

# Defenders of Wildlife

## Continuing Resolution (H.R. 1) Threatens the Future of America's Wildlife



### SEVERE BUDGET CUTS AND ANTI-ENVIRONMENT RIDERS ON MUST-PASS FUNDING BILL ENDANGER AMERICA'S WILDLIFE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

#### Climate Change Adaptation

**H.R. 1 cuts in half the funding requested for climate change adaptation—a 35 percent reduction from FY2010.** These cuts will severely hinder already underfunded efforts to begin preparing and responding to increased droughts, floods, wildfires, storms, plant and animal species range shifts, and other impacts on our ecosystems.

The cuts will make it more difficult for the Fish and Wildlife Service to work with its partners to address landscape-scale threats to natural resources conservation including climate change, development, and harmful invasive species. The cuts will also prevent FWS from helping private landowners who want to voluntarily implement cost-effective projects to mitigate climate change impacts on private land.

The bill will severely limit the Bureau of Land Management's efforts to restore vital habitat and to collect and store the seeds of at-risk native plants. The cuts will also stymie the development of broad, landscape-level assessments that provide planners with important scientific information about existing resources as well as changes in climate, demographics, fire, and invasive species. The bill also will hamper the work of the U.S. Geological Survey to provide needed scientific information to assist with large-scale restoration projects.

#### National Wildlife Refuges

**H.R. 1 eliminates funding for the National Wildlife Refuge System's climate change program.** This program, which works to inventory and monitor refuge resources, provides broad benefits and actually prevents the loss of taxpayer dollars. The need for an inventory and monitoring program was made clear by the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, which forced Refuge System staff

to hastily catalog the assets of Gulf Coast refuges in order to recover for the American people the cost of damaged resources from responsible parties. Currently, the only refuges in the System with a thorough inventory are those that were in the path of oil, and the loss of funding would prevent data acquisition throughout the rest of the system that will help guide effective management of wildlife populations.

#### Public Lands Protection

**H.R. 1 cuts funding requested for the Land and Water Conservation Fund by 90 percent—an 86 percent reduction from FY2010.** This funding provides protection for lands in our national wildlife refuges, parks, forests, parks and other public lands and for state conservation of open space and wildlife habitat. The levels in the bill would provide only 5 percent of the \$900 million annually that has been promised to the Fund from federal offshore oil and gas drilling revenues. Each day, 6,000 acres of open space is lost in the U.S. to habitat fragmentation and destruction. Once these lands are lost, they can never be recovered.

#### State Grants to Protect Imperiled Wildlife

**H.R. 1 zeroes out funding for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program.** The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program was specifically created by Congress in 2000 to assist states in voluntary efforts to protect more than 12,000 at-risk wildlife species around the U.S. from becoming endangered. Without this funding, states and their partners will have to stop working to address local needs and priorities. Affected conservation activities include land protection, invasive species management, restoration of land and water habitats, wildlife disease, stewardship, reintroduction of wildlife, private landowner incentives, research,

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monitoring, vulnerability assessments, and helping wildlife adapt to climate change.

The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program leverages state, tribal, local and private funds and has spawned hundreds of new collaborations with the conservation, business and farming/ranching communities. Thousands of jobs that have been created or are being sustained by this program will be lost. These jobs include local heavy equipment contractors employed to restore wetlands and streams, temporary workers who clear trees, put up fencing and conduct prescribed burning, and biologists who provide technical expertise.

**H.R. 1 essentially zeroes out the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund**, which provides grants to states and territories to implement voluntary protections for endangered wildlife on non-federal lands. In 2010, 25 states and territories benefitted from these grants. Without these resources state activities will grind to a halt including habitat restoration, habitat conservation planning, land protection, captive breeding and reintroduction of wildlife. More than half of all endangered species spend at least some of their time on private land, making these property owners key participants in endangered species conservation. These cuts will limit collaboration on conservation-minded development projects that can reduce costly litigation and project delays.

## Wetlands Conservation Grants

**H.R. 1 zeroes out funding for the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund.** More than half of the original wetlands in the U.S. have been lost already. Lack of funding will exacerbate declines of migratory birds and other fish and wildlife dependent on wetlands and will drive up the costs of erosion control, water treatment, and flood protection that natural wetlands provide for free. Through FY2010 this grant program has helped to fund more than 2,038 wetland conservation projects supported by 4,440 partners in all 50 U.S. states, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, 13 Canadian provinces and more than 30 Mexican states and

leveraged some \$2.24 billion in matching funds and \$1.2 billion in non-matching funds to conserve approximately 25.9 million acres of wetlands and associated uplands.

## Forest Service Research

**H.R. 1 cuts funding for U.S. Forest Service Forest and Rangeland Research & Development by nearly five percent from FY2010.** This action will hinder work that supports the sustainable management of national forests as well as non-federal forestlands. The Forest Service conducts research in targeted strategic program areas related to the conservation of fish and wildlife, forest inventory and analysis, and wildland fire, as well as investigations into broader issues such as climate change, watershed management, and biomass energy. These cuts would limit the Forest Service's ability to strategically direct research into these critical issue areas, preventing the development of information needed to solve pressing management challenges. For example, cutting spending for investigating the relationship between wildland fire management and biomass production would decrease our ability to carry out projects that reduce fire risk while providing economic benefits to local communities.

## Clean Water Act

**H.R. 1 would prevent EPA from restoring protections for waterways that are vital for drinking water and wildlife but have been left vulnerable to pollution and destruction.** Recent court decisions have created chaos in the implementation of the Clean Water Act, which protects the nation's waters and wetlands. Current regulatory loopholes limit the scope of EPA's authority to protect some 20 million acres of wetlands and wildlife habitat from development and degradation. This places vital natural resources at risk, including the drinking water of 117 million Americans.

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## Public Lands Planning

### **H.R. 1 cuts funding for planning on our national forest and Bureau of Land Management lands.**

The Forest Service Land Management Planning program would be cut by about 16 percent below FY 2010 and the FY 2011 request. This funding cut undermines efforts to develop smart forest management plans, and bad plans lead to bad project implementation.

Funding reductions result in a failure to achieve social, economic and environmental land management objectives, such as the development of recreational opportunities or the conservation of wildlife and water. Adequate funding is also needed to address the backlog of 37 plans currently undergoing revisions and the additional 33 plans due for revision in order to meet the broad ecological challenges facing our national forests and grasslands.

The bill also cuts funding for Bureau of Land Management Resource Management Planning by about 17 percent below FY 2010. These funding reductions will impede our nation's ability to responsibly develop energy resources. According to the BLM, out-of-date land management plans limit the effectiveness of on-the-ground actions and raise the likelihood of costly litigation, both of which can prohibit or delay the delivery of important economic and ecological benefits and increase the cost to the taxpayer.

## Renewable Energy Development

**H.R. 1 would limit renewable energy development and stifle the "clean energy economy."** Funding cuts for Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management would delay review, planning and permitting of renewable energy projects. As a result, efforts to accelerate renewable energy development and project permitting to meet the Secretary's goal would be severely undermined. If renewable energy projects are to proceed and the jobs, economic, energy security, and environmental benefits they provide are to be realized, more funding is needed, not less.

## **Benefits of Protecting Wildlife**

To protect wildlife, we must also protect the habitat they depend on. Protecting habitat in turn protects healthy natural systems that provide clean air and water, food, medicines, and other products that we need to live healthy lives. Thus, protecting wildlife and important habitat ultimately ensures the health and well-being of the American people.

For example, birds and bats are pollinators and seed dispersers – pollination is worth billions each year to the agricultural industry. Bats also eat vast numbers of insects, including pests that damage crops such as corn, cotton, and potatoes and carry dangerous diseases like West Nile virus, reducing the need for toxic pesticides.

Wildlife also provides far-reaching benefits to treat human disease:

- The Gila monster lizard provides a drug that helps treat diabetes;
- Chemicals secreted by the Houston toad are used as medicines to treat heart and nervous disorders;
- Crocodile blood is being studied for an antibiotic, desert pupfish for kidney disease, and black bear for osteoporosis.

Programs that protect endangered species and other vulnerable wildlife from pesticides, heavy metals, endocrine disruptors, industrial chemicals and numerous other pollutants protect people at the same time.

Wildlife also makes an important contribution to the economy through wildlife-related consumer spending. According to the 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, 87.5 million U.S. residents participated in wildlife-related recreation, contributing more than \$120 billion to outdoor recreation economies.

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## Protections for Wolves

**H.R. 1 includes a provision to strip Endangered Species Act protections for wolves.** This provision establishes a dangerous precedent of legislatively micromanaging the ESA by eliminating all federal protection for wolves in Idaho, Montana and portions of Washington, Oregon and Utah. The provision would reinstate the same 2009 delisting rule that was struck down by a federal judge for violating the plain language of the ESA by delisting wolves based on political, not biological, boundaries.

Under this provision, responsibility for managing wolves would be turned over to states, including the state of Idaho, where state officials have refused to adhere to previous commitments to manage wolves responsibly. Idaho state law, in fact, only requires that a population of 150 wolves be maintained, which could authorize the killing of more than 80 percent of wolves currently residing in that state. Without adequate legal protections, wolf numbers in the Northern Rockies could be reduced substantially, erasing the great conservation success story of the return of gray wolves to the Northern Rockies.

## California's Bay-Delta

**H.R. 1 includes a provision that would block two federal biological opinions affecting California's collapsing Bay-Delta ecosystem.** After years of protracted litigation and negotiations, state and federal agencies agreed on measures to protect imperiled fish and wildlife in the Bay Delta ecosystem and the Sacramento and San Joaquin River basins. The measures are based on the best available science and strike a reasonable balance between water supply reliability and environmental protection.

The House provision, however, would diminish all of this progress by eviscerating the most important of these protections. As a result, collaboration and trust among stakeholders would come to a halt, and controversies would end up in court again to the detriment of all Californians. We could also witness the loss of thousands of fishing, recreation, and

farming jobs in California and Oregon—jobs that depend on abundant fish and healthy rivers. This will only worsen the plight of the Central Valley which has already lost many jobs in recent years because of the economic recession and drought.

## Wildlands Protection

**H.R. 1 would prohibit funding to protect important wilderness areas on public lands.**

Secretarial Order 3310 restored rules similar to those in effect under Presidents Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and Clinton requiring the BLM to identify and consider protecting lands with wilderness characteristics. This policy is intended to inform the BLM and the public about our wilderness heritage and give the agency and all interested stakeholders a chance to participate in decisions about how to manage it. This provision would prevent the Secretary of the Interior from conducting balanced management of BLM lands by prohibiting the collection of information and scientific analysis of wilderness characteristics during land management planning. This would severely limit the ability of Congress to make educated choices about whether or not an area should be designated as wilderness.

## Clean Air Act Authority

**H.R. 1 blocks funding for greenhouse gas pollution control.** In 2007, the Supreme Court found that greenhouse gases are air pollutants that must be regulated under the Clean Air Act, and directed the EPA administrator to determine whether these pollutants endanger public health or welfare. Upon finding that greenhouse gases are contributing to dramatic climate change, and endangering the health of the American people, the EPA set out to reduce carbon pollution under the Clean Air Act. This provision will effectively reverse the Supreme Court's ruling and allow the impacts of climate change to continue unabated. These impacts will endanger public health, food and water supplies, wildlife habitat, species, forests and coastlines throughout our nation.