

FUNDING WILDLIFE PROTECTIONS AND REJECTING HARMFUL RIDERS

Passed: 220-207

The House passed a six-bill FY 2023 appropriations package that includes both Interior and Environment and Agriculture appropriations for important funding increases for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service endangered species program, National Wildlife Refuge System, threatened and endangered species programs on multiple-purpose lands and a program to reduce human-wildlife conflicts, and eliminates riders including one that prevents protections for the imperiled greater sage-grouse. (*July 20, 2022, Roll Call No.383*)

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 FY 2023 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, Agriculture, Rural Development, Energy and Water Development, Financial Services and General Government, Interior, Environment, Military Construction, and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, H.R. 8294, would provide funding for six of the twelve FY 2022 appropriations bills, including \$44.8 billion, a \$6.8 billion increase, for the Interior Department, Environmental Protection Agency, and related agencies and \$27.2 billion, a \$2.1 billion increase for the Agriculture Department and related agencies.

The Interior and Environment portion of the bill provides significant funding increases for a number of programs that benefit wildlife and habitat; for example, the bill would provide a \$77 million increase for the flagship U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service endangered species program, a \$55 million increase for the National Wildlife Refuge System and a significant increase for threatened and endangered species on Bureau of Land Management lands. The bill also eliminates anti-environmental riders that had been included in recent appropriations bills including a rider that prohibits the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) from considering protection for the imperiled greater sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act. Sage-grouse numbers continue to decline – moreover, the fate of the Sagebrush Sea and more than 350 other declining species dependent on the habitat are inextricably linked to effective conservation of the sage-

grouse. Removal of the rider would ensure the FWS will have the tools to protect the species if needed.

The Agriculture appropriations portion of the bill continued for a fourth-year crucial new funding, increasing it by \$2 million, nearly doubling funding, for USDA Wildlife Services to hire staff and to promote and implement effective nonlethal coexistence tools and strategies that help avoid and minimize potential conflicts between people and wildlife. As human communities expand and recovering wildlife species return to their historical ranges, conflicts between people and wildlife can pose a serious challenge to conservation and to human livelihoods. The innovative coexistence practices supported by this funding will both minimize conflicts and provide better outcomes for people and wildlife.

OUTCOME:

On July 20, 2022, the House passed H.R. 8294, 220-207. "Yes" was the pro-conservation vote.