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Contact:

Heather Taylor, NRDC, 703-357-5429

Brian Moore, Audubon, 202-386-1516

Mary Beth Beetham, Defenders of Wildlife, 202-772-0231

Beth Lowell, Oceana, 202-833-3900

Kassandra Serveny, Marine Conservation Biology Institute, 202-546-5346

Maribeth Oakes, The Wilderness Society, 202-429-2674

Peter Raabe, American Rivers, 202-243-7046

Bush Budget Rewards Relic Industries Strapped Natural Resources Take a Hit

Leading Environmental Groups Analyze Bush Spending Plan

WASHINGTON (February 4, 2008) – Today, President Bush unveiled his final federal spending plan proposal for FY2009, accurately reflecting his administration's misplaced priorities and continued favors to polluters, according to conservation and environmental leaders.

Again, President Bush stripped critical funds protecting America's communities and natural resources, and instead rewarded dirty industries. All of this came a week after touting his commitment to advance clean, renewable resources and reduce dependence on oil.

The following is an analysis of the president's spending plan by policy experts at several of the nation's leading conservation and environmental advocacy organizations:

Department of Energy

The same pen that slashed investments in energy efficiency and renewables by 28 percent ups the giveaways to outdated dirty energy like nuclear power, conventional coal, and oil. Symbolic of the abandonment of energy efficiency is the zeroing-out of the budget of the Weatherization Assistance Program, which the Department of Energy itself calls "this country's longest running, and perhaps most successful energy efficiency program." In FY06, DOE weatherized 97,000 homes and last year, only 55,000 homes. Now it will go to zero.

Environmental Protection Agency

The administration's budget proposal for EPA would continue the agency's downward spiral into irrelevance. For instance, the president proposes to cut \$134 million from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) to \$555 million. The SRF meets critical stormwater and wastewater needs across the country, such as advanced sewage treatment, reduction in raw sewage overflows, protection of drinking water sources, treatment of toxic runoff from streets and highways, and use of best management practices to reduce farm runoff. The Clean Water State Revolving Fund also supports about 400,000 jobs annually for engineers, architects, and other professionals and skilled laborers. Because the federal dollar is matched at the state and often again at the local level, direct federal investment receives a return on investment of 2.23 times. If Congress listens to the president's recommendation, we can expect more flooding, more disease, more beach closures, loss of fish diversity, increased drinking water treatment costs, and more putrid, trash-filled waterways, especially in highly populated areas.

Department of Interior

Despite the president's promise to fully fund the popular Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), the blueprint released today extends the pattern of deep cuts to the program seen in previous Bush administration budgets. In FY2008, LWCF received \$154 million. For FY2009, the administration reduced that by more than \$110 million to approximately \$42.5 million. LWCF is authorized by Congress to receive up to \$900 million annually. In addition, the president once again calls for the enactment of the chronically rejected proposals to open up the Outer Continental Shelf and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling.

With cuts to discretionary funding of \$65 million or 4.8 percent, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service remains an agency in crisis. Funding for the endangered species program, which protects our nation's most vulnerable wildlife species, is cut by \$3.7 million, law enforcement funding is cut by \$2.3 million and the Multinational Species Fund is cut by 46 percent. Our national wildlife refuges continue to fall behind, with funding nearly \$32 million below the FY 2004 inflation-adjusted level and land acquisition for refuges slashed by more than \$24 million, a 70 percent cut. Bright spots, such as the cross-cutting "Safe Borderlands" and "Birds Forever" initiatives, are paid for by the cuts in other programs.

National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration

The president once again missed an opportunity to substantially increase investments in our oceans. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) budget request was \$4.11 billion for FY 2009, an increase of 140 million above FY 08 enacted levels. While this increase is appreciated, it is still well below what is needed for the agency. NOAA is charged with protecting our oceans, managing our fisheries, predicting our weather, and researching climate change among other critical duties. The National Marine Fisheries Service received increases to key data collection and management programs which will help the agency implement the changes to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act. Unfortunately, other programs, such as marine turtle conservation and the National Marine Sanctuaries program were cut.

If NOAA is to continue monitoring U.S. waters for the effects of global warming, then it needs a substantial increase in additional funding. Global climate change has the potential to drastically change our oceans. Sea level rise, ocean acidification, coral bleaching, and sea temperature rise are a few of the changes that the marine world will see. In order to make a national commitment to addressing the impacts of climate change, research and monitoring should be substantially funded and can not come from an existing agencies budget.

Department of Agriculture

The administration's request for funding for the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service short-changes the conservation efforts of farmers and ranchers across the nation. The president's request eliminates two of the most important tools the federal government has in protecting habitat for birds and wildlife on private land. The proposal requests no funding for the Wildlife Habitat Incentives program, which is authorized at \$85 million annually to help land owners develop habitat for wildlife with an emphasis on threatened and endangered species. In addition the administration proposes to eliminate funding for the Grasslands Reserve Program, the only program designed to protect the quickly vanishing native prairies and grasslands across our nation. Eliminating these programs removes many of the conservation opportunities available to American's on private land.

Army Corps of Engineers

While the FY'09 budget request includes an increase in funding to restore America's Everglades, it fails to adequately reflect our nation's other restoration priorities, such as the Upper Mississippi River and Coastal Louisiana. We need a national commitment and significant investment to restore these national treasures before they are lost forever. Congress authorized nearly \$6 billion in ecosystem restoration

projects in 2007. Restoring ecosystems across our nation is a vital and urgent national priority, which does not get cheaper or easier the longer we wait.

Green Budget Released Today

Also today, the nation's leading energy and environmental groups released the annual "Green Budget" for fiscal year 2009. The Green Budget outlines the most critical funding needs, and highlights areas where even a small amount of money will pay huge dividends when it comes to protecting our air, water, climate, public health and wildlife.

The Green Budget is available at:

The Green Budget was created by the following organizations:

Alaska Wilderness League, American Lands Alliance, American Rivers, Audubon, Center for Native Ecosystems, Clean Water Action, Defenders of Wildlife, Endangered Species Coalition, Environment America, Friends of the Earth, League of Conservation Voters, Marine Conservation Biology Institute, National Parks Conservation Association, Natural Resources Defense Council, National Wildlife Federation, Oceana, Ocean Conservancy, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, The Wilderness Society, The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, and World Wildlife Fund.

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