

FUNDING INVESTMENTS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE AND SAFEGUARD WILDLIFE

The Senate approved legislation making historic investments in clean energy to address the climate crisis as well as providing additional funding for endangered species recovery and national wildlife refuges. *(August 7, 2022, Roll Call No.325)*

BACKGROUND:

Climate change is among the greatest threats to biodiversity on our planet. It is already having devastating effects on both human and natural communities. Extreme weather events like heat waves, intense storms and prolonged droughts are on the rise, taking scores of lives and causing billions of dollars in damage each year. Wildlife are also experiencing new and intensified threats.

Habitats around the world are beginning to shift, shrink, melt and even disappear entirely from climate change. Intense storms can destroy nesting trees, drown animals, spread invasive species and damage aquatic ecosystems. Unusual heat and droughts stress plants and animals alike. And increasingly, animals' life cycles are out of sync with plant growth and seasonal changes.

Moreover, Endangered Species Act programs critical to preventing the extinction of imperiled wildlife are woefully underfunded.

The Inflation Reduction Act (H.R. 5376) proposed investing \$269 million in climate, clean energy, and environmental justice to provide the single largest investment in history to address the climate crisis. The bill also included \$250 million for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – \$125 million for endangered species recovery and \$125 million for National Wildlife Refuges and State Wildlife Management Areas.

Although on balance beneficial to wildlife, the legislation involved a troublesome energy project permitting tradeoff that would have adversely impacted wildlife. Fortunately, the permitting measure was in separate legislation that Congress did not enact.

OUTCOME:

On August 7, 2022, the Senate passed the Inflation Reduction Act (H.R. 5376) by a vote of 51-50 after Vice President Harris cast the tie-breaking vote. "Yes" was the pro-conservation vote. The bill was subsequently passed by the House and signed into law by President Biden.