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. 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. 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/esalibrary/pdf/recovery.pdf.

² "The Endangered Species Act," *Union of Concerned Scientists*, http://www.ucsusa.org/center-science-anddemocracy/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. These events—including more frequent hurricanes, larger storm surges, and increased flooding—destroy homes, properties, and even lives. 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. 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. 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."

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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 &}quot;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., "Nonbee 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. 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.

Earthiustice

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