

TESTIMONY OF MARY BETH BEETHAM
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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES
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Mister Chairman, Ranking Member and Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Mary Beth Beetham, Director of Legislative Affairs for Defenders of Wildlife. Founded in 1947, Defenders has more than one million members and supporters and is dedicated to the conservation of wild animals and plants in their natural communities.

Defenders understands the sober fiscal realities, and, in general, we are very pleased with several of the high priority initiatives in the president's budget, including: 1) the continued emphasis on assisting wildlife and ecosystems in surviving the impacts of climate change and providing the necessary science; 2) the recognition of the importance of landscape level conservation; and 3) the commitment to reach full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. However, while the Department of the Interior (DOI) is moving ahead with praiseworthy initiatives to coordinate their work in addressing the impacts of climate change, it still is unclear how different efforts underway within the Department, individual agencies, and the Council on Environmental Quality will result in a comprehensive national strategy across all federal departments and agencies in coordination with States, Tribes, and other stakeholders to assist fish, wildlife, plants and natural systems in adapting to climate change, as directed in both the final FY09 and FY10 Interior appropriations conference reports. We continue to be deeply grateful for the subcommittee's leadership on climate change, and we ask that you maintain your excellent efforts on this critically important issue, including working with the administration to ensure progress in developing the national strategy.

However, we also are troubled by certain aspects of the request. In particular, we have deep concerns about the agency operating accounts, as they are the critical foundation on which rests the agencies' abilities to meet their missions and implement the administration's highest priority initiatives. The unfortunate failure to, at minimum, meet fixed costs for the agencies will further erode base programs, even more dramatically compromising their status about which Congress has previously expressed concern. We also are concerned about specific aspects of the allocation of Land and Water Conservation Fund dollars, and, potentially, with some of the policy implications of the "New Energy Frontier Initiative" and with the reorganization of the Forest Service budget.

We urge the subcommittee to continue to rebuild the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), our nation's premier wildlife conservation agency. We strongly support the following increases:

- To continue progress in addressing the impacts of climate change on wildlife and ecosystems, a total of \$40 million for Climate Change Adaptive Science Capacity, an increase of \$20 million over FY10 that will allow needed progress in the effort to build more than 20 Landscape Conservation Cooperatives across the country. In developing the Cooperatives, it is important that the agency communicate in a timely and comprehensive manner with their own staff and with the many external partners about what these new partnerships are, how partners can participate, and how these are additive to existing partnerships.
- 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 \$37.7 million over FY10, allocated as follows: \$15 million for Candidate Conservation, an increase of \$2.4 million; \$32 million for

Listing, an increase of \$9.9 million; \$95 million for Recovery, an increase of \$9.7 million; and \$75 million for Consultation, an increase of \$15.7 million. We are deeply concerned that the request was essentially flat and even reduced in for Listing. Increases are needed for addressing the backlog of 249 domestic and 20 foreign candidate species awaiting protection under the Endangered Species Act, for restoring a 16 percent staffing shortfall in the Recovery program, for addressing concerns about tracking species under the Consultation program and for updating Habitat Conservation Plans to incorporate climate change into existing long-term permits. We also are concerned about the decreases for the Wolf Livestock Loss Demonstration program and for White Nose Syndrome and ask that funding be restored.

- To continue efforts to restore the integrity of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a total of \$578.3 million, an increase of \$75 million over FY10 as recommended by the diverse coalition of 23 organizations in the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement. Defenders is concerned about the \$3.3 million decrease, an effective \$18.3 million cut, since an increase of at least \$15 million each year is needed to keep pace with fixed costs and to have adequate management capability. We appreciate the \$8 million requested increase for inventory and monitoring needed to manage for climate change, however, the amount is not a net increase. FWS also must ensure that new inventory and monitoring efforts are integrated with existing programs of other federal agencies and non federal entities to avoid duplication and to allow for easy information sharing.
- To restore the mission critical Office of Law Enforcement, a total of \$77 million, an increase of \$11.2 million, to support hiring, training and equipping 24 special agents, 10 additional port inspectors, and 4 of 12 critically needed forensics scientists. The special agent force is still 23 percent below the authorized number of 261 and Defenders is extremely disappointed that the request included a decrease of \$2.5 million, including \$2 million that was specifically added in FY10 for special agents. We also recommend report language directing the agency develop a plan to increase the special agent force to, and maintain it at, the authorized level.
- To build the International Affairs program, a total of \$22 million, an increase of \$7.6 million over the FY10 level. The request included a 9 percent decrease in this very modest program. Even at current funding, International Affairs lacks resources to implement most international treaties and agreements the U.S. is involved in; to address emerging problems at the global level such as human-wildlife conflict, wildlife disease, and invasive species; to address the growing permitting, research, and monitoring workload, including the effort FWS is undertaking on species native to the U.S; and other crucial needs.
- To support the Migratory Bird Management program, a total of \$68.5 million, an increase of \$14 million over FY10. The request cut Migratory Bird Management by \$1.7 million, yet increases are needed to continue development and implementation of plans for 139 focal species of highest conservation need, to cover critical gaps in inventory and monitoring, and for the innovative Urban Conservation Treaties for Migratory Birds.
- For critical grant programs, \$115 million for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants, an increase of \$25 million; \$100 million for the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund, an increase of \$15 million; \$6.5 million for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, an increase of \$1.5 million; and \$18 million for the Multinational Species Conservation Fund, an increase of \$6.5 million.

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 their resources are not adequate to meet significant challenges. While Defenders supports the administration's efforts to move toward a clean energy economy, it must proceed in a balanced way that ensures the ability to maintain sustainable wildlife populations. We were extremely pleased that

the FY10 conference report directed the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service to submit a comprehensive review on siting and coordination of renewable energy projects. We urge continued strong oversight to ensure that any energy development is done in an environmentally sensitive fashion. And given the overriding challenge posed by climate change, it is imperative that both agencies have clear climate change adaptation and restoration policies and incorporate these considerations into any energy development plans.

Defenders supports the stated goals of the Integrated Resource Restoration (IRR) initiative to move to a restoration and resiliency based approach to forest management. However, the success of any such effort – and beneficial rather than harmful outcomes – will depend on establishment of science-based management objectives and dedicated support for planning, assessment, and monitoring. It is not clear from the budget that such requirements have been taken into consideration. In particular, given the merging of Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management into IRR and elimination of its output measures, we are concerned about the adequacy of wildlife diversity objectives in this new proposal. Moreover, the agency currently is developing new National Forest Management Act (NFMA) planning regulations – an effective planning rule is necessary to ensure proper implementation of any integrated program. We urge the subcommittee to work with the administration to ensure a strong policy and regulatory framework before IRR is allowed to move forward. We will be following up with more detailed recommendations.

We recommend the following funding for BLM and FS programs:

- For BLM Climate Change Adaptation, we support the request of \$17.5 million, an increase of \$2.5 million over FY10. However, as was the case in FY10, it is again proposed for funding under the Soil, Water, and Air subactivity. Since the stated focus of this funding primarily is to assist native plant and animal communities in adapting to climate change, consideration should be given to funding this initiative through the wildlife and fish budget activities.
- For BLM Wildlife and Fisheries Management, a total of \$65.4 million, an increase of \$15 million over FY10 and for BLM Threatened and Endangered Species Management, a total of \$32.6 million, an increase of \$10 million. Defenders is extremely disappointed that these two activities were cut by a combined total of more than \$2 million, especially given the dire status of the sage grouse and the need for proactive conservation actions in the face of expanded renewable energy development. Moreover, reports are that the practice continues of inappropriately diverting at least 30 percent of funding to compliance activities of energy and other non-related programs. Consideration should be given to directing the Government Accounting Office or a reputable outside entity knowledgeable in natural resource management to review this problem and make recommendations to resolve it.
- For the BLM Challenge Cost Share (CCS) program, a total of \$19.5 million, an increase of \$10 million directed to wildlife. Defenders is extremely disappointed in the decision to eliminate this program, that, given the diversion of resources from wildlife programs accomplishes much of the agency's proactive wildlife and habitat conservation work.
- For BLM Resource Management Planning, a total of \$55 million, an increase of \$5 million over FY10. We are quite concerned about the \$8.2 million decrease in the request. As is the case with the wildlife activities, failure to invest in planning sets the BLM up for less than optimal results in energy development and adaptation policy implementation.
- For BLM's Land and Realty Management subactivity, we support the requested \$3 million increase to support site specific National Environmental Policy Assessments for renewable energy projects.

- For FS Land Management Planning, \$80 million, an increase of \$34.1 million over FY10 and for FS Inventory and Monitoring, \$180.5 million, an increase of \$10 million. Defenders was concerned that these requests were flat. Given the new IRR proposal, parallel commitments are required to move toward a restoration and sustainability agenda. Moreover, robust Land Management Planning funding, which has declined by more than 40 percent since 2001, is needed to support the ongoing NFMA rulemaking process.
- Given the IRR proposal, it is not clear if the separate Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management line item will still exist, however regardless of whether there is a separate or combined line item, Defenders supports a total of at least \$163 million for Wildlife and Fish output measures, a \$20 million increase over the FY10 level that was still nearly \$15 million below the 2001 inflation adjusted level. The program has lost 15 percent of its scientists since 2003 and Defenders is greatly concerned about the loss of biological capability in the agency.
- For FS Forest and Rangeland Research R&D programs, \$265.1 million, an increase of \$20 million over FY10 that includes a total of \$41.9 million for Climate Change Research and \$37.1 million for Fish and Wildlife R&D. Defenders is concerned about the \$5 million reduction for Climate Change Research in the request.

The US Geological Survey through its Biological Research Discipline (BRD) and National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center supports the basic science necessary for conservation of fish, wildlife and habitat. To provide adequate science support, we urge the following increases:

- For the National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center, \$27 million, an increase of \$12 million over FY10. We thank the subcommittee for its past strong support, including the strong direction to the administration in the FY10 conference report that the future identity and activities of the Center remain distinct and accountable in the overarching DOI climate change adaptation effort and urge that strong support and oversight continue. We appreciate the administration's requested increase of \$8 million; however we believe that a larger increase is needed to move more quickly in establishing planned regional centers across the country.
- For the BRD Research and Monitoring Program, a total of \$170 million, an increase of \$9.3 million above FY10, which includes a \$5 million increase to support Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, and for BRD Cooperative Research Units, \$22.5 million, an increase of \$3.2 million. We have concerns about the \$3.6 million net decrease for BRD in the request, but we appreciate the increases for FWS/NPS/BLM science support (\$4 million), in particular the \$1 million for BLM, the first time specific science support funding has been requested for BLM.

We urge the subcommittee to continue restoration of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at a total of \$600 million, \$425 million for federal LWCF and \$175 million for stateside. We are pleased at the significant increases in the request, but are concerned that a substantial portion is being directed to two other programs.

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, funding and opposition to related riders hindering land management agency operations. In addition, we urge the subcommittee to work with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appropriations subcommittee to ensure that DHS provides funding to mitigate for any impacts from border security infrastructure, including the as yet unfulfilled commitment of \$50 million in FY09 funds and \$40 million in FY10 funds.