

*On November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, we signed on to the following letter authored by Defenders of Wildlife:*

November XX, 2016

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

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 protections of the Endangered Species Act and other safeguards for wildlife. Unfortunately, damaging provisions aimed at undermining the Endangered Species Act are included in the House National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 4909); the House-passed energy package (House amendment to S. 2012); and the House and Senate versions of the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bills (H.R. 5538/S. 3068). If enacted, any one 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 land, water, and air.

The Endangered Species Act remains the most effective and important law to protect species at risk of extinction. For over four decades, the Endangered Species Act has succeeded in preventing the extinction of 99 percent of the species placed under its protection, including the bald eagle, the whooping crane, and the Southern sea otter. It is also one of the most popular conservation laws. According to a June 2015 poll, 90 percent of American voters support the Endangered Species Act.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the House Interior appropriations bill has again become a minefield of reckless riders aimed at weakening the efficacy of this bedrock conservation law. This year's bill contains no fewer than 11 provisions that would strip federal protections for iconic American wildlife including the gray wolf, the Mexican gray wolf, the lesser prairie-chicken, two species of meadow jumping mice, and otherwise undermine the Endangered Species Act. 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 seeks to block the implementation of landmark land management plans to conserve the greater sage-grouse that resulted from years of collaboration between state, federal and private partners. Yet another provision would override protections for salmon and other endangered fish in California's Bay-Delta estuary. An additional anti-wildlife rider would block Department of the Interior rules to conserve native carnivores on federally protected lands in Alaska.

We are grateful that your Administration has already opposed many of these concerning provisions in your strong Statement of Administration Policy (SAP) on the House Interior appropriations bill (H.R. 5538). Many of these provisions, which according to the SAP would "undermine the ESA and limit the ability of the Fish and Wildlife Service [FWS] to properly protect important species and

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<sup>1</sup> National poll conducted by Tulchin Research, July 2015, *available at* <http://www.defenders.org/publications/Defenders-of-Wildlife-National-ESA-Survey.pdf>

habitats based on the best available science,” were also included in the Senate Interior appropriations bill (S. 3068).

Additionally, several damaging riders that seek to remove necessary protections for imperiled species and undermine management of our federal public lands are included in the House NDAA bill (H.R. 4909). This year, the Department of Defense delivered a series of letters from various military officials to House Armed Services Committee Ranking Member Smith and House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Grijalva clarifying that conservation activities to protect the greater sage-grouse and its habitat will not adversely impact military readiness activities. Despite these reassurances that there is no need for legislation concerning the sage-grouse on military bases, a provision that would block a future listing for greater sage-grouse and prevent the implementation of the land management plans to conserve the bird throughout its 11-state range was included in the bill. The bill also includes other non-germane provisions aimed at blocking Endangered Species Act protections for the imperiled lesser prairie-chicken and the endangered American burying beetle.

Finally, we are deeply concerned about numerous provisions in the House-passed energy package – some of which are similar to those in the House and Senate Interior appropriations bills – that would weaken the Endangered Species Act and otherwise harm wildlife. Some of the most damaging provisions in this House package would strip existing Endangered Species Act protections for certain gray wolf populations, void the FWS’s recently finalized rule cracking down on the illegal trade in African elephant ivory, block Department of the Interior efforts to conserve native carnivores on federally protected lands in Alaska, allow power companies that operate hydroelectric dams to avoid compliance with the Endangered Species Act, and override vital Endangered Species Act protections for salmon and other native fish in California. Nearly all of these provisions have nothing to do with energy policy.

Last year, we were relieved and grateful that the final FY 2016 omnibus bill to fund the government did not contain any new riders undermining endangered species conservation. We strongly urge you to use this opportunity to seal your environmental legacy and again stand for wildlife by flatly rejecting all harmful anti-wildlife measures on year-end legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

**Alaska Wilderness League \* Alliance for Animals and the Environment \* Alliance for Wild Rockies \* American Bird Conservancy \* American Rivers \* Animals are Sentient Beings \* Animal Welfare Institute \* Born Free USA \* Buffalo Field Campaign \* Californians for Western Wilderness \* California Wolf Center \* Center for Biological Diversity \* Clean Water Action \* Conservation Northwest \* Defenders of Wildlife \* Earthjustice \* Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Research \* Endangered Habitats League \* Endangered Small Animal Conservation Fund \* Endangered Species Coalition \* Environmental Defense Fund \* Environmental Investigation Agency \* Environmental Protection Information Center \* Freedom Center for Wildlife \* Friends of Blackwater \* Friends of the Capital Crescent Trail \* Friends of the Earth \* Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf & Wildlife \* Great Lakes Wildlife Alliance \* Greenpeace \* Green Science Policy Institute \* High Country Conservation Advocates \* Hoosier Environmental Council \* Howling For Wolves \* Humane Society Legislative Fund \* Humane Society of the United States \* Idaho Conservation League \* International Fund for Animal Welfare \* International Marine Mammal Project of Earth**

Island Institute \* Klamath Forest Alliance \* Los Padres ForestWatch \* Marine Conservation Institute \* National Audubon Society \* National Wolfwatcher Coalition \* Natural Resource Defense Council \* New Energy Economy \* New Mexico Environmental Law Center \* New Mexico Wilderness Alliance \* Northcoast Environmental Center \* Northeast Oregon Ecosystems \* Northwood Alliance Inc. \* Oceana \* Oregon Wild \* Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations \* Partners in Forestry \* Predator Defense \* RESTORE: The North Woods \* Rio Grande Return \* Rocky Mountain Wild \* SandyHook SeaLife Foundation \* San Juan Citizens Alliance \* San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council \* SAVE THE FROGS \* Selkirk Conservation Alliance \* Sierra Club \* Soda Mountain Wilderness \* Stone Zoo \* The Cougar Fund \* The Endangered Wolf Center \* The Franklin Park Zoo \* The International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council \* The Lands Council \* The Life Cairn Project \* TrapFree Wisconsin \* Turtle Island Restoration Network \* Voices of Wildlife in New Hampshire \* Western Watersheds Project \* Western Wildlife Conservancy \* White Mountain Conservation League \* WildEarth Guardians \* Wildlife Conservation Society \* Wild Utah Project \* Wolf Conservation Center \* Wolf Haven International \*