

## **STEALTHILY FUNDING A DAMAGING BORDER WALL**

Passed 235-192

### **SUMMARY:**

The House passed a massive funding bill that includes \$1.6 billion to pay for a 70-mile expansion of President Donald Trump's proposed wall along the U.S.-Mexico border that would slice through a national wildlife refuge and other sensitive lands and wildlife habitat. (*July 27, 2017, Roll Call No. 435*).

### **BACKGROUND:**

Nearly one-third of the 1,953-mile U.S.-Mexico border lies within military, tribal, and public lands, including federally-designated wilderness areas, National Wildlife Refuges, National Forests, National Monuments, State Parks and hundreds of miles within the National Park System. Much of this country's most spectacular and imperiled wildlife, including Mexican wolves, jaguars, ocelots, bighorn sheep, Sonoran pronghorn and hundreds of bird species, depend on protected public lands along the border for intact habitat and survival. Since 2006, nearly 700 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border has been blocked by walls, fences and other barricades, impeding the movement of wildlife in search of food and mates, cutting off migration routes and damaging public lands and other special places. These barriers also sever and harm human borderland communities. Soon after he took office, President Trump issued an Executive Order authorizing extension of the wall along the entire U.S.-Mexico border. The wall's construction, maintenance and enforcement operations will have significant consequences for affected human communities, pristine wildlands and wildlife, including potential impacts to at least 89 endangered or threatened species and 108 species of migratory birds. Border construction can be exempted from all federal, state or local laws by waivers under the 2005 REAL ID Act. Since the act was passed, the Department of Homeland Security has waived dozens of laws including the Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act and National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act.

The leadership of the House bundled four of the 12 annual spending bills—Defense; Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies; Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies; and the Legislative Branch—into a massive \$789 billion appropriations bill, H.R. 3219, the “Make America Secure Appropriations Act of 2018.” H.R. 3219 did not include the bill that funds the Department of Homeland Security; however, the House leadership used a parliamentary maneuver that did not require a separate vote on the House floor to add \$1.6 billion to the bill as a down payment on President Trump's border wall. This behind-the-scenes maneuver was used so that members of the House Majority would not be held accountable on a separate up or down vote to fund the controversial wall. The funding in the bill would support a 70-mile expansion of the border wall in San Diego and in the Rio Grande Valley, where sections of it would bisect Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge in Texas, one of the top birding destinations in the world.

Santa Ana is home to approximately 400 species of birds and is important habitat for endangered ocelots and jaguarundi and other rare species found only in deep South Texas. The refuge is part of an important wildlife migration corridor that runs the length of the Rio Grande and into Central America and South America. The wall would sever most of the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge from the rest of the United States.

**OUTCOME:**

On July 27, 2017, the House passed H.R. 3219, 235-192. “No” was the pro-conservation vote.