

FUNDING WILDLIFE PROTECTIONS AND REJECTING HARMFUL RIDERS

Passed 227-194

SUMMARY:

The House passed its FY 2020 Interior appropriations bill that provided significant funding increases for the Endangered Species Act and other crucial wildlife programs, held the Trump administration accountable for drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and eliminated a rider that prevents protections for the imperiled greater sage-grouse. *(June 25, 2019, Roll Call No. 408)*

BACKGROUND:

Federal funding for environmental programs is vital to efforts in our nation to protect our irreplaceable natural heritage and to leave a clean, healthy and vibrant environment to our children. Work by federal wildlife agencies to protect imperiled species and stop illegal trafficking; efforts by land management agencies to properly manage our national wildlife refuges, parks, and forests, and build resilience in the face of climate change; and actions by regulatory agencies to keep our air and water clean and stop toxic pollution, all depend on adequate funding of their programs. Despite their importance, programs that protect our environment and natural resources have been crippled by draconian budgets in recent years. Must-pass funding bills have also become vehicles for riders – controversial policy provisions undermining environmental protections that proponents hope will ride along on the underlying bill.

The House Commerce, Justice, Science, Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, Interior, Environment, Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Act, 2020 (H.R. 3055) was a package of five appropriations bills that includes important increases for a number of programs that benefit wildlife and habitat and that rejects harmful riders. In particular, the Interior and Environment bill was an outstanding piece of legislation that that upheld protections for wildlife and provided needed funding for crucial wildlife conservation and public lands programs. In May 2019, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services released a landmark global assessment which found that up to one million species are at risk of extinction, highlighting the importance of the strong federal response provided by this bill.

The FY 2020 Interior and Environment bill included an extraordinary \$37 million increase for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) endangered species program and significantly boosted funding for a number of other crucial programs including FWS National Wildlife Refuge System Operations and Maintenance; Bureau of Land Management Threatened and Endangered

Species Management and sage-grouse conservation; U.S. Geological Survey's Ecosystems and National and Regional Climate Science Centers; and U.S. Forest Service Wildlife and Fish Habitat Management. Importantly, however, the bill rejected funding for the damaging reorganization of the Department of the Interior and denied harmful budget restructuring proposals for some Forest Service and U.S. Geological Survey programs.

The bill also eliminated anti-environmental riders that had been included in recent appropriations bills including a rider that prohibited the FWS from considering protection for the greater sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act. Sage-grouse numbers are declining in every state where they occur, and the situation will only continue to worsen given the Trump administration's reversal of the landmark National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy. Removal of the rider would have ensured the FWS will have the tools to protect the species if needed. At the same time, the bill included finely-crafted language that would have held the administration accountable for promises made when Arctic National Wildlife Refuge fossil fuel leasing passed Congress in the tax package by requiring a minimum bid for drilling leases on the Refuge's irreplaceable coastal plain. The Committee report also included language that laid the groundwork for mitigating some of the damage to wildlife and public lands by construction of the border wall.

OUTCOME:

On June 25, 2019, the House passed H.R. 3055, 227-194. "Yes" was the pro-conservation vote. A significantly modified version of the House Interior appropriations bill was signed into law in December 2019 by President Trump.