

**TESTIMONY FOR THE RECORD**  
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**DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE**  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES**  
**MARCH 26, 2009**

Mister Chairman, Ranking Member and Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for the record. Founded in 1947, Defenders of Wildlife has more than one million members and activists across the nation and is dedicated to the protection and restoration of wild animals and plants in their natural communities.

We continue to be deeply grateful for the subcommittee's leadership on climate change, and we ask that you maintain your excellent leadership on this critically important issue. We thank the subcommittee for the significant increase provided to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center in the final FY09 bill and ask that funding be increased by \$10 million to \$20 million for FY10, and gradually raised to \$50 million annually by FY13. The new Center is developing well and will be a critical front in the battle to help wildlife adapt to climate change, supporting research needs of both federal and state agencies in dealing with a threat in which we have no analogous experience. Defenders also very much appreciates the direction given to the Secretary of the Interior in the FY09 bill "to initiate development of a national strategy to assist fish, wildlife, plants and associated ecological processes in becoming more resilient, adapting to, and surviving the impacts of climate change" in consultation with other federal agencies, states, tribes and other stakeholders and with the assistance of a science advisory board. We urge the subcommittee to exert its oversight authority to monitor this effort, to continue the direction in the FY10 bill, and to provide \$5 million to ensure that the Secretary has the resources to effectively work with other agencies and stakeholders to achieve this critically important mission. Finally, while we still await the details of the President's budget, we were very pleased that funding for adaptation of fish, wildlife and habitats to climate change was among the priorities for the Department of the Interior, and we support the requested \$130 million increase.

Defenders thanks the subcommittee for its efforts to restore the operational capacities of the natural resource management and science agencies that were decimated for a number of years and to fully fund fixed costs which typically increase by 3-5 percent yearly, and we urge you to continue this progress. Robust operational accounts for the agencies will become increasingly important as our nation fights to protect wildlife from the ravages of climate change. Our primary concerns are with the programs of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), our nation's premier agency for the conservation of wildlife and habitat, and wildlife-related programs in the other natural resource management and science agencies as detailed below. We know that the subcommittee must operate within the constraints of its 302(b) allocation, but we ask you to do as much as possible.

We urge the subcommittee to continue to rebuild the FWS which has suffered substantial losses in both staffing, an 8 percent reduction from 2004-2007, and capability to carry out important projects. We are particularly concerned about the loss of biological capacity and research grade scientists in the Service. We urge the subcommittee to provide the following increases:

- To address the needs of our nation's most vulnerable plants and animals, a total of \$217 million for the endangered species operating accounts, an increase of \$59 million over FY09, allocated

as follows: \$15 million for Candidate Conservation, an increase of \$4.3 million; \$32 million for Listing, an increase of \$12.7 million; \$95 million for Recovery, an increase of \$20.4 million; and \$75 million for Consultation, an increase of \$21.5 million. These amounts will help the Service to make progress on listing the 252 candidates awaiting protection under the Endangered Species Act, overseeing recovery of listed species, adequately addressing the workload of consultations, and effectively monitoring hundreds of Habitat Conservation Plans covering millions of acres and federal projects subject to Section 7 consultation. We further ask the subcommittee to work with the new administration to develop a schedule for determinations on the current candidate list.

- To continue efforts to restore the integrity of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a total of \$514 million, an increase of \$51.1 million over FY09. The recommended level for FY10 will allow incremental progress toward a yearly level of at least \$765 million needed to allow the System to achieve the mission set forth in the landmark 1997 National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, as recommended by the diverse coalition of 23 national conservation, sporting, and scientific organizations in the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement.
- To restore the “Thin Green Line” held by the Office of Law Enforcement between federally and internationally protected animals and plants and the ruthless poachers and smugglers who traffic in them, a total of \$72.8 million, an increase of \$10.1 million, to support hiring, training and equipping 24 special agents, 10 additional port inspectors, 12 critically needed scientists for the forensics laboratory and to support recent amendments to the Lacey Act to ban international imports of illegally sourced timber and plant products. The special agent force plunged to a 30 year low in 2008. Continued attention must be paid to this issue since, on average, 14 agents are lost yearly through attrition – even with the addition of a new class of 24 every two years, the force still would suffer a net loss of 4 agents over that same time period.
- To build the International Affairs program, a total of \$21 million, an increase of \$7.8 million, that will support boosts to the regional Wildlife Without Borders programs, implementation of treaties for which the program currently receives little funding, listing and permitting actions to address a backlog of foreign species awaiting Endangered Species Act protection, and replacement of key personnel. We are pleased with the subcommittee action in the FY09 bill to move International Affairs out of General Operations and establish it as a separate subactivity under the same activity as Migratory Bird Management and the Office of Law Enforcement.
- To support the Migratory Bird Management program in halting the decline of migratory birds, a total of \$61.2 million, an increase of \$15.3 million, that will allow for implementation of completed plans for focal species and continued development of plans for the rest of the 139 focal species, enhanced inventory and monitoring including increased costs for operations of survey planes, “Urban Conservation Treaties” that aid participating cities in reducing migration hazards and conserving birds, increased permitting demands under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, and the Joint Venture program.
- To provide for critical FWS grant programs, a total of \$85 million for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grant program (STWGP), an increase of \$10 million; \$110 million for the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund, an increase of \$34.5 million; \$6.5 million for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, an increase of \$1.7 million; and \$15 million for the Multinational Species Conservation Fund, an increase of \$5 million. The STWGP was established to serve the federal interest by conserving species before they decline to the point where they need Endangered Species Act protection. As always, we appreciate the subcommittee’s strong oversight of the implementation of the Action Plans created through STWGP and ask that it be continued.

The multiple-use lands of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (FS) are becoming increasingly crucial to the conservation of wildlife and habitat in the United States. Yet these agencies lack the resources and adequate tools to fulfill this important aspect of their multiple use missions. Staff of the BLM and FS declined 9 percent and 35 percent respectively under the prior administration. In particular, given the recent order by the Secretary of the Interior to promote development of renewable energy on public lands, the availability of resources to ensure ability to maintain sustainable wildlife populations as this effort proceeds is absolutely crucial. To begin to fill this gap, we urge the subcommittee to provide the following amounts:

- For BLM Wildlife and Fisheries Management, a total of \$66.1 million, an increase of \$17.6 million over FY09 and for BLM Threatened and Endangered Species Management, a total of \$33.2 million, an increase of \$11.5 million. These increases would support needed recovery efforts for threatened and endangered species on BLM lands; additional staff; monitoring and habitat restoration for species at risk; restoration of fish passage; inventory and improvements for wetlands, lakes and streams; and other critical needs. Defenders understands that the practice of diverting 30 to 50 percent of program resources to pay for compliance activities of BLM's energy, grazing and other non-wildlife related programs continues despite efforts by the subcommittee to correct it. We appreciate the subcommittee's work on this issue and ask that efforts to address this harmful practice be redoubled, including consideration of a review by the Government Accounting Office.
- For the BLM Challenge Cost Share (CCS) program, a total of \$29.3 million, an increase of 19.8 million, with the entire increase directed to wildlife. Given the diversion of resources in the other programs, CCS is the primary means through which proactive wildlife conservation work is accomplished.
- For BLM Plant Conservation, a total of \$26 million, an increase of \$21.4 million. Defenders appreciates the decision by the subcommittee to transfer the funding for the Native Plant Materials Development program out of Wildland Fire management and into the wildlife account in the FY09 bill. We ask that this move be a first step in establishing a separate Plant Conservation activity or subactivity that would encompass both a program to conserve sensitive plants on BLM lands and the Native Plant Materials Development program. The amounts recommended above would provide \$5 million for the Plant Conservation program, \$15 million for the Native Plant Development program, and one time construction funding of \$6 million for seed storage facilities.
- For BLM Resource Management Planning, a total of \$52.5 million, an increase of \$4.4 million over FY09; for FS Land Management Planning, a total of \$58.8 million, an increase of \$10 million; and for FS Inventory and Monitoring a total of \$175 million, an increase of \$7.4 million. Science-based planning, including targeted monitoring and state-of-the-art analysis, is fundamental to effectively conserve fish and wildlife on BLM and FS lands. We ask the subcommittee to consider directing or encouraging the two agencies to cooperatively link species and ecosystem data collection, analysis, planning and decision-making processes in meaningful and cost-efficient manners.
- For BLM Landscape Scale Habitat Conservation/"Healthy Lands," a total of \$30 million, an increase of \$25 million to support the BLM in addressing large-scale regional planning and conservation efforts at the landscape level. Related to the item above, this funding potentially could be targeted for interagency efforts to incentivize needed cross-cutting work across levels of government and land ownerships.

- For FS Forest and Rangeland Research R&D programs, \$260.8 million, an increase of \$25.2 million that includes \$30.3 million for Global Change Research and \$35.5 million for Fish and Wildlife R&D. These amounts are needed to provide on-the-ground forest managers with decision support tools that enable effective and efficient fish and wildlife management, and assist them in understanding the impacts of climate change on forests, and identifying adaptive management strategies that help forests and wildlife survive increasing stresses.
- For FS Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management, a total of \$197.4 million, an increase of \$58 million. With the exception of the increase provided in the FY09 bill, this program was flat funded for seven years, falling far behind.

The core of scientific expertise regarding fish, wildlife and plants within the Department of the Interior is found within the Biological Research Discipline (BRD) of USGS. BRD scientists are responsible for research, development of analytical tools, and sharing of information needed to manage and conserve these biological resources. However, support to carry out these activities and to ensure adequate scientific staff and expertise has steadily eroded over the last eight years. Restoring funding to these programs is essential so that BRD can provide the natural resource management agencies with the scientific expertise, analysis and information necessary for conservation of fisheries and wildlife populations and habitat. To meet these needs, we urge the following increases:

- For the BRD Research and Monitoring Program, a total of \$155 million, an increase of \$8.6 million above the FY09 level. Over the last decade, this program has declined 12 percent when adjusted for inflation and increases are needed to (1) identify factors that contribute to or limit conservation and recovery efforts for terrestrial plant and wildlife species-at-risk; (2) institute an adaptive science approach to support the management of terrestrial plants and wildlife and; (3) provide technical assistance to natural resource managers.
- For the BRD Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units (CFWRUs), a total of \$20 million, an increase of \$3.1 million. Approximately one-fifth of all CFWRU scientist positions are vacant, and these amounts are needed to restore this true federal-state-university-private partnership that leverages more than three dollars for every appropriated dollar.

We urge the subcommittee to continue restoration of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and urge a total of \$450 million for FY10, \$325 million for federal LWCF and \$125 million for stateside. We were extremely pleased to see the increases proposed for LWCF in the President's budget and strongly support their proposal to fully fund the LWCF by 2014.

Finally, we deeply appreciate the subcommittee's continued attention to the impacts of illegal immigration and related enforcement on sensitive land and wildlife resources along the Southwest border, and we urge continued oversight and funding increases. Funding is needed through the natural resource management agency budgets to address ongoing damage, including tons of trash, hundreds of miles of illegal trails and roads, hundreds of abandoned vehicles, fouled water sources, vandalized and stolen facilities and equipment, and degraded habitat across the landscape. In addition, we urge the subcommittee to work with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appropriations subcommittee to ensure that any construction or installation of border security infrastructure is carried out with the proper environmental safeguards and that DHS provides funding to mitigate for any impacts, including following up with its commitment to provide up to \$50 million to the Department of the Interior to mitigate for adverse impacts on federally listed threatened and endangered species from wall and road construction.