

February 7, 2018

**Re: Reject Damaging Endangered Species Act Riders in FY 2018 Spending Legislation**

Dear Leaders McConnell, Schumer, Pelosi, and Speaker Ryan:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, we write to urge you to reject all policy riders on year-end legislation that would erode the Endangered Species Act and other safeguards for wildlife. Unfortunately, damaging provisions that would undermine the Endangered Species Act are included in the House Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bill (H.R. 3354) and the Senate Chairman's Mark of the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bill. If enacted, any of these riders would be highly detrimental to the future of imperiled species conservation. While this letter focuses on riders that would undermine vital wildlife protections, we also strongly oppose all other anti-environmental riders that would undermine protections for our lands, water, and air.

The Endangered Species Act remains the most effective and important law to protect animal and plant species at risk of extinction. The Endangered Species Act has successfully prevented the extinction of 99 percent of the species placed under its protection, including the bald eagle, the brown pelican, and the humpback whale. It is also one of our most popular conservation laws. According to a June 2015 poll, 90 percent of American voters support the Endangered Species Act.

Nevertheless, the House FY 2018 Interior/EPA appropriations bill has once again become a minefield of reckless riders aimed at weakening this bedrock conservation law. This year's bill contains provisions that would strip federal protections for iconic American wildlife including the gray wolf, the Mexican gray wolf, the sage-grouse, and the Preble's meadow jumping mouse. Such decisions should be based on the best available science, rather than political considerations that fall outside the framework of the Act. Still, another provision would block federal funding for listed species if the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or National Marine Fisheries Service (the Services) fails to complete its five-year reviews on time. If passed, this legislative language would suspend all federal conservation actions for over 900 endangered and threatened species with past-due five-year reviews. This translates to roughly 54 percent of all listed species. The Services currently lack the funds to complete timely reviews. Endangered and threatened species should not be made to suffer and decline toward extinction because the Services lack adequate funding to fulfill their responsibilities. Yet another provision would block a Department of the Interior rule to conserve native carnivores on federally protected preserves in Alaska. Finally, for a fourth year running, the bill includes a rider that prevents the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) from taking any steps to list the sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act. In September 2015, FWS determined that the greater sage-grouse was not warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act, citing an unprecedented landscape-scale planning process as reducing threats to sage-grouse. That plan will almost certainly be weakened under a new process initiated by Interior Secretary Zinke, yet this amendment would prevent a listing for sage-grouse, even if this species slips even closer to extinction.

The Senate FY 2018 Interior/EPA appropriations bill contains two of the same riders that attack protections for gray wolves and sage grouse. Additionally, the Senate bill includes a rider that would prevent FWS from even considering listing the imperiled lesser prairie-chicken. It also contains a highly damaging rider that would override the longstanding Endangered Species Act Section 7 requirement of re-initiation of interagency consultation once a species is listed, critical habitat is designated, or new pertinent information on a listed species becomes available.

The conservation challenges America faces today are even greater and more complex than they were when the Endangered Species Act was first enacted. We face the reality of climate change and other enormous threats to our planet's biodiversity—which in turn threaten our own survival as a species. Clearly, now is not the time to weaken the best tool our nation has to combat what scientists have determined is the sixth major extinction phase experienced on this planet.

Our organizations are grateful that the final FY 2017 omnibus appropriations package enacted earlier this year did not contain any new riders undermining endangered species conservation. Such harmful riders have no place in the appropriations context and only serve to chip away at one of America's most popular and effective environmental laws. We urge you to again stand for wildlife by flatly rejecting all harmful anti-wildlife measures on final spending legislation for FY 2018.

Respectfully,

Advocates for Snake Preservation  
Advocates for the West  
Alaska Wilderness League  
Alaska Wildlife Alliance  
All-Creatures.org  
American Bird Conservancy  
American Conservation Film Festival  
American Forests  
American Rivers  
American University Animal Law Society  
American University Environmental Law Society  
Amphibian Ark  
Animal Advocates of Western New York  
Animal Welfare Institute  
Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc.  
Arizona Center for Nature Conservation/Phoenix Zoo  
Arkansas Audubon Society  
Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos  
Association of Zoos & Aquariums  
Audubon Connecticut  
Audubon Naturalist Society  
Audubon New York  
Audubon of Kansas, Inc.

Audubon Society of Rhode Island  
Basin and Range Watch  
Bat Conservation International  
Berkshire Environmental Action Team, Inc. (BEAT)  
Black Hills Clean Water Alliance  
Blank Park Zoo  
Blue Heron Productions  
Bluestem Farms - Douglas County, Kansas  
Born Free USA  
Boulder Rights of Nature, Inc.  
Buffalo Field Campaign  
Burroughs Audubon Society of Greater Kansas City  
Buttonwood Park Zoological Society  
California Wolf Center  
Californians for Western Wilderness  
Cascadia Wildlands  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Center for Food Safety  
Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition  
Central Florida Zoo & Botanical Gardens  
Cetacean Society International  
Clean Water Action  
Cleveland Zoological Society  
Colorado Native Plant Society  
Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center  
Columbus Zoo and Aquarium and The Wilds  
Conejos Clean Water  
Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo  
Conservation Council for Hawai'i  
Cottonwood Environmental Law Center  
Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust  
Cumberland-Harpeth Audubon Society  
Dallas Zoo Management, Inc.  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Delaware Center for the Inland Bays  
Delaware Ecumenical Council on Children and Families  
Detroit Zoological Society  
E.O. Wilson Biodiversity Foundation  
Earth Ethics, Inc.  
Earthjustice  
Eastern State College  
EcoFlight  
EDF Action  
El Paso Zoological Society

Ellen Trout Zoo  
Endangered Habitats League  
Endangered Small Animal Conservation Fund  
Endangered Species Coalition  
Endangered Wolf Center  
Environmental Action Committee of West Marin  
Environmental Protection Information Center  
Essential Information  
Footloose Montana  
Forests Forever  
Foundation for Global Sustainability  
Friends of Blackwater  
Friends of Nevada Wilderness  
Friends of the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge (FAR)  
Friends of the Capital Crescent Trail  
Friends of the Richmond Hills  
Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf & Wildlife  
Friends of Whitehaven Park  
Fund for Wild Nature  
Gallatin Wildlife Association  
Grand Canyon Trust  
Grand Canyon Wildlands Council  
Grand Canyon Wolf Recovery Project  
Great Old Broads for Wilderness  
Greater Hells Canyon Council  
Greater Yellowstone Coalition  
Green Science Policy Institute  
Greenpeace  
Heartwood  
Hip Hop Caucus  
Hoosier Environmental Council  
Houston Zoo  
Howling For Wolves  
Humane Society Legislative Fund  
Idaho Conservation League  
IECAN  
Inland Ocean Coalition  
International Fund for Animal Welfare  
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute  
Iowa Audubon  
Kentucky Heartwood  
Kettle Range Conservation Group  
Klamath Forest Alliance  
Kootenai Environmental Alliance

KS Wild  
Kunak Ecological Studies  
Lincoln Park Zoo  
Living with Wolves  
Los Padres ForestWatch  
Louisiana Audubon Council  
Maine Audubon  
Marine Mammal Alliance Nantucket  
Marine Resources Council  
Mass Audubon  
Miami Waterkeeper  
Midwest Environmental Advocates  
Milwaukee County Zoological Gardens  
Missouri Botanical Garden  
Montana Audubon  
Montana Conservation Voters  
Montana Environmental Information Center  
Montana Native Plant Society  
Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center  
Mystic Aquarium  
Naples Zoo  
National Audubon Society  
National Wolfwatcher Coalition  
Native Plant Conservation Campaign  
Natural Resources Council of Maine  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Nature Abounds  
Nevada Wildlife Alliance  
Nevada Native Plant Society  
New England Wild Flower Society  
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance  
NH Animal Rights League, Inc.  
North Cascades Conservation Council  
Northcoast Environmental Center  
Northeast Oregon Ecosystems  
Northern Alaska Environmental Center  
Northwest Environmental Advocates  
NYC Audubon  
Oceana  
Oklahoma City Zoo  
One More Generation  
Orca Network  
Oregon Natural Desert Association  
Oregon Wild

Orleans Audubon Society  
OVEC-Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition  
Patagonia Area Resource Alliance  
Pelican Island Audubon Society  
Pollinate Minnesota  
Potter Park Zoo  
Power Shift Network  
Predator Defense  
Protect Our Wildlife  
Quality Parks  
Raptors Are The Solution  
Red River Zoo  
Representing future generations  
RESTORE: The North Woods  
Riverkeeper, Inc.  
Rocky Mountain Recreation Initiative  
Rocky Mountain Wild  
Roger Williams Park Zoo  
Rolling Hills Zoo  
Roosevelt Park Zoo  
Rosamond Gifford Zoo  
S.P.E.C.I.E.S.  
Saint Louis Zoo  
Salem Audubon Society  
San Antonio Zoological Society  
San Juan Citizens Alliance  
Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society  
Santa Barbara Zoo  
Save Animals Facing Extinction  
Save Our Sky Blue Waters  
Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition  
SAVE THE FROGS!  
Save the Manatee Club  
Save Wolves Now Network  
Scovill Zoo  
Sea Shepherd Legal  
Selkirk Conservation Alliance  
Sheep Mountain Alliance  
Sierra Club  
Smoky Hills Audubon Society  
South West Wisconsin Area Progressives  
Southern Illinoisans Against Fracturing Our Environment  
Southern Maryland Audubon Society  
Southwest Environmental Center

The Connecticut Audubon Society  
The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs  
The Humane Society of the United States  
The Imani Group, Inc.  
The Institute for Bird Populations  
The Living Desert  
The Ocean Foundation  
The Rewilding Institute  
The Urban Wildlands Group  
The Wilderness Society  
Toledo Zoo and Aquarium  
Trevor Zoo  
Tucson Audubon Society  
Turtle Island Restoration Network  
Upper Gila Watershed Alliance  
Urban Wildlife Research Project  
Utah Rivers Council  
Ventana Wilderness Alliance  
Vet Voice Foundation  
Voices of Wildlife in NH  
Waterkeeper Alliance  
WE ACT for Environmental Justice  
West Virginia Rivers Coalition  
Western Watersheds Project  
Western Wildlife Conservancy  
Western Wildlife Outreach  
Whidbey Environmental Action Network  
White Oak Conservation  
Wild Connections  
Wild Utah Project  
WildEarth Guardians  
Wilderness Workshop  
Wildlands Network  
Wildlife Alliance of Maine  
Wildlife Center of Virginia  
WildWest Institute  
Wolf Conservation Center  
Wolf Haven International  
Woodland Park Zoo  
Wyoming Untrapped  
Zoo Knoxville  
Zoo New England