

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 23, 2009

The Honorable Norman Dicks
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Michael Simpson
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Dicks and Ranking Member Simpson:

As members who share your commitment to the conservation of our nation's wildlife, fish, plants and their habitats, we are writing to urge needed increases for the US Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) endangered species program in the FY2010 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill.

When Congress passed the Endangered Species Act in 1973, it recognized that America has an obligation to protect its most vulnerable species of wildlife, fish and plants and to ensure a rich conservation legacy for our children and grandchildren. Unfortunately, we are falling short of that commitment by failing to provide needed funding to protect and adequately recover endangered and threatened plants and animals. We appreciate the Subcommittee's work to begin to reverse this in FY09 and ask you to aggressively build upon this year's effort.

Failure to provide adequate levels of funding for endangered species operations will only ensure that species slide closer to extinction, decreasing chances for recovery while increasing the costs. It has been reported that in recent years the program has experienced a 30 percent staffing shortage due to budget constraints, an unacceptable vacancy rate. The number of candidate species awaiting protection under the Act, many of which have been candidates for years, totals 252. The number of projects reviewed under the consultation program has increased dramatically, from 40,000 in 1999 to more than 67,000 in 2006. Development and implementation of Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), which allow activities to proceed while still protecting species, continues to grow, with funding critically needed to help ensure timely and effective development and monitoring of nearly 600 existing and more than 300 new HCPs.

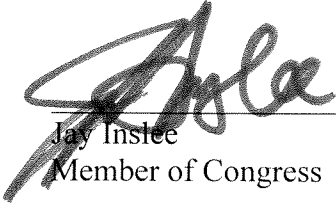
While we understand the existing budget constraints placed on the Subcommittee, we urge you make every effort to provide an increase of at least \$59 million over the FY09 funding

levels for USFWS endangered species operating accounts to a total of \$217 million, with the increases allocated as follows: \$12.7 million for Listing, \$20.4 million for Recovery, \$21.5 million for Consultation, and \$4.3 million for Candidate Conservation.

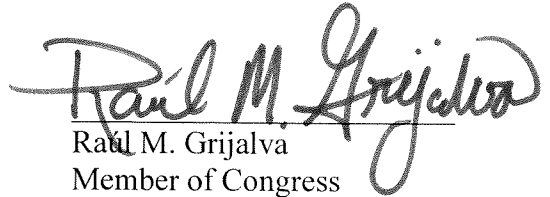
In addition, the FY09 appropriation of \$75.5 million for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund continues to limit this successful cooperative program with the states, which previously received as much as \$104 million in FY2001. We further ask for the Subcommittee to consider an increase for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund to a level of \$110 million, while also taking into consideration the demand for this program is two to three times this level.

Thank you for your kind consideration of these requests. We look forward to working with you as the FY2010 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill moves forward in the House in the weeks ahead.

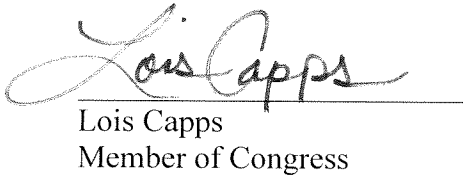
Sincerely,



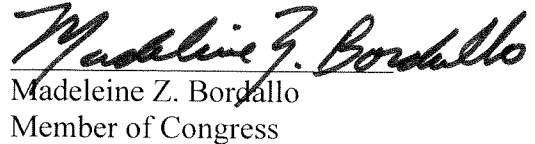
Jay Insee
Member of Congress



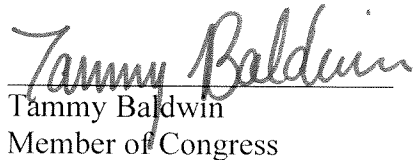
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



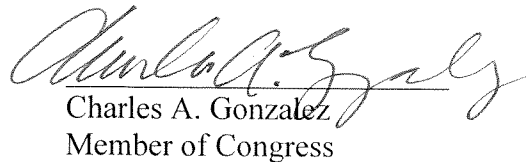
Lois Capps
Member of Congress



Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Member of Congress




Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress



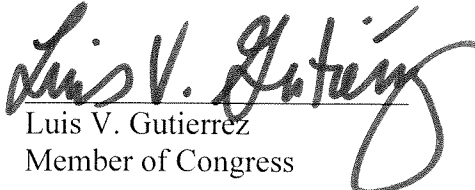
Charles A. Gonzalez
Member of Congress

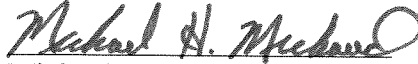


Mazie K. Hirono
Member of Congress

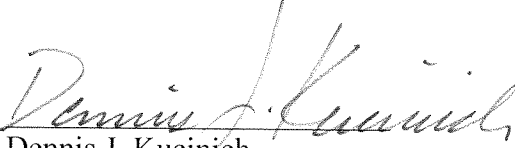


Pedro R. Pierluisi
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Luis V. Gutierrez
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Ben Ray Luján
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Dennis J. Kucinich
Member of Congress