

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 13, 2020

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,  
and Related Agencies  
House Committee on Appropriations  
2007 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Joyce  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,  
and Related Agencies  
House Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable José Serrano  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science and Related Agencies  
H-310 The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science and Related Agencies  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman McCollum, Chairman Serrano, Ranking Member Joyce, and Ranking Member Aderholt:

As you consider the fiscal year 2021 Interior and Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations, we urge you to support increased funding for endangered species conservation, including Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing, planning and consultation, species conservation and restoration, and species recovery. We appreciate the funding increases that H.R. 1865 provided for these critical programs in FY 2020. However, after decades of being systematically and severely underfunded, more robust funding is still needed to recover and conserve our Nation's imperiled animals and plants, and ultimately protect America's natural heritage.

In 2019, the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services released a groundbreaking assessment warning that 1 million animal and plant species are heading towards extinction in the next few decades due to habitat loss, climate change and other human activities. More than 10 species have been declared extinct since 2010 in the continental U.S., and insects and other important pollinators around the world are declining at a rapid rate. In North America alone, bird populations have declined by 30 percent in the past 50 years.

Fortunately, the U.S. Endangered Species Act is one of the strongest tools we have to combat the current wildlife extinction crisis. In enacting the Endangered Species Act of 1973, Congress recognized that imperiled species of wildlife, fish and plants "are of esthetic, ecological, educational, historical, recreational, and scientific value to the Nation and its people." Congress gave the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) a powerful set of tools to carry out the law's goal of conserving endangered species.

Nonetheless, implementing recovery strategies and partner activities in an effective manner recovery requires significant commitment and resources. Strong funding for Ecological Services supports FWS's work with partners at the state and local level both to recover listed species and protect their habitats. Similarly, funding for NMFS Protected Resources Science and Management program is crucial for the protection and recovery of imperiled marine species.

The need for increased funding is evident from the over 400 threatened and endangered species that lack recovery plans, as well as the hundreds of species that receive zero dollars in recovery funding from any agency – federal or state. Congressional appropriations for recovery and consultation have simply not kept pace with the number of listed species or the complex challenges of conservation in a world facing the consequences of climate change. Inadequate funding not only puts at risk the recovery of threatened and endangered species and conservation of their habitats; it also impedes FWS and NMFS's ability to apply the best scientific knowledge available in a timely review of listing decisions for species in need of protection.

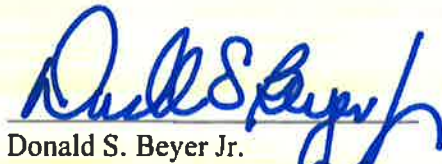
We recommend increasing the recovery budget by \$28 million this year and increasing the consultation budget by \$8 million this year. If Congress does not provide the funding increases necessary for FWS and NMFS to carry out their statutory obligations, endangered species could slip closer to extinction. More importantly, our Nation could lose even more of our precious wildlife heritage.

We request robust funding for ESA listing, candidate conservation and grants to states in FY 2021. Unfortunately, animals and plants continue to go extinct in the United States while waiting for the Act's protections. Creating an artificial bottleneck in the listing process—a process that is based solely on the best available science by law—is simply poor policy. We recommend that the listing budget be increased by \$9 million this year. Likewise, underfunding Candidate Conservation in the Conservation and Restoration line-item and the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund undermines the strong partnerships that the FWS is working to build and is simply counterproductive. We recommend an increase of \$14 million for the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund. We are grateful that the FY 2020 bill provided \$13.3 million for Candidate Conservation and we ask for that level to be maintained.

Finally, in the last few years we have seen the Southern Resident killer whales and the North Atlantic Right Whales approach crisis status, with 10 right whale deaths in 2019 alone and the killer whale population at its lowest levels in 20 years. Both species underscore the dangers of being complacent and not providing robust funding to NMFS. We recommend a \$20 million increase in funding to the agency's protected resources budget to ensure that none of our amazing marine species slip towards extinction.

These funding increases are critical to save more species from extinction and put America's imperiled animals and plants on the path to recovery.

Sincerely,



Donald S. Beyer Jr.



Debbie Dingell



Raúl M. Grijalva

**Support increased funding for endangered species conservation, FY 2021**  
**List of Signatories**  
**March 13, 2020**

Ron Kind  
Tulsi Gabbard  
Grace F. Napolitano  
Steve Cohen  
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Ro Khanna  
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