

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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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

---

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

<sup>2</sup> “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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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.<sup>5</sup> These events—including more frequent hurricanes, larger storm surges, and increased flooding—destroy homes, properties, and even lives.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.”

---

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> “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>.

<sup>5</sup> 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>.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

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

<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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

---

<sup>9</sup> “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