

September 5, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Reject Damaging Endangered Species Act Riders in FY 2019 Spending Legislation

Dear Chairman Shelby, Ranking Member Leahy, Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, we write to urge you to reject all policy riders in appropriations bills that would undermine the Endangered Species Act and other safeguards for wildlife. Unfortunately, damaging provisions that would weaken the Endangered Species Act are included in several FY 2019 appropriations bills. If enacted, any of these riders would be highly detrimental to 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. In the decades since it was enacted, 99% of listed species have been saved from extinction, 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 and a recent study by [researchers at the Ohio State University](#) found that roughly four out of five Americans support the Act as well.

FY 2019 House Interior/EPA Appropriations Bill – H.R. 6147

The House FY 2019 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 block or strip federal protections for iconic American wildlife including

the gray wolf, the Preble's meadow jumping mouse, the lesser prairie chicken, and the sage-grouse – including the very vulnerable bi-state sage-grouse population. Additional provisions would reduce protections for the marbled murrelet in Washington State and prevent restoration of grizzly bears to the North Cascades ecosystem. Such decisions should be based on the best available science, not 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) fail to complete five-year reviews on time. Unfortunately, the Services are so underfunded that they simply cannot complete timely reviews. If passed, this legislative language would halt all federal conservation actions for the approximately 700 endangered and threatened animals and plants with past-due five-year reviews. This translates to more than 40 percent of protected U.S. species. Endangered and threatened species should not be made to suffer and decline toward extinction because the Services lack adequate funding to fulfill their responsibilities. Finally, the bill includes several provisions that preclude judicial review for massive water projects in California, endangering salmon runs and other native fish in the San Francisco Bay-Delta.

FY 2019 Senate Interior/EPA Appropriations Bill – S. 3073

We very much appreciate that the FY 2019 Senate Interior/EPA bill was kept free of any new riders that undermine the ESA. Nevertheless, like the House bill, it includes for a fourth year running 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 sufficient for reducing threats to sage-grouse. However, that plan is currently being weakened under a process initiated by Interior Secretary Zinke, and this amendment would prevent a listing for sage-grouse, even if the unique bird slips closer to extinction.

FY 2019 House Energy & Water Appropriations Bill – H.R. 5895

The FY 2019 House Energy and Water bill includes a rider that would jeopardize the continued existence of thirteen imperiled wild salmon and steelhead populations in the Columbia River Basin and drive southern resident orcas that rely on chinook salmon runs for food closer to extinction. Hundreds of communities, businesses, tribes and other wildlife species ranging from California to Alaska depend on Columbia Basin salmon. This rider would roll back protections for the fish (specifically, it prevents increased water over the dams, which helps move juvenile salmon downstream to the ocean more efficiently) and freeze in place an outdated and woefully inadequate plan of operation for the Basin's dams that violates the Endangered Species Act because it risks the extinction of thirteen salmon and steelhead populations.

In addition to the riders listed above, the House Interior and Energy and Water Appropriations Bills as well as the House Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations Bill (H.R. 5952) include damaging report language that weakens protections for listed species.

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. Now is not the time to weaken our nation's best tool to combat what scientists have determined is the sixth major extinction phase experienced on this planet.

Our organizations are extremely grateful that the final FY 2018 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 up for wildlife by flatly rejecting all harmful anti-wildlife measures on final spending legislation for FY 2019.

Respectfully,

Alabama Ornithological Society
Alaska Inter-Tribal Council
Alaska Wilderness League
Alaska's Big Village Network
Alberta Wilderness Association
Alliance for International Reforestation
Alliance for the Wild Rockies
American Bird Conservancy
American Rivers
Amigos Bravos, Inc.
Amos Butler Audubon Society
Animal Welfare Institute
Arkansas Audubon Society
Association of Avian Veterinarians
Association of Zoos & Aquariums
Audubon Foundation of Texas
Audubon Naturalist Society
Audubon Society of Western PA
Bauman Foundation
Berkshire Bike Path Council
Bermuda Audubon Society
Bird Ally X
Bird Conservation Network
BirdsCaribbean
BirdYak

Bluedog
Bodie Hills Conservation Partnership
Born Free USA
Boulder County Audubon Society
Boxborough Birders, Massachusetts
Bozeman Birders
Brookline Bird Club
California Council for Wildlife Rehabilitators
California Native Plant Society
Californians for Western Wilderness
Cascade Forest Conservancy
Cascadia Wildlands
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation
Center for Water Advocacy
Central New Mexico Audubon Society
Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage
Chicago Ornithological Society
Chicago Audubon Society
Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge
Citizens Natural Resources Association of Wisconsin
Clean Water Action
Columbia Land Trust
Conscious Talk Radio

Conservation Congress
Conservation Imaging, Inc.
Conservation Northwest
Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship
Defenders Of Wildlife
Delaware Ecumenical Council on Children and Families
Delaware Valley Ornithological Club
Delmarva Ornithological Society
DeWitt County Residents Against Wind Turbines
Douglass School Art Place
Earthjustice
Earthworks
Eastern Long Island Audubon Society
Eco-Advocates
Ecosystems Ltd.
Endangered Habitats League
Endangered Species Coalition
Environment America
Environmental Action Committee of West Marin
Environmental Center of San Diego
Environmental Protection Information Center
Evanston North Shore Bird Club
Four Harbors Audubon Society
Friends of Blackwater, Inc.
Friends of Dyke Marsh
Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Plumas Wilderness
Friends of St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the Inyo
Friends of the Kalmiopsis
Friends of the Sonoran Desert
Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf & Wildlife
Gallatin Wildlife Association
Geos Institute
Grand Canyon Trust
Grays Harbor Audubon Society
Great Lakes Wind Truth
Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Middle California Broadbands
Great Plains Cooperative Ecosystems Study Unit
Greater Hells Canyon Council
Greater Ozarks Audubon Society
Greater Yellowstone Coalition
Gulf Coast Bird Club
Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.
Hemlock Hill Biological Field Station
High Peaks Birders
Hoffmann Bird Club
Howling For Wolves
Humane Society Legislative Fund
Idaho Conservation League
Illinois Ornithological Society
Illinois River Hideaway
International Fund for Animal Welfare
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
Iowa Audubon
Jackson Audubon society
John Muir Project
Juniata Valley Audubon Society
Kalmiopsis Audubon Society
Kane County Audobon Society
Kentucky Heartwood
Kettle Range Conservation Group
Kirkland Bird Club
Klamath Forest Allaince
Kootenai Environmental Alliance
Lahontan Audubon Society
Lake County Audubon Society
Lassen Forest Preservation Group
League of Conservation Voters
Lehigh Valley Audubon Society
Lights Out Baltimore
Living with Wolves
Los Angeles Audubon Society
Los Padres ForestWatch
Maguari-One Zoo and Wildlife Consultants

Maine Audubon
Maricopa Audubon Society
Marine Conservation Institute
McDaniel Honey Farm
McHenry County Audubon
Michigan Audubon
Mid-Michigan Stewardship Initiative
Midwest Environmental Advocates
Missouri River Bird Observatory
Missouri Valley Shooting Sports Association
Monmouth County Audubon Society
Montana Raptor Conservation Center
Montanans for Gallatin Wilderness
Montgomery County Bird Club
Mountaineer Audubon
Napa Climate NOW!
Nasketucket Bird Club
National Audubon Society
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wildlife Refuge Association
National Wolfwatcher Coalition
Native Plant Conservation Campaign
Native Songbird Care and Conservation, Inc.
Natural Resources Defense Council
New Hampshire Audubon
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
North American Platform Against Wind Power
North American Wolf Foundation
North Cascades Audubon Society
North Cascades Conservation Council
Northcoast Environmental Center
Northern Jaguar Project
Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society
NY4WHALES
NYC Audubon
Oceana
Ohio Ornithological Society
Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge
Olympic Forest Coalition
Oregon Natural Desert Association
Oregon Wild
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations
Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society
Pelican Paddlers
Peoria Audubon Society
Pilchuck Audubon Society
Pisgah Defenders
Plant Professionals
Portneuf Valley Audubon Society
Prairie and Timbers Audubon Society
Predator Defense
Preserve Calavera
Public Interest Coalition
Quad City Audubon Society
Quality Parks
Queens County Bird Club
Redcliffs Audubon St. George Utah
Redwood Region Audubon Society
RESTORE: The North Woods
Roaring Fork Audubon
Rockbridge Bird Club
Rocky Mountain Wild
Rogue Valley Audubon Society
Rutland County Audubon
Sacramento Audubon Society
Safe Alternatives for our Forest Environment
Salem Audubon Society
San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society
San Diego Audubon Society
San Diego Chapter of the California Native Plant Society
Santa Fe Forest Coalition
Save Our Allegheny Ridges
Save Our Sky Blue Waters
Save the Manatee Club
Save the Scenic Santa Ritas
Save Wolves Now Network
Saving Maine
Sequoia ForestKeeper®
Sierra Club
Sierra Club Ohio Chapter

Sierra Forest Legacy
Soda Mountain Wilderness Council
South Carolina Wildlife Federation
South Shore Bird Club
Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Society
Stanislaus Audubon Society
Tennessee Ornithological Society
The Center for Conservation Biology
The Chicago Ornithological Society
The Cougar Rewilding Foundation
The Enviro Show
The Humane Society of the United States
The Lands Council
The Maryland Ornithological Society
The Tareen Filgas Foundation
The Urban Wildlands Group
The Wilderness Society
The Wildlife Trust
Trap Free Montana
Trap Free Montana Public Lands
Tribe of the Oak
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Umpqua Watersheds, Inc.
UW-Madison Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society

Vermont Center for Ecostudies
Washington Crossing Audubon Society
Washington Forest Law Center
WE ACT for Environmental Justice
Western Environmental Law Center
Western Watersheds Project
Whidbey Environmental Action Network
White Mountain Audubon Society
Wild Birds Unlimited of Syosset
Wild Nature Institute
Wild Utah Project
Wildbird Recovery Wildlife Rehabilitation Center
Wildcare Eastern Sierra
WildEarth Guardians
Wildlands Network
Wildlife Alliance of Maine
Wildlife Conservation Advocacy Southwest
Wildlife Rehabilitation Medical Database
Will County Audubon Society
Wolf Conservation Center
Wolf Haven International
World Temperate Rainforest Network
Wyoming Wildlife Advocates
Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

CC: The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader
The Honorable Chuck Schumer, Minority Leader
The Honorable Paul Ryan, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader