

July 5, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Environment and Public Works Committee

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Environment and Public Works Committee

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources

Dear Senators and Representatives:

On behalf of the 422 undersigned organizations and our members, we write to express our strong support for the Endangered Species Act. The Act faces unprecedented threat. Using misleading words such as “update,” “modernize,” or “reform,” the Act’s opponents ultimately seek to undermine its core principles, gut its scientific basis, and abandon its common-sense approach to conserving imperiled wildlife.

The Endangered Species Act is our nation’s most effective law for protecting wildlife and plants in danger of extinction. Thanks to its effectiveness, more than 99 percent of the nearly 1,800 U.S. animals and plants protected by it have been saved from extinction.¹ Today, our children and grandchildren can still see bald eagles, American alligators, brown pelicans, Channel island foxes, stellar sea lions, Tennessee purple coneflowers, and humpback whales in the wild thanks to the Act. The Endangered Species Act works.

The Endangered Species Act is extremely effective because it relies on a foundation of peer-reviewed, best-available science in its listing, consultation, recovery, and delisting decisions.² This reliance on rigorous science ensures that the implementing agencies can successfully prevent extinction and conserve species’ habitat. Recovery cannot occur without making sure that animals and plants have places to live. Protecting the habitat of endangered animals and plants from human-caused threats ensures that species can establish enough populations to maintain genetic diversity and survive catastrophic events that may threaten any one population.

Like many environmental laws, the Act also allows citizens to engage and participate in its implementation. Scientific studies have shown that citizen-initiated petitions to protect animal and plant

¹ “Endangered Species Recovery Program,” *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*, <https://www.fws.gov/endangered/esa-library/pdf/recovery.pdf>.

² “The Endangered Species Act,” *Union of Concerned Scientists*, <http://www.ucsusa.org/center-science-and-democracy/preserving-science-based-safeguards/the-endangered-endangered-species-act#.WS242DPMzYU>.

species are commonly targeted toward species that are under the greatest level of biological threat, and which have not yet been identified by the federal government as needing protections.³ And in the instances where the government fails to use the best available science, the law allows for citizen suits to ensure that implementation meets the high standards of the Act.

The Endangered Species Act is a profoundly popular law that represents fundamental American principles. Polling over the past ten years has consistently shown that overwhelming majorities of American voters across party lines support the Endangered Species Act. The most recent poll shows that 90 percent of voters support the Endangered Species Act, including 96 percent of self-identified liberals and 82 percent of self-identified conservatives.⁴

The Endangered Species Act helps to maintain the foundations of life for the American people and their families. By protecting healthy communities of plants and animals, it provides key ecosystem services and benefits including clean air, clean water, food, pollination, and medicines. And by preserving millions of acres of forests, wetlands, and beaches threatened by environmental degradation and destruction, the Act helps to protect vulnerable human communities from environmental challenges.

The conservation and restoration of animal and plant communities can also help mitigate and reduce the impacts of climate change. Studies show that areas replete with biodiversity are more resilient to events caused by climate change.⁵ These events—including more frequent hurricanes, larger storm surges, and increased flooding—destroy homes, properties, and even lives.⁶ When plant and animal communities are intact, vulnerable human communities are more likely to be better protected from these impacts and to better adapt after impact.⁷ Furthermore, vulnerable communities rely on safe and healthy ecosystems for subsistence farming, hunting, and fishing for their families. And all communities rely on wild pollinators for food and on nature for the development of medicines.⁸ While people of means can move to a cleaner environment that is rich in biodiversity, the most vulnerable among us—particularly those who live in frontline or sacrifice zone communities—face many more challenges when moving; they have fewer options for escape. Vulnerable communities suffer the effects of climate change first and worst.

Despite the Endangered Species Act's tremendous success and popularity, it is under threat from industry groups and other wildlife opponents. A small yet vocal sector of the regulated community seeks to undermine and weaken the core principles of the Act, just so they can improve their bottom line. We cannot allow the Act to be weakened under the guise of soft-sounding catch phrases such as “reforms” or “tweaks.”

³ Berry J. Brosi and Eric G. N. Biber, “Citizen Involvement in the U.S. Endangered Species Act,” *Science* (August 17, 2012): Vol. 337, 802-803.

⁴ “Poll Finds Overwhelming, Broad-Based Support for the Endangered Species Act Among Voters Nationwide,” *Tulchin Research*, <http://www.defenders.org/publications/Defenders-of-Wildlife-National-ESA-Survey.pdf>.

⁵ Forest Isbell et al., “Biodiversity Increases the Resistance of Ecosystem Productivity to Climate Extremes,” *Nature* (October 22, 2015): 526, 574-577 and “About Climate Change and Biodiversity,” *Convention on Biological Diversity*, <https://www.cbd.int/climate/intro.shtml>.

⁶ Donald Scavia et al., “Climate Change Impacts on U.S. Coastal and Marine Ecosystems,” *Estuaries and Coasts* (April 2002): Vol. 25, Issue 2, 149-164. and Joel B. Smith et al., “Assessing Dangerous Climate Change Through an Update the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) ‘reasons for concern,’” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS)* (December 9, 2008): Vol. 106, no. 11, 4133-4137.

⁷ W. Neil Adger et al., “Social-Ecological Resilience to Coastal Disasters,” *Science* (August 12, 2005): Vol. 309, Issue 5737, 1036-1039.

⁸ Michael Gochfeld et al., “Disproportionate Exposures in Environmental Justice and Other Populations: The Importance of Outliers,” *Am J Public Health* (December 2011): Vol. 101, S53-S63. and Romina Rader et al., “Non-bee Insects Are Important Contributors to Global Crop Pollination,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS)* (August 28, 2015): Vol. 113, no. 1, 146-151.

We ask you to support the Endangered Species Act and oppose any bill, rider, or other policy proposal that weakens protections for endangered species and habitat. Given the hostile record of many members of the current Congress to the Endangered Species Act, efforts to rewrite this law would prove disastrous for imperiled wildlife and should be strongly opposed. Instead, we urge you to seek full funding and comprehensive implementation of the Act. The endangered species budget peaked in 2010 and has declined since then, even as more species are added to the endangered species list.⁹ Thus, neither the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service nor the National Marine Fisheries Service have sufficient funding to recover species.

We owe it to our children and grandchildren to be good stewards of the planet and leave behind a legacy of protecting endangered species and the special places they call home. Your position gives you a unique opportunity to support the Endangered Species Act, its programs, and its benefits. We strongly urge you to not support legislative efforts to rewrite or diminish this incredibly effective law.

Sincerely,

350.org
Acadia Center
Advocates for Snake Preservation
Advocates for the West
Alabama Environmental Council
Alabama Ornithological Society
Alaska Wilderness League
Alaska Wildlife Alliance
Alaskans FOR Wildlife
All-Creatures.org
America Forests
American Bird Conservancy
American Birding Association
American Conservation Film Festival
American Rivers
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Animal Welfare Institute
Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc.
Animas Valley Institute
Antelope Valley Conservancy
Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch
Arise for Social Justice
Arkansas Audubon Society
Arkansas Sierra Club
Atlantic Energy
Audubon
Audubon Alaska
Audubon Arizona
Audubon Arkansas
Audubon California
Audubon Connecticut

⁹ “Green Investments: How Budget Cuts are Impacting Our Communities and the Environment: The Case for Reinvestment in FY17,” <https://www.defenders.org/publications/FY17-Green-Investments.pdf>.

Audubon Dakota
Audubon Florida
Audubon Great Lakes/National Audubon Society
Audubon Maryland-DC
Audubon Minnesota
Audubon Naturalist Society
Audubon Nebraska
Audubon New Mexico
Audubon New York
Audubon of Kansas, Inc.
Audubon Pennsylvania
Audubon Rockies
Audubon Society of Central Arkansas
Audubon Society of Omaha
Audubon Society of Portland
Audubon South Carolina
Audubon Texas
Audubon Vermont
Audubon Washington
Baltimore Bird Club
Bark
Basin and Range Watch
Bat Conservation International
Beaver Creek Wetlands Association
Berkeley Partners for Parks
Berkshire Environmental Action Team (BEAT)
Beyond Pesticides
Beyond Toxics
Bird Conservation Network
Bird-Safe Glass Foundation
Birds & Beans LLC
BirdsCaribbean
Black Warrior Riverkeeper
Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project
Boise Chapter of Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Born Free USA
Boulder Rights of Nature, Inc.
Brooks Range Council
Bucks County Audubon Society at Honey Hollow
Buffalo Field Campaign
Bull Run Mountains Conservancy
Butterfly Farms
California Chaparral Institute
California Native Plant Society
California ReLeaf
California Wildlife Foundation/California Oaks
California Wolf Center
Californians for Western Wilderness
Canyon Park Friends of Open Space
Cape Fear River Watch
Carnivore Coexistence Lab

Carroll County Bird Club
Cascades Raptor Center
Cascadia Wildlands
Cellular Tracking Technologies
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Food Safety
Center for Public Environmental Oversight
Center for Study of Responsive Law
Central Maryland Beekeepers Association
Central New Mexico Audubon society
Cetacean Society International
Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage
Chicago Audubon Society
Children's Advocacy Institute
Chris Wildlife Consulting
Citizens Campaign for the Environment
Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge
Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife (CLAW)
Citizens for Sludge-Free Land
Citizens' Climate Lobby
Clean Water Action
Clean Water Alliance
Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection
COFEM
Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center
Columbus Audubon
Conservancy of Southwest Florida
Conservation Council for Hawai'i
Conservation Imaging, Inc.
Conservation Northwest
Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology
Cottonwood Environmental Law Center
Crawford Stewardship Project
Cumberland-Harpeth Audubon Society
DC Audubon
Deep Fork Audubon Society
Defenders of Wildlife
Delaware Center for Inland Bays
Delaware Valley Ornithological Club
Delmarva Ornithological Society
Desert Rivers Audubon Society
Difference Makers Media, LLC
Discover Life in America
Dogwood Alliance
Dysart Defenders
E.O. Wilson Biodiversity Foundation
Earth Action, Inc.
Earthjustice
Earthworks
Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Research

ECOAN
ecoflight
Ecology Party of Florida
El Dorado Audubon Society
Endangered Habitats League
Endangered Small Animal Conservation Fund
Endangered Wolf Center
Environment America
Environmental Justice Leadership Forum on Climate Change
Environmental Protection Information Center
Essential Information
Eyak Preservation Council
Fairmont, MN Peace Group
Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs
Fields Pond Audubon Center
Five Valleys Audubon Society
Flathead Audubon Society
Food & Water Watch
Food Empowerment Project
For All Animals
FORESTS FOREVER
Foundation Earth
Foundation for Global Sustainability
Friends of Blackwater
FRIENDS of Great Salt Lake
Friends of Nevada Wilderness
Friends of the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the Bitterroot
Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness
Friends of the Capital Crescent Trail
Friends of the Earth
Friends of the Eel River
Friends of the Kalmiopsis
Friends of the Kaw
Friends of the Richmond Hills
Friends of the Sonoran Desert
Friends of the Upper Delaware River
Friends of the Wild Swan
Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf & Wildlife
Friends of Tucson's Birthplace
Friends of Whitehaven Park
Fund for Wild Nature
Gallinas Watershed Council
Gallatin Wildlife Association
Georgia ForestWatch
Georgia Native Plant Society
Gila Conservation Coalition
Gila Resources Information Project
Global Justice Ecology Project
Golden Eagle Audubon Society
Gorongosa Project Inc.

Grand Canyon Trust
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Great Salt Lake Audubon
Greater Yellowstone Coalition
Green Science Policy Institute
GreenLatinos
Greenpeace USA
Gulf Restoration Network
Gunpowder RIVERKEEPER
Harford County Bird Club
HawkWatch International
Heart of the Wild Yellowstone Community
Heartwood
Hells Canyon Preservation Council
Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History
Hoosier Environmental Council
Howard County Bird Club
Howling for Wolves
Humane Society Legislative Fund
Humane Society of the United States
Idaho Sporting Congress, Inc.
IECAN
Illinois Humane
In Defense of Animals
Indivisible Cenla
Information Network for Responsible Mining
Inland Ocean Coalition
International Fund for Animal Welfare
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
International Society for the Preservation of the Tropical Rainforest
Iowa Audubon
Jayhawk Audubon Society
Jesus People Against Pollution
John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute
Kansas Herpetological Society
Kansas Wildlife Federation
Kentucky Heartwood
Kettle Range Conservation Group
Key Deer Protection Alliance
Kinnikinnick Native Plant Society
Klamath Forest Alliance
Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center
Kunak Ecological Studies
Last Chance Audubon Society
League of Conservation Voters
Lehigh Valley Audubon Society
Living with Wolves
Los Angeles Audubon
Los Angeles Audubon Society
Los Padres ForestWatch
Louisiana Audubon Council

Madison Audubon Society
Maine Audubon
Mankato Area Environmentalists
Marine Conservation Institute
Marine Mammal Alliance Nantucket
Maryland Ornithological Association
Maryland Ornithological Society
Maryland Pesticide Education Network
Mass Audubon
Mecklenburg Audubon Society
Miami Waterkeeper
Michigan Audubon
Midwest Environmental Advocates
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Mission Mountain Audubon
Missouri Coalition for the Environment
Mobile Bay Audubon Society
Monmouth County Audubon Society
Montana Audubon
Montana Native Plant Society
Montana Wilderness Association
Montana Wildlife Federation
Montgomery Bird Club
MountainTrue
Mt. Diablo Audubon Society
Museum of Life and Science
Napa County Water, Forest and Oak Woodland Protection Initiative
Nashville Chapter of The Tennessee Ornithological Society
National Audubon Society
National Family Farm Coalition
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wolfwatcher Coalition
Native Plant Society of Oregon
Natural Resources Council of Maine
Nevada Native Plant Society
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
New York City Audubon
NH Animal Rights League, Inc.
North Carolina Native Plant Society
North Cascades Conservation Council
North County Watch
Northeast Oregon Ecosystems
Northern Alaska Environmental Center
Northern Jaguar Project
Northwest Environmental Advocates
NRDC
Ocean Conservation Research
Ocean Futures Society
Oceana
Oceanic Preservation Society (OPS)
Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition

Oklahoma Ornithological Society
One More Generation
Oregon Natural Desert Association
Oregon Wild
Orleans Audubon Society
Our Wisconsin, Our Wildlife
Ozark Society
Pacific Rivers
Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon
Park County Environmental Council
Patagonia Area Resource Alliance (PARA)
Pathways: Wildlife Corridors of NM
Peace and Freedom Party
Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology
Penobscot Solar Design
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Pintler Audubon Society
Point Blue Conservation Science
Polar Bears International
Pollinate Minnesota
Polly Dyer Chapter, Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Prairie Rivers Network
Predator Defense
Project Coyote
Public Citizen
Rachel Carson Council
Raptors Are The Solution
Reflection Riding Arboretum and Nature Center
RESTORE: The North Woods
Riverkeeper, Inc.
Rockbridge Bird Club
Rocky Mountain Wild
Russian Riverkeeper
S.P.E.C.I.E.S.
SafeEnergyAnalyst.org
Sailors for the Sea
Salem Audubon Society
San Fernando Valley Audubon Society
San Gabriel Mountains Forever
SandyHook SeaLife Foundation
Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society
Santa Barbara Channelkeeper
Santa Monica Bay Audubon Society
Save Our Sky Blue Waters
Save Our wild Salmon Coalition
SAVE THE FROGS!
Save the Manatee Club
Save the Yellowstone Grizzly
Save Wolves Now Network
Sea Shepherd
Selkirk Conservation Alliance

Sequoia ForestKeeper
Seventh Generation Advisors
Sierra Club
Sky Island Alliance
Slow Food USA
South Florida Wildlands Association
Southeastern Avian Research
Southern Colorado Environmental Council
Southern Environmental Law Center
Southern Maryland Audubon Society
Southern Oregon Climate Action Now
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Southwest Environmental Center
Southwest Environmental Law Center
Southwest Wildlife Conservation Center
Southwestern Wisconsin Area Progressives (SWWAP)
Studio Stef
Sugar Shack Records
Sunridge Saddlebreds
Sustainable World Coalition
T. Gliberty Pearson Chapter of Audubon NC
Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo
Tennessee Ornithological Society
The Center for Popular Democracy
The Clinch Coalition
The Cloud Foundation
The Endangered Wolf Center
The Imani Group, Inc.
The Institute for Bird Populations
The International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council
The Lands Council
The Maine Chapter of the Wildlife Society
The Maine Wolf Coalition, Inc.
The Network of Spiritual Progressives
The Ocean Foundation
The Piedmont Environmental Council
The Rewilding Institute
The Safina Center
The Urban Wildlands Group
The Xerces Society
Todd Bird Club
Topeka Audubon Society
Toxic Free NC
TrapFree Wisconsin
Tri-county Bird Club
Trustees for Alaska
Tucson Audubon Society
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Union of Concerned Scientists
Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition
Utah Native Plant Society

Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment
Utah Rivers Council
Ventana Wilderness Alliance
VetVoice Foundation
Virginia Native Plant Society
Voices of Wildlife in NH
Warioto Audubon
WaterWatch of Oregon
WE ACT for Environmental Justice
West Virginia Rivers Coalition
Western Environmental Law Center
Western Watersheds Project
Whale and Dolphin Conservation
Whidbey Environmental Action Network
White Mountain Conservation League
Wholly H2O
Wild Nature Institute
Wild Ones Natural Landscapers, Ltd.
Wild Utah Project
Wild Virginia
Wild Zone Conservation League
WildEarth Guardians
Wilderness Watch
Wilderness Workshop
Wildlands Network
Wildlife Alliance of Maine
Wildlife Society
WildWatch Maine
WildWest Institute
Wolf Conservation Center
Wolf Haven International
Wolf Hollow
Wyoming Outdoor Council
Wyoming Untrapped
Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society
Yuma Audubon Society
Zoo New England