



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

March 16, 2007

The Honorable Norman Dicks
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Dicks and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

As members who share your commitment to the conservation of our nation's wildlife, fish, plants and their habitats, we are writing to urge for much-needed increases for the US Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) endangered species program.

When Congress passed the Endangered Species Act in 1973, it recognized that America has an obligation to protect its most vulnerable species of wildlife, fish and plants and to ensure a rich conservation legacy for our children and grandchildren. Unfortunately, we are falling short of that commitment by under-funding the protection and recovery of endangered and threatened plants and animals. The Administration's Fiscal Year 2008 Budget includes a \$5.5 million or 7.5 percent cut to the recovery budget, further exacerbating the existing shortfall. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is in crisis and has lost 600 staff over the last two years.

Failure to provide adequate levels of funding for endangered species operations will only ensure that species slide closer to extinction, putting chances for recovery further out of reach while sharply increasing the costs to the taxpayer. More than 270 species, many of which have for years been candidates for listing, continue to await protection. Biologists with the Fish and Wildlife Service have previously estimated that more than 200 already-listed species are on the verge of extinction primarily because recovery activities are given too little attention alongside inadequate funding. In addition, the number of projects reviewed under the Consultation program has nearly doubled since 2000; funding for these reviews, however, lags far behind, having grown only 30% in the same period.

The development and implementation of Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), which allow land use activities to proceed while still protecting species, also continues to grow, with funding critically needed to help ensure timely and effective development and


monitoring of 500 existing and more than 300 new HCPs that together will cover more than 70 million acres when complete. All ESA program areas are currently understaffed by at least 30 percent, with some offices in danger of being understaffed by as much as 50%.

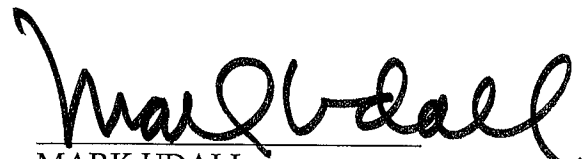
Finally, the President's budget request eliminated two important programs to carry out proactive species recovery efforts on private lands—the Landowner Incentive Program and the Private Stewardship Grants Programs. These two programs provide resources to states and private landowners to conserve endangered plants and animals on non-federal lands. In 2006, funding was awarded to efforts in 46 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The need for these programs again far outstrips available funding – the amount requested for worthy projects on average totals two to three times the yearly available funding. I urge that these valuable programs be restored through the appropriations process.

While we understand the existing budget constraints placed on the Subcommittee, we urge you make every effort to provide a total increase of at least \$38.7 million over the President's request for USFWS endangered species operating accounts, with the increases allocated as follows: \$6.9 million for Listing, \$16.7 million for Recovery, \$11.6 million for Consultation, and \$3.4 million for Candidate Conservation. We further ask for increases of \$16.2 million for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund and that the Landowner Incentive Program and Private Stewardship Grants Program be restored and funded at \$27.4 million and \$11 million respectively. However, while these voluntary incentives programs are important for the recovery of our nation's imperiled species, they should not be funded at the expense of the Fish and Wildlife Service's core endangered species programs.


Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,


JAY INSLEE
Member of Congress


MARK UDALL
Member of Congress


JOHN DINGELL
Member of Congress


HENRY WAXMAN
Member of Congress



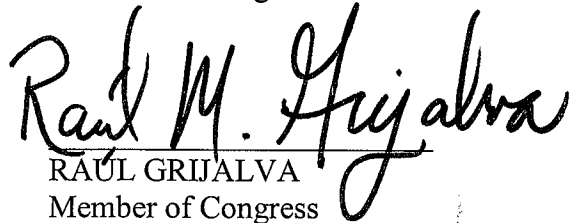
TOM ALLEN
Member of Congress



GWEN MOORE
Member of Congress



RON KIND
Member of Congress



RAUL GRIJALVA
Member of Congress



DENNIS MOORE
Member of Congress



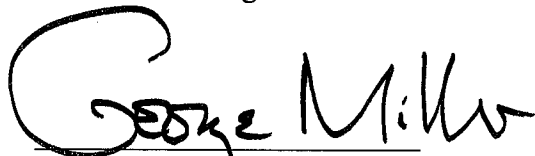
LLOYD DOGGETT
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PETER DEFAZIO
Member of Congress



JIM MCDERMOTT
Member of Congress



GEORGE MILLER
Member of Congress



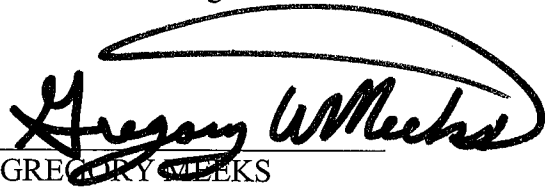
EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress



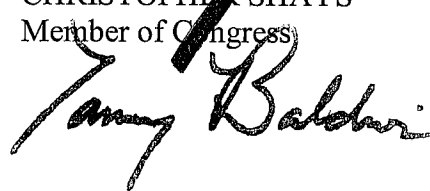
MIKE THOMPSON
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GREGORY MEES
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TAMMY BALDWIN
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ELLEN TAUSCHER
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