningly narrow and primarily focused on sporting interests to promote increased hunting and fishing on public lands. Other outdoor recreationists and conservationists are increasingly ignored or outright excluded from discussions and decision-making affecting wildlife across the country.

Finally, the Trump administration's proposed annual budgets have sought to slash grants and other funding for on-the-ground projects that reduce pollution and help communities protect and improve the environment. And the administration's policies, treatment of asylum seekers and wall-building plans at our southern border threaten important and productive conservation partnerships and the very spirit of cooperation between the United States and Mexico.

DEFENDERS' RESPONSE

Defenders continues to work closely with tribes, states and private landowners to monitor wildlife populations and restore habitat on focal landscapes across the country. We are working with the Assiniboine and Sioux tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation to restore genetically pure bison to tribal management. We partnered with the American Prairie Reserve in northcentral Montana to create new black-footed ferret habitat (prairie dog colonies) on private lands adjacent to a ferret recovery site on Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, improving the species' chances at recovery by allowing this population to expand. We have also developed a comprehensive set of recommendations to improve wildlife and habitat conservation on private lands through the Farm Bill, which is due for reauthorization this year. Finally, through our coexistence program, Defenders collaborates with ranchers, farmers and other landowners to reduce the risks of conflict with wildlife and to build public support for restoration of predators on working landscapes.

6 International Wildlife Conservation

Strengthen our role as an international leader in imperiled species conservation.

American leadership in the conservation of species across and beyond our borders dates to the early 20th century, when the United States entered groundbreaking treaties with Canada, Russia, Japan and Mexico to conserve migratory birds. The United States also led the negotiation for the 1940 Convention of Nature Conservation and Wild Life Preservation of the Western Hemisphere and later for the Convention on International Trade in Wild Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES). More recently, the Obama administration took a global leadership role in fighting international wildlife trafficking, poaching and illegal trade—major threats to elephants, parrots, sharks and countless other species around the world.

Our conservation agenda urged the next president to maintain America's leadership role in combating international wildlife trafficking, eliminating illegal domestic consumption of wildlife products, and working with other countries to support biodiversity conservation and cross-border cooperation.

THE TRUMP ASSAULT

Contrary to the course we advised, President Trump has forfeited American leadership and extended his administration's isolationist tendencies to international conservation. In addition to withdrawing the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement, leaving us the only nation not part of the accord, the administration is pushing an international agenda that is building barriers, not bridges, to neighboring countries. In fact, President Trump's primary international aspiration is to construct and fortify a wall along the more than 1,200 miles of our southern border.

A centerpiece of the Trump campaign, the border wall will sever communities on both sides of the border, cut through habitat for more than 1,500 wildlife species and further imperil at least 89 endangered or threatened species, including the Mexican gray wolf, jaguar, ocelot and Peninsular bighorn sheep.

Bisecting a biodiversity hotspot

While President Trump waits for a federal spending bill to provide the billions he needs to complete his wall, the Department of Homeland Security is moving forward with border construction plans on certain segments using funding previously received from Congress. This includes plans to construct additional border wall through the Lower Rio Grande Valley, effectively walling off a large part of this region that extends from south Texas into Mexico. This area, a convergence of temperate, desert, and coastal ecosystem types, is a borderlands biodiversity hotspot that is home to an impressive array of plants and animals.

The Trump administration has also withdrawn a proposed regulation, prompted by a Defenders-led petition, to restrict the trade of amphibians infected with the chytrid fungus, which has decimated frog and toad populations around the world. Without action to contain and cure this deadly fungus, salamanders and other amphibians will suffer a similar fate.

In addition, the Trump administration disbanded the U.S. Advisory Council on Wildlife Trafficking, a panel of conservation leaders and international experts established by President Obama to advise the U.S. government in its fight against illegal trafficking. In its place, Secretary of the Interior Zinke created the International Wildlife Conservation Council, an advisory group entirely comprised of big-game hunters and representatives of the firearms and ammunition industries and charged with the mission of promoting hunting overseas and making it easier to import animal trophies.

DEFENDERS' RESPONSE

To stop the border wall, Defenders is working with a broad coalition of local community groups and national organizations to oppose funding for this ill-conceived project. We scored a major victory when recent legislation to fund the federal government rejected President Trump's request for appropriations to construct three miles of border levee wall across the 2,088-acre Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, a critical remnant of riparian habitat along the Rio Grande in extreme south Texas. Although the refuge is quite small, its connection with similar habitat in Mexico allows it to support an incredible variety of wildlife, including more than 400 species of birds and half of all North American species of butterflies.



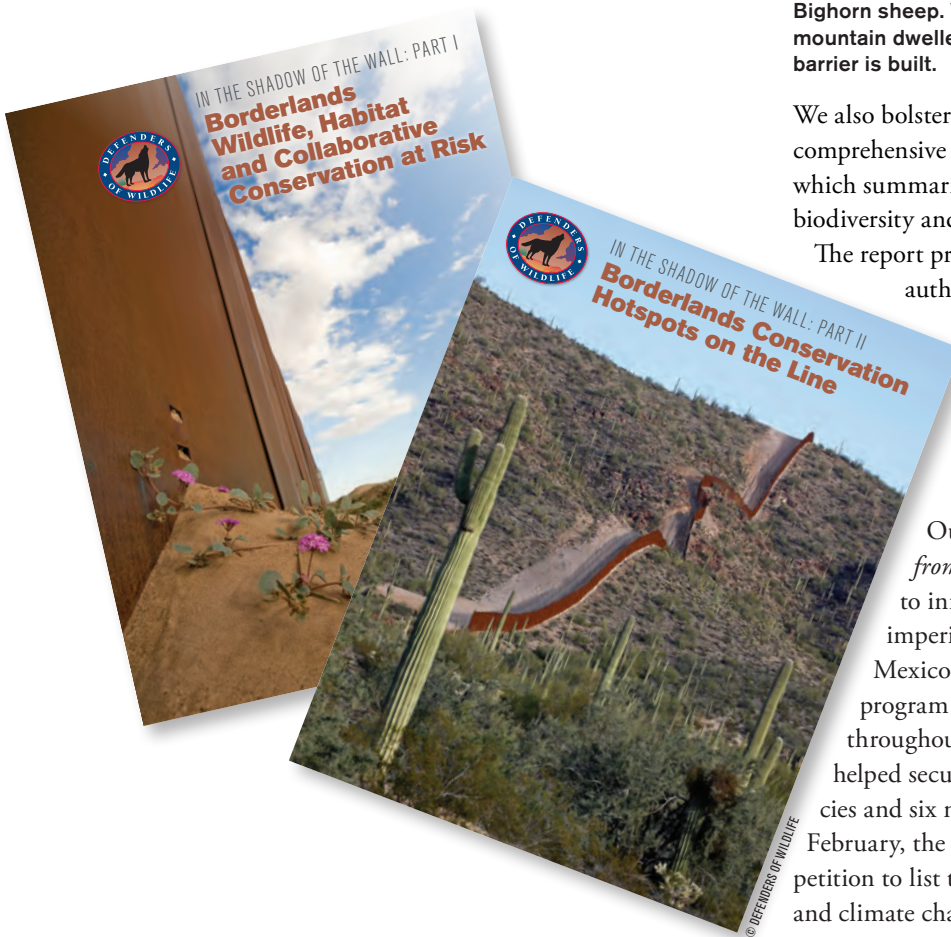
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Bighorn sheep. Vital connections between populations of these mountain dwellers will be severed if a more impenetrable border barrier is built.

We also bolstered the case against the wall by compiling a comprehensive two-part report, *In the Shadow of the Wall*, which summarizes the irreversible damage it will cause to biodiversity and international conservation collaboration.

The report prompted a peer-reviewed scientific article co-authored by Defenders' scientists and American and Mexican biodiversity and borderlands experts and published in the journal *BioScience*. In a show of global scientific consensus and concern, more than 2,500 scientists from 43 countries endorsed the article.

Our 2015 report, *Combating Wildlife Trafficking from Latin America to the United States*, continues to inform policies for halting illegal trafficking in imperiled between South America, Central America, Mexico and the United States, and our international program promotes conservation of species there and throughout the world. In October 2017, Defenders helped secure international protection for four bat species and six marine species, including the whale shark. In February, the National Marine Fisheries Service granted our petition to list the giant manta ray, at risk from overfishing and climate change, as threatened under the ESA.



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7 Youth and Community Engagement

Encourage our youth and diverse and changing communities to connect with our public lands and wildlife conservation heritage.

The young people of our increasingly diverse nation are the future protectors of our nation's environmental legacy. But their willingness to carry the torch for conservation will depend on how much they care. We cannot underestimate the importance of ensuring that our public lands and environmental priorities are relevant, inspiring and inclusive of diverse communities. We must ensure that diverse voices are included and heeded in federal government decision-making about the use, enjoyment and conservation of our natural resources.

Defenders' conservation agenda proposed that the next administration find more ways to connect younger and more diverse groups to our environment. We recommended expanding efforts to engage young Americans with nature and encourage them to visit, enjoy and make memories and traditions on public lands, so that the community of public lands visitors more closely reflects the demographics of the United States. We also advised the administration to diversify agency workforces that manage and protect our wildlife, public lands and environment. Finally, we called on the administration to uphold the laws that give voice to diverse communities in federal decision-making, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Equal Access to Justice Act, and citizen suit provisions in our environmental laws.

THE TRUMP ASSAULT

Rather than embracing a diverse America, President Trump's inflammatory and divisive rhetoric has divided the nation. His actions in office show a lack of interest in promoting diversity or encouraging communities' access to public lands. Eighteen of 24 of his highest-level appointments are white men, making the Trump cabinet and agency leadership the least diverse of any president's since Ronald Reagan. The Trump team has yet to fill critical leadership positions at the federal agencies charged with our public lands and recreational resources, depriving these agencies of the leadership needed to reach out to broader constituencies. Eighteen months into his administration, the president has yet to nominate directors for FWS and BLM or an assistant secretary of the interior for fish and

wildlife and parks, a critical policy position overseeing national parks and wildlife refuges.

In fact, the Trump administration is doing much more to expand public lands access for mining and drilling companies than for people and communities. To address maintenance backlogs, NPS is increasing entrance fees at many of our most popular national parks, even as the administration has reduced the amount that drilling companies pay in offshore oil and gas royalties. Secretary of the Interior Zinke even proposed to terminate the highly popular "Every Kid in a Park" program begun under President Obama to encourage children and their parents to visit national parks and other public lands and waters, only to relent after facing overwhelming public criticism.

The Trump administration has supported continuing legislative efforts in Congress to undercut environmental review

Silencing diverse voices

The Trump administration is seeking to revise long-standing regulations that govern federal agency environmental review under NEPA. Proposed regulatory changes could threaten the integrity of federal environmental analyses by ignoring invaluable input from the public, including members of diverse, local communities. Robust public planning is not only essential for understanding, minimizing and mitigating environmental impacts from proposed land use and development, but also for accounting for past impacts and preventing further incursions on tribal and minority rights, traditions and protections.

and public participation under NEPA and to block members of the public from going to court to protect their rights and hold government officials accountable. To promote President Trump's vision of a massive wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, the Department of Homeland Security has issued waivers of all environmental laws that might impede or mitigate the effects of wall construction and has refused to conduct environmental reviews of the wall under NEPA, excluding border communities and the public from its decision-making.

DEFENDERS' RESPONSE

Despite the current political climate, enthusiasm for wildlife and wild places remains undiminished across a wide spectrum of the public. Defenders' community outreach and engagement activities invite people of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy and contribute to wildlife conservation and habitat restoration. We mobilized more than 1,200 Alaskans to help count beluga whales; engaged more than 150 volunteers in our Wolverine Watch project, a highly popular community science forest carnivore monitoring effort in Bitterroot National Forest in Montana; organized supporters to log over 3,000 volunteer hours in camera monitoring for carnivores in Oregon; and helped schools, parks and communities in Washington state install raingardens that will keep toxic pollutants out of Puget Sound, improving marine waters for people, salmon and orcas. And in our fight against the border wall, we work hand in hand with a broad coalition of local community organizations and national groups with diverse perspectives and interests.



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A class in Tacoma, Washington, plants vegetation with "Orcas Love Raingardens," a Defenders-led partnership program that works with schools and parks to install and maintain these landscape features that capture and clean stormwater runoff—a major source of pollution harmful to orcas and the salmon they need to survive.

8 Science-based Conservation

Maintain our commitment to conservation based on sound science.

Effective environmental policy and management require evidence-based decision-making. High-quality information, including the best available science, has been a guiding tenet for America's greatest conservationists, from Theodore Roosevelt to Rachel Carson, and today is a central mandate of American conservation law.

Our proposed conservation agenda urged the new administration to strengthen the vital role of science in federal decision-making by providing agencies with adequate resources and technology to support the collection, organization, analysis and application of scientific information. We also recommended enhanced cooperation and data sharing among federal departments and agencies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of conservation action.

THE TRUMP ASSAULT

The Trump administration has not only stalled scientific progress on biodiversity conservation, it has also undermined science-based decision-making throughout federal departments and agencies, with grave implications for the health and safety of all species, including humans.

This administration is literally erasing science, systematically banning scientific language in government documents, ignoring scientific facts in its decision-making, rescinding America's high-priority, international, science-based commitments and attacking core environmental policies that do not align with the president's agenda. For example, the administration scrubbed any mention of "climate change" from federal websites and infamously censored the Centers for Disease Control's use of seven science terms, including "science-based" and "evidence-based."

The past 20 months have also seen unprecedented efforts to sideline or outright disband federal science advisory committees, which provide invaluable, objective advice to federal agencies and decision-makers responsible for resolving complex management challenges, ranging from environmental to medical crises. Last year federal committees recruited fewer

experts, lost more members and met less often than any year on record. At the Department of the Interior, Secretary Zinke recently put one of his high school football teammates, an individual with no scientific expertise, in charge of reviewing all the department's large science grants.

The administration has repeatedly threatened to cut funding for science agencies, including the Department of Energy and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. These are the resources that have funded independent scientists and their students working to improve our understanding of biodiversity and have driven technological innovation and habitat conservation that spur economic growth and job creation.

March for Science 2017



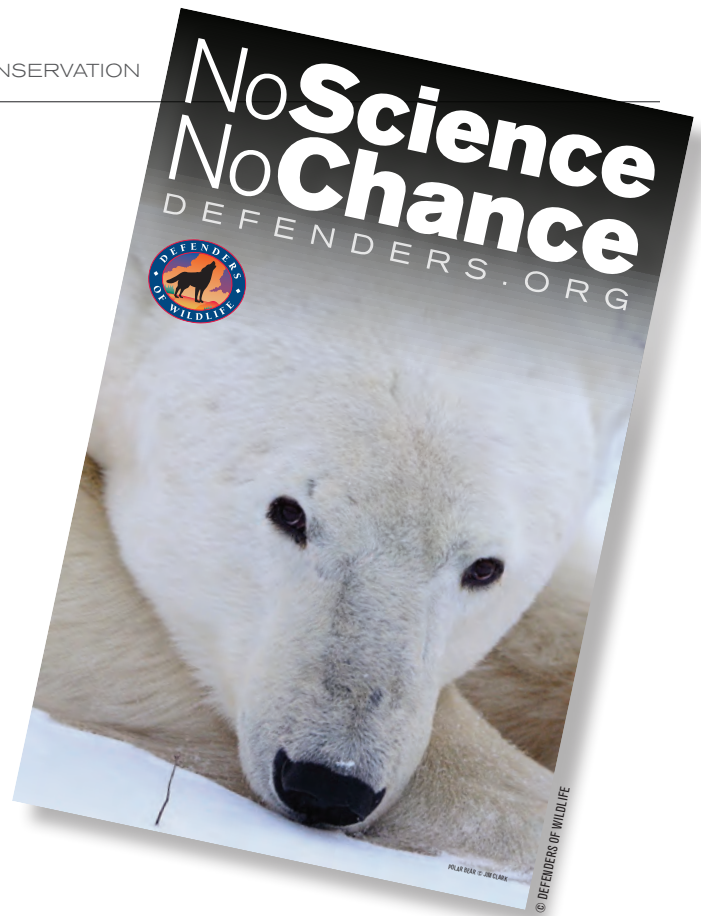
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The Trump administration made stripping scientific analyses and environmental review of major federal projects a hallmark of its infrastructure agenda. Instead of allocating adequate funds to fix the country's crumbling roads and bridges, the president's only real proposal was to bulldoze as many as 10 of the nation's leading environmental laws that protect America's air, lands, water and wildlife, wrongly scapegoating these protections as a cause of delay in infrastructure construction and repair.

DEFENDERS' RESPONSE

Defenders works closely with federal departments and agencies to preserve and expand federal scientific capacity and funding and develop sophisticated new online technologies and tools to improve species conservation and recovery. Examples include the development of *Dynamic Recovery*, an online application that aims to modernize recovery plans from static documents to a web-based, interactive platform, and *ESAdocs Search*, a searchable database of ESA-related documents that increases accessibility and transparency of decision-making on ESA-listed species.

Defenders has been a leading voice publicly opposing the efforts by the Trump administration to eliminate science and data in decision-making, including in court. In comments delivered at the March for Science in the first months of the Trump administration, Defenders President and CEO Jamie Rappaport Clark called for the federal government to



maintain its commitment to science-based decision-making under the ESA and other environmental laws. Practicing what we preach, we increased our own science capacity in 2017 by hiring a senior scientist to ensure that science remains at the core of Defenders' conservation advocacy.

Conclusion

Defenders of Wildlife believes in the inherent value of wildlife and the natural world. For 70 years, we have relied on the best available science to inform and guide our decisions and priorities when protecting threatened and endangered species and their habitats. We have worked with presidential administrations—Republican and Democratic—to fulfill and strengthen our national commitment to protecting wildlife, public lands and our environment.

Our initial shock at the Trump team's shameless assault on wildlife conservation quickly turned into determination to prevent this administration from further weakening or destroying the decades of conservation progress we have made. This is an incredibly difficult fight, but it is one we must win for the sake of wildlife, wild lands and us.

Former astronaut, science education advocate and Defenders supporter Leland Melvin joins Jamie Rappaport Clark at the 2017 March for Science.





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