

April 9, 2026

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
The Capitol S-128
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
The Capitol S-128
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol H-307
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: FY2027 Funding Request for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service & Endangered Species Conservation

Dear Chair Collins, Vice Chair Murray, Chair Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro,

After just one year in office, the Trump administration has systemically dismantled the integrity of the Executive Branch, ignored the directives of Congress on appropriated funding, and gutted the federal workforce so severely that it will take decades for agencies to recover. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service alone lost at least 18% of its staff nationwide, including over 500 biologists working on the ground to protect and recover some of our most imperiled animals and plants and the wild places they live. The loss of hundreds of dedicated employees will make it almost impossible for the Service to effectively carry out even its most basic administrative duties.

To make matters worse, President Trump and Interior Secretary Doug Burgum have gone further than any other administration in history to gut the Endangered Species Act and weaken protections for more than 1,600 threatened and endangered species across the country. These rollbacks, along with massive reductions in agency resources, only compound the existing struggles that have plagued the Service for decades, including the systemic lack of funding to properly implement the Endangered Species Act. The Service currently only receives around one-third of the funding it needs to carry out the mission Congress intended 50 years ago when it dedicated our country to protecting the species and the habitats that need it most. As a result, hundreds of endangered species receive less than \$1,000 a year for their recovery, with many receiving no funding from the Service at all. The recent passage of the FY2026 Interior-EPA appropriations package has now dug the agency into an even deeper funding hole. Because of these shortfalls, nearly 50 imperiled species have tragically gone extinct while waiting for the Act's protections.

While we recognize that significant funding increases are unlikely in the short term, we must also recognize that the biological needs of our most imperiled animals and plants do not simply change based on which way the political wind blows. To truly save species, Congress must fully fund the Endangered Species Act. **This means providing at least \$870 million annually for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Ecological Services Program and Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund.**

Given the political reality we face, however, Congress should, at the very least, restore the Service's funding to FY2025 levels — particularly the listing budget, which was cut by 36% in FY2026 and has hamstrung the program in charge of determining which animals and plants deserve protection under the Act.

Congress must also ensure that appropriated dollars translate into actual federal capacity on the ground. To do that, **we urge Congress to enumerate and require minimum FTE levels for the Service directly in appropriations text.** Congress has used this tool before — including at the program-level — to guarantee sufficient staffing for core federal functions.¹ We recommend setting required FTE floors above the agency's 2011 high-water mark of 9,508 FTEs Service-wide and 1,823 FTEs for Ecological Services.² This would lock in the workforce the agency needs, protect it from politically-driven cuts, and finally give the Service the ability to carry out its statutory duties at the speed and scale this moment demands.

Now more than ever, we need our Congressional leaders to stand up against these unprecedented attacks to our federal agencies and the laws they implement. The Endangered Species Act has saved countless imperiled species from extinction and has put hundreds more on the road to recovery. Thanks to the Act, millions of acres of forests, mountains, rivers, deserts, beaches, and oceans are protected. Simply put, the Endangered Species Act is our most powerful tool to combat the extinction crisis and stem the loss of biodiversity currently facing our country and the global community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Center for Biological Diversity
Defenders of Wildlife
Advocates for Snake Preservation
Alabama Coastal Foundation
Alameda Creek Alliance
Alaska Wilderness League
American Friends Service Committee
American Indian Mothers Inc/Three Sisters Farm and Ranch Co-op
Animal Commons
Animal Defenders International
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Animal Protection New Mexico
Animal Welfare Institute
Animal Wonders KC

¹ See Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 1992, Pub. L. 102-154, 105 Stat. 1020 (1991)

²

<https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Fiscal%20Year%202013%20Fish%20and%20Wildlife%20Service%20Precedents%20Budget.pdf>

Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc.
Animas Valley Institute
Antelope Valley Conservancy
Assateague Coastal Trust
Black Warrior Riverkeeper
BoCo Wild Writers
Bold Visions Conservation
Born Free USA
Boulder County Audubon Society
California Native Plant Society
California Wildlife Foundation
CalWild
Cascadia Wildlands
Center for Food Safety
Center for Public Environmental Oversight
Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN) Action Fund
Christians Caring for Creation
Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge
Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection
Coastal Conservation League
Colorado Mountain Club
Colorado Native Plant Society, Conservation Committee
Conservation Congress
Conservation Council for Hawai'i
Conservation Law Foundation
Conservation Northwest
Desert Tortoise Council
Dogwood Alliance
Down to Earth Apiaries
Earth Path Sanctuary
Earthjustice Action
Eco-Justice Collaborative
Endangered Habitats League
Endangered Species Coalition
Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC)
Environmental Center of San Diego
Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC)
Equinox Consultancy LLC
Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs
FOUR PAWS USA
Friends of Blackwater, Inc.
Friends of Bosque del Apache NWR
Friends of Merrymeeting Bay
Friends of the Clearwater
Friends of the Cloquet a valley State Forest
Friends of the Earth
Gaviota Coast Conservancy
Global Green

Great Old Broads for Wilderness
GreenFaith
Heartwood
High Country Conservation Advocates
Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History
Humboldt Waterkeeper
Hummingbird Research Group
Inland Empire Waterkeeper
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
Intheshadowofthewolf
Izaak Walton League Rapid City SD Chapter
Jemez Peacemakers
Juniata Valley Audubon Society
Kettle Range Conservation Group
Kickapoo Peace Circle
Klamath Forest Alliance
KyotoUSA
Large Carnivore Fund
Los Angeles Audubon Society
Los Padres ForestWatch
Louisiana Audubon Council
Maryland Ornithological Society
Miami Waterkeeper
Mountain Mamas
National Wolfwatcher Coalition
Natural Resources Defense Council
NC WARN
Next 100 Coalition
Nokuse Land Conservancy
North Central Washington Audubon Society
Northeast Oregon Ecosystems
Northern Virginia Bird Alliance
NYC Plover Project
Oasis Earth
Orange County Coastkeeper
Oregon Wild
Orleans Audubon Society
Partnership for Policy Integrity
Passionist Solidarity Network
People and Carnivores
Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania
Predator Defense
Preserve Wild Santee
Project Coyote
Project Eleven Hundred
Quiet Use Coalition
Raptors Are The Solution
Resource Renewal Institute

RESTORE: The North Woods
Rockbridge Conservation
San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society
San Francisco Baykeeper
Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society
Savannah Riverkeeper
Save Our Allegheny Ridges
Save Our Sky Blue Waters
Save The Colorado
SAVE THE FROGS!
Save the Pine Bush
Sea Turtle Conservancy
Selkirk Conservation Alliance (SCA)
Sierra Club
Sky Island Alliance
Social Compassion in Legislation
Society for Marine Mammalogy
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Species Unite
St. Johns Riverkeeper
Team Wolf
The Cougar Fund
The Habitat Institute
The Urban Wildlands Group
Three Sisters Indigenous Organic Farm and Ranch
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Ventana Wilderness Alliance
Washington Wildlife First
Watauga Riverkeeper
Waterkeeper Alliance
Watershed Alliance of Marin
Western Nebraska Resources Council
Western Watersheds Project
Western Wildlife Conservancy
Western Wildlife Outreach
Wild Connections
Wild Cumberland
Wild Nature Institute
WildEarth Guardians
Wildlife for All
Wishtoyo Foundation
Wolf Conservation Center
Wolf Hollow
Wyoming Untrapped
Wyoming Wildlife Advocates
Yaak Valley Forest Council