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April 9, 2009

The Honorable Gary Locke  
Secretary  
Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Locke:

We are writing to ask you to use your authority under the recently enacted Omnibus Appropriations Bill to withdraw Endangered Species Act regulations put into effect by the Bush administration in its final days that substantially weaken protection for imperiled fish, wildlife and plants.

The Bush administration's re-write of the Section 7 consultation regulations largely dismantled a system of checks and balances that has provided an essential safety net for threatened and endangered plants and animals for more than two decades. The sweeping changes made to the scope and application of the Endangered Species Act were not based on any revisions to the law by Congress and were finalized in an effort so rushed that it made a mockery of the public review and comment process.

President Obama took an important interim step in reducing the adverse effects of the Bush administration Section 7 rules by issuing a memorandum on March 3, 2009, requesting that federal agencies immediately return to their prior longstanding consultation and concurrence practices involving the scientific experts at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service. But the March 3 memorandum does not repeal the Bush Administration's eleventh-hour regulatory rewrite. Your withdrawal of these regulations would simply and immediately restore an interagency consultation process that functioned successfully for more than 20 years prior to January 15, 2009.

We hope that you will seize the opportunity Congress has provided to restore integrity to implementation of the Endangered Species Act and withdraw the Bush administration's ideologically driven regulations.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Wodder  
President  
American Rivers

John DeCock  
President  
Clean Water Action

Rodger Schlickeisen  
President  
Defenders of Wildlife

Trip Van Noppen  
President  
Earthjustice

Margie Alt  
Executive Director  
Environment America

Fred Krupp  
President  
Environmental Defense Fund

Brent Blackwelder  
President  
Friends of the Earth

Mike Clark  
Executive Director  
Greenpeace

David Hoskins  
Executive Director  
Izaak Walton League

Gene Karpinski  
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League of Conservation Voters

John Flicker  
President  
National Audubon Society

Thomas Kiernan  
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Larry Schweiger  
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Andrew Sharpless  
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Vikki Spruill  
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Carl Pope  
Executive Director  
Sierra Club

Kevin Knobloch  
President  
Union of Concerned Scientists

William Meadows  
President  
The Wilderness Society

Carter Roberts  
President  
World Wildlife Fund