

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AGENDA

for the next administration





DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE

Defenders of Wildlife is a national, nonprofit membership organization dedicated to the protection of all native wild animals and plants in their natural communities.

Authors

Mary Beth Beetham, Jean Brennan, Sara Chieffo, Matt Clark, Bob Davison, Aimee Delach, Robert Dewey, Bob Dreher, Cindy Hoffman, Peter Jenkins, Noah Kahn, Caroline Kennedy, Noah Matson, James Navarro, Peter Nelson, Sara O'Brien, Brian Segee, Brianne Smith, Katie Theoharides, Sara Vickerman, Aimee Weldon

Project Director

Robert Irvin, Senior Vice President of Conservation Programs

Editorial Team

Krista Schlyer, Editor
Charles Kogod, Photo Editor

Designer

Peter Corcoran

© 2008 Defenders of Wildlife
1130 17th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036-4604
202.682.9400
www.defenders.org

Cover photo: polar bears © Rinie Van Meurs/Foto Natura/Minden Pictures



Recycled
Supporting responsible
use of forest resources

Cert no. SW-COC-001530
www.fsc.org
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council

Printed on 100% post-consumer-waste, process-chlorine-free recycled paper manufactured with wind power, creating the following environmental benefits: 8.66 trees preserved for the future; 3,678 gallons wastewater flow saved; 407 lbs solid waste not generated; 801 lbs net greenhouse gases prevented; 6,133,600 Btus of energy not consumed; 416 pounds of air emissions not generated.



GRIZZLY BEAR AND MOOSE ANTLERS, KATMAI, ALASKA © JOEL SARTORE/JOELSARTORE.COM

Just over a century ago President Theodore Roosevelt took bold steps to conserve some of our most spectacular and important habitats for wildlife conservation, setting the standard for presidential conservation leadership. Since that time, as America's population grew and its natural resources, open space and wildlife were increasingly threatened, conservationist Presidents such as Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton worked to expand and strengthen our national commitment to protecting our environment. And everyone has benefited. Just ask those who have stood awestruck at the lip of a seemingly bottomless red-rock canyon in Arizona, or heard the primeval howl of a wolf in the northern Rockies.

Today, it's difficult to imagine an America without a protected Grand Canyon, gray wolves, wide open spaces and wilderness—and we have strong conservation leaders to thank for that. These visionaries and many others like them have created laws and systems of land protection, placed natural treasures under federal stewardship, ensured the continued existence of imperiled creatures like the bald eagle, brown pelican and grizzly bear, and helped open the eyes of the world to the great beauty of planet Earth. They created federal park and wildlife refuge systems that have served as an inspiration and model for other nations, and cultivated a consciousness of the importance of clean air and water.

More recently we have witnessed what happens when conservation leadership is lacking, when the voices of extraction, extinction and exploitation overwhelm those who

The next President should promise to be a strong and consistent voice for wildlife conservation and sustainable management of wildlife habitat.

call for protection and recovery of wildlife and wild places. From the erosion and underfunding of our most important environmental safeguards like the Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act and Clean Water Act, to the squelching of scientific data for political gain, to the abdication of leadership on global warming—the most important environmental and social issue of our time—the outgoing administration of George W. Bush has given the nation a glimpse of what it would be like to live in an America without a protected Grand Canyon and all the other invaluable natural treasures we have for so long conserved and treasured.

Much of the damage done over the past eight years will not be easily undone. But we can reclaim our environmental laws, policies and lands, and renew our country's commitment to conserving what remains. The new administration that takes office January 20, 2009, has the opportunity to restore our nation's historic role as a world leader in conservation and environmental awareness, and to renew and enhance the role of the federal government as a leader and cooperative partner in preserving the vast natural wealth of this great country.

DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE CALLS ON THE NEW ADMINISTRATION TO:

- 1 Promise to end the political manipulation of science
- 2 Promise to responsibly manage America's federal lands
- 3 Promise to safeguard America's rarest plants and wildlife
- 4 Promise to make America a leader in addressing global warming and its impacts
- 5 Promise to restore America's role as a global leader in wildlife conservation
- 6 Promise to restore our connection to nature through education and proper stewardship of our shared federal lands
- 7 Promise to encourage private landowners, states and tribes to conserve wildlife and habitat



1

Promise to end the political manipulation of science

Science is the foundation of effective wildlife and habitat conservation. All successful conservation campaigns, from bald eagle recovery to wolf reintroduction, have had their foundations in solid scientific data, assessment and monitoring. But during the past eight years the voice of science in federal conservation decisions has been fiscally sidelined, politically undermined and at times altogether silenced to the detriment of wildlife and essential habitat.

Under the Bush administration ecological research funding at the Environmental Protection Agency has sustained a decrease of nearly 26 percent just since 2004. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Biological Resources Discipline, which generates information needed to manage and conserve fish and wildlife, has declined 12 percent, and its Cooperative Fisheries and Wildlife Research Unit program alone has lost approximately one fifth of all its scientists.

In addition to loss of federal research funding, wildlife managers and scientists have faced unprecedented pressure to ignore vital scientific data when such data conflicted with official administration policy. From those working on the Florida panther to those working in the unique ecosystems of south Texas, federal wildlife professionals who have stood up to this pressure have faced workplace reprisals and loss of employment. This manipulation of science for political expediency has greatly undermined the integrity and credibility of federal natural resource agencies.

To restore the foundation of our nation's wildlife conservation efforts, the next administration must make scientific integrity a keystone of our natural resources management. This will require an increase in funding for research and scientific personnel and a rigorous evaluation of current scientific staffing and expertise. The new administration must safeguard scientific input and restore public confidence in decisions by preventing the politicization of science and increasing opportunities for public involvement.

The next administration has an important opportunity at a crucial time. In an era of global warming, successful conservation of wildlife will depend as never before on a science-based approach to natural resources management.

We urge the new administration to take the following actions:

Secure significantly increased funding for federal natural resources agencies to conduct research, fill vacant positions and provide information analysis and sharing.

Restore scientific capacity to the federal agencies entrusted with stewardship of the nation's fish and wildlife.

Incorporate scientific adaptive management requirements into federal fish and wildlife conservation programs.

RESEARCHER MONITORING CALIFORNIA CONDORS, HOPPER MOUNTAIN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, CALIFORNIA. © TOM VEZO/MINDEN PICTURES



2

Promise to responsibly manage America's public lands

Our national network of public lands is a treasure of immeasurable value. These spaces are uniquely American, with national icons such as Yosemite and Great Smoky Mountains national parks, the wildlife refuges that host millions of birds traveling the skies of North America and the hushed ancient forests of Washington and Oregon.

National wildlife refuges, national forests, national parks and lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) cover almost one third of our country. Largely concentrated in the West, these lands and waters are vitally important to wildlife conservation, providing some of the last remaining contiguous blocks of habitat. Federal lands form the backbone of many large-scale conservation plans, harboring intact populations of many rare and endangered species.

Under the outgoing administration, the stewardship of federal lands has been sidelined and compromised as resource extraction, development and political agendas have been given precedence over conservation and the public interest. Rampant oil and gas development has replaced wildlife habitat on federal lands, threatening water supplies and the livelihoods of ranchers, outfitters, nature tour operators and other industries that rely on healthy wildlife populations and ecosystems; environmental laws have been ignored and imperiled species put at risk by politics related to U.S. border security; standards for maintaining viable populations of wildlife on federal lands have been eroded; along with many other assaults on the integrity of our shared environment.

We need a new vision for our federal lands, one that recognizes that ecological sustainability is the fundamental building block for all the uses of our federal lands, and an essential ingredient for our economy, health and quality of life. When many of the federal lands laws and practices were developed, our natural resources were plentiful, and our population was sparse. Today the opposite is true: natural resources are scarce, the population is growing and the economy is much less dependent on the extraction of natural resources and much more dependent on clean air, clean water, open space and quality of life. The laws and policies governing our nation's federal lands and natural resources should be modernized to reflect this change.

We urge the new administration to take the following actions:

Restore environmental review of federal lands management by fully implementing the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act and other laws.

Restore proper consideration of wildlife and other environmental resources by fully complying with applicable environmental laws in making decisions on U.S. border security.

Fully protect all remaining roadless areas on national forests and other public lands.

Fully consider the impact of global warming on wildlife and habitats on federal lands and incorporate measures to assist wildlife adaptation to global warming in federal land management plans.

Support administrative action and legislation to maintain viable wildlife populations on national forest and BLM lands.

Ensure energy development on federal lands and waters does not harm crucial wildlife habitats.

Enforce the Federal Airborne Hunting Act.

Restore and increase funding to support fish and wildlife conservation on national wildlife refuge, national forest and BLM lands.

Support full and permanent funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund to expand national conservation land holdings as necessary to fulfill their intended purposes.

Restore protection of all wetlands by clearly defining them as waters of the United States under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.



BISON, WIND CAVE NATIONAL PARK, SOUTH DAKOTA © JIM BRANDENBURG/MINDEN PICTURES



COAL-BED METHANE DEVELOPMENT NEAR PINEDALE, WYOMING © JOEL SARTORE/JOELSARTORE.COM

3

Promise to safeguard America's rarest plants and wildlife

Thirty-five years ago, Congress enacted the current Endangered Species Act, and this nation put in place the world's most farsighted and important protection for imperiled wildlife and plant species and the ecosystems on which they depend. This protection has everyday value for humans because these plants and animals, many seemingly insignificant, play crucial roles in their ecosystems that help sustain all life on Earth.

The Endangered Species Act has helped rescue hundreds of species from extinction. But the even greater achievement of the Endangered Species Act has been the efforts it has prompted to recover species to the point at which they no longer need special protections. It is because of the act that we have wolves in Yellowstone, manatees in Florida and sea otters in California. We can marvel at the sight of bald eagles in the lower 48 states and other magnificent creatures like whooping cranes, American alligators and California condors largely because of the Endangered Species Act.

Unfortunately, during the last eight years the outgoing administration largely abandoned, and in many cases actively undermined, our longstanding bipartisan commitment to protect imperiled species. The administration slowly starved Endangered Species Act programs of critical funding and altered the fate of many species based on political agendas rather than scientific data. The net result has been to thwart protection for more than 280 species deserving protection under the act and to hamstring recovery of those species already listed.

The tarnished legacy of the outgoing administration includes adoption of novel policies that re-interpret and weaken the Endangered Species Act and our nation's efforts to protect and recover endangered and threatened species. The changes also have sought to sidestep any responsibility for addressing the impacts of global warming on polar bears and other rare wildlife and plants. In an era of global warming, a strong and

forward-thinking approach to endangered species conservation is nothing short of essential.

The new administration has the opportunity to provide a fresh start for imperiled species. We should renew our nation's courageous 35-year commitment to protect the wealth of our living natural resources by undoing the damage caused during the past eight years and reauthorizing and strengthening the Endangered Species Act.





We urge the new administration to take the following actions:

Secure substantial increases in U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service endangered species program funding over the next four years.

Undo the radical shifts in policies adopted by the Bush administration that have damaged effective implementation of the Endangered Species Act.

Make recovery, not just staving off extinction, the focus of endangered species conservation efforts.

Ensure that the short- and long-term impacts of global warming are incorporated in all aspects of species assessments and recovery planning.

Encourage endangered and threatened species recovery efforts on private lands, including working with Congress to pass legislation that incorporates the tax incentive provisions of the Endangered Species Recovery Act that were not included in the 2008 Farm Bill.

Work with Congress to pass a 21st century renewal of the Endangered Species Act that reauthorizes and strengthens the 35-year old law.



TOP-SEA OTTER, MONTEREY BAY, CALIFORNIA © THOMAS D. MANGELSEN
LEFT-WHOOPING CRANE AND SANDHILL CRANES, BOSQUE DEL APACHE NATIONAL
WILDLIFE REFUGE, NEW MEXICO © JOEL SARTORE/JOELSARTORE.COM
BOTTOM-MANATEE © JOEL SARTORE/JOELSARTORE.COM

4

Promise to make America a leader in addressing global warming and its impacts

The success of all our efforts to conserve and recover fish, wildlife and other natural resources will depend on how well we respond to the challenge of global warming. Reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the U.S. Climate Change Science Program confirm that climate change already is causing serious damage and disruptions to wildlife and ecosystems, including loss of important habitat in polar and high mountain ecosystems, acidification of the oceans, increased drought, warming of rivers and other waters, increased threat from invasive species and more frequent cata-

strophic fires. These impacts threaten the natural systems that provide communities with drinking water, flood protection, food, medicine, timber, recreational opportunities, scenic beauty, jobs and numerous other services.

During the past eight years, as study after study from scientific leaders around the world sounded the alarm about the mounting impact of our use of fossil fuels, the outgoing administration stuck its head in the sand. At a time when we should have been a world leader and taken an active role in reducing the causes and dealing with the effects of climate change on natural systems, wild species and human populations, the outgoing administration did nothing.

Too much time has been wasted. We need to act immediately to substantially reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Legislation must be enacted to achieve science-based greenhouse gas reduction targets and lessen the impact of the global warming that we have already set underway. Even with immediate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, threats to wildlife, plants and their habitats are predicted to accelerate and deepen for decades and longer as global warming continues to alter climate patterns. We will face unprecedented challenges in coping with currently unpredictable effects and ecosystem responses to a changing climate.

Federal and state agency scientific research programs currently are woefully inadequate to address the impact of climate change and the magnitude of wildlife adaptation needs. These programs will have to be greatly enhanced to deal with the uncertain future ahead. Additionally, land management and wildlife conservation programs will have to adopt a new paradigm that employs innovative approaches and strategies if we are to help species survive and adapt in the future. This new paradigm will have to incorporate a national view of conservation, seeing species as they relate to the entire landscape of the country and continent.



COAL-FIRED POWER PLANT, ARIZONA © SCOTT WARREN/AURORA PHOTOS

We urge the new administration to take the following actions:

Secure significantly increased funding for the U.S. Geological Survey's National Global Warming and Wildlife Science Center.

Pursue legislation that facilitates a national strategy for helping wildlife navigate the bottleneck of global warming impacts over the next century.

Mandate that any federal climate cap-and-trade system dedicate a portion of the generated revenue to assist wildlife, plants and associated ecological processes in becoming resilient and adapting to the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification.

Implement policy and fund research that ensures that development of biofuels, wind power and other renewable energy is compatible with protection of wildlife, conservation of habitats, reduction of greenhouse gases and avoidance of conflicts with food needs.

POLAR BEAR, NUNAVUT, CANADA ©JIM BRANDENBURG/MINDEN PICTURES





TOP-RAINFORREST CLEARCUTTING IN MALAYSIAN BORNEO © THOMAS MARENT/MINDEN PICTURES
RIGHT-JAGUAR © PETE OXFORD/MINDEN PICTURES

5 *Promise to restore America's role as a global leader in wildlife conservation*

During the past eight years, the United States has plummeted from a position as a world leader in environmental conservation to a blocker of some of the most important global environmental initiatives of our time. From global warming, to the conservation of biological diversity, to responsible stewardship of shared ecosystems along our international borders, the outgoing administration has failed to show even the most basic environmental leadership.

Global warming is the most critical international environmental issue we face, but the previous administration refused year after year to work with the global community to meaningfully address the situation. As a result, the United States has lagged behind other countries and even the efforts of states, local governments and private business in addressing the causes and impacts of climate change. The eight-year failure of this administration to work with the rest of the world to seriously address emissions of greenhouse gas pollution will make solving the problem of global warming, and saving wildlife and habitat from its impacts, even more difficult.

Similarly, the failure of the outgoing administration to secure

Senate ratification of the Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Convention on Biological Diversity, two global agreements that are critically important to protecting wildlife and its habitat, has limited both the effectiveness of those treaties and the influence of the United States in their implementation.

Relations with our closest international neighbors and most natural conservation partners have also suffered under the outgoing administration. Many of the United States' most iconic and treasured wildlife species, including the bald eagle, grizzly bear, wolf and jaguar, also have significant habitat within Mexico or Canada. Revitalized coordination with those countries will help better ensure the health and stability of wildlife populations within our own borders. Such coordination should start by developing alternatives to construction of border walls, which disrupt the natural migration of wildlife across political boundaries and destroy habitat.

These and myriad other international conservation challenges face the new administration. We now have the opportunity to rejoin the community of nations by igniting a renewed commitment and charting a new path to global environmental conservation.

We urge the new administration to take the following actions:

Commit the United States to substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in international climate change negotiations.

Secure Senate ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Law of the Sea treaty.

Secure sufficient funding for key federal programs that help to maintain and enhance America's global leadership in wildlife conservation.

Create an incentive for international forest protection by dedicating funding to such activities, primarily through a federal climate cap-and-trade system.

Enhance coordination with Mexico and Canada on conservation of border wildlife.



6

Promise to restore our connection to nature through education and proper stewardship of our shared federal lands

For many Americans, national wildlife refuges, national parks, national forests and other federal lands are more than just open space and resources—they are living classrooms that provide insight into the workings of nature and a connection to the world's rarest wildlife and most spectacular landscapes. In an era when most children spend the majority of their time indoors, these natural spaces are vital connectors to the world of nature so essential for all life on Earth.

After years of insufficient staff for interpretive and educational services in the national parks, the Bush administration and Congress last year provided funding to return 3,000 rangers to the national parks. Many of these rangers are seasonal interpreters who are helping to welcome and inspire visitors to the national parks in preparation for the upcoming centennial of our national

park system. But our national wildlife refuges have not been so fortunate.

Refuge lands alone provide nearly 100 million acres of habitat for wildlife, countless recreational opportunities, clean air and drinking water, as well as hands-on learning for thousands of children. Around 40 million people annually visit our nation's refuges, many of whom hold a deep passion for understanding wildlife and protecting wild lands. This passion fuels a whole sector of the American economy. Our refuge system generates more than \$1.7 billion in annual sales for local economies and provides jobs for more than 27,000 Americans.

Yet despite the system's widespread popularity, during the past eight years it has been battered by consistent underfunding. In 2004, the refuge system stopped filling job vacancies in recognition that funding was not keeping up with rising costs,

ROSEATE SPOONBILL AT DING DARLING NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, FLORIDA © JOEL SARTORE/JOELSARTORE.COM





WILDLIFE WATCHING, LAMAR VALLEY, YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK © JOEL SARTORE/JOELSARTORE.COM

inflation and a sizeable operations and maintenance backlog. Now four years later, more than 300 positions have been eliminated. Educators, interpreters and scientists were the first to go. This funding shortfall has had far-reaching consequences for our children. Visitors to some 221 refuges won't find anyone at their welcome centers to explain the important role of the refuge to our nation's wildlife. At refuges such as the Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge in Florida, the Cross Creeks National Wildlife Refuge in Tennessee and the Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge in Illinois, funding and staffing cuts have drastically reduced educational and public use programs.

The new administration should make a strong commitment to fully funding and staffing our federal public lands, and to rebuilding and maintaining environmental education programs. These programs are essential to restoring our national connections with nature, wildlife and wild places.

While the federal land management agencies play a vital role in educating new generations to care for our lands, wildlife

and vital natural resources, they cannot do it alone. Legislation such as the "No Child Left Inside Act" would authorize major new funding for states to provide high-quality environmental instruction. Funds would support outdoor learning activities both at school and in environmental education centers, along with teacher training and the creation of state environmental literacy plans.

We urge the new administration to take the following actions:

Restore and maintain education programs throughout the national wildlife refuge, national park, national forest and other federal land systems.

Support the "No Child Left Inside Act" to authorize federal funding for states to provide environmental instruction and support outdoor learning activities.

7

Promise to encourage private landowners, states and tribes to conserve wildlife and habitat

For wild species, human-drawn boundary lines are meaningless. The grizzly bears that find important protected habitat inside Glacier and Yellowstone national parks do not halt at the edge of the parks but move through the landscape as they must to find food and mates. And so, while our federal lands are among the nation's most treasured natural assets, they cannot alone preserve the complete fabric on which our country's inhabitants—wild and human—depend.

Studies have shown that 15 to 30 percent of the land in any state or ecoregion must be conserved to maintain native flora and fauna in functioning ecosystems. The existing network of protected lands in the United States is simply too small, too isolated and too inconsistently managed to sustain wildlife

populations in the long term. It is essential that we work to create a national network of conservation lands to meet both the needs of wildlife and our needs as a society.

Achieving this goal will require a strategic and coordinated effort across federal and state agencies, tribes and private entities, with particular emphasis on conserving private lands. Nearly two-thirds of our nation's 2.3 billion acres are in private ownership. In some states, such as Illinois and Texas, private land accounts for more than 90 percent of the total land area, with protected areas scattered throughout. Private lands support 70 percent of the species listed under the Endangered Species Act—with 10 percent of listed species occurring only on such lands. These lands also disproportionately support the relicts of imperiled ecosystems—tall and shortgrass prairies, longleaf pine forests, shrub lands and bottomland hardwood forests.

The burgeoning threat of climate change will make private lands even more important as buffers and connectors for natural communities and wildlife populations forced to migrate or otherwise adjust to climate change.

Because purchasing all of the land necessary for a national network of conservation lands would be expensive and politically difficult, effective strategies will require creative and flexible solutions that leverage federal and state resources to allow private landowners to simultaneously conserve their land and maintain their livelihoods. Because conservation funding is limited, investments must be made in a coordinated, strategic manner that ensures that the most critical landscapes are given priority.

By adopting this national approach to conservation and working cooperatively with private landowners, the new administration has the potential to stem the current loss of biodiversity and usher in a new era of environmental leadership for the United States.



LEFT-GIANT SEQUOIAS, SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK, CALIFORNIA
© JAMES RAVILIOUS; BEAFORD ARCHIVE/CORBIS
RIGHT-BISON, GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK, WYOMING
© THOMAS MANGELSEN/MINDEN PICTURES



We urge the new administration to take the following actions:

Secure appropriations to fully fund voluntary U.S. Department of Agriculture conservation and forestry programs authorized through the Farm Bill.

Promote legislation to make the temporary tax incentive for donating conservation easements permanent.

Secure increased funding for technical assistance delivery and monitoring programs that quantify the environmental benefits of conservation incentive programs.

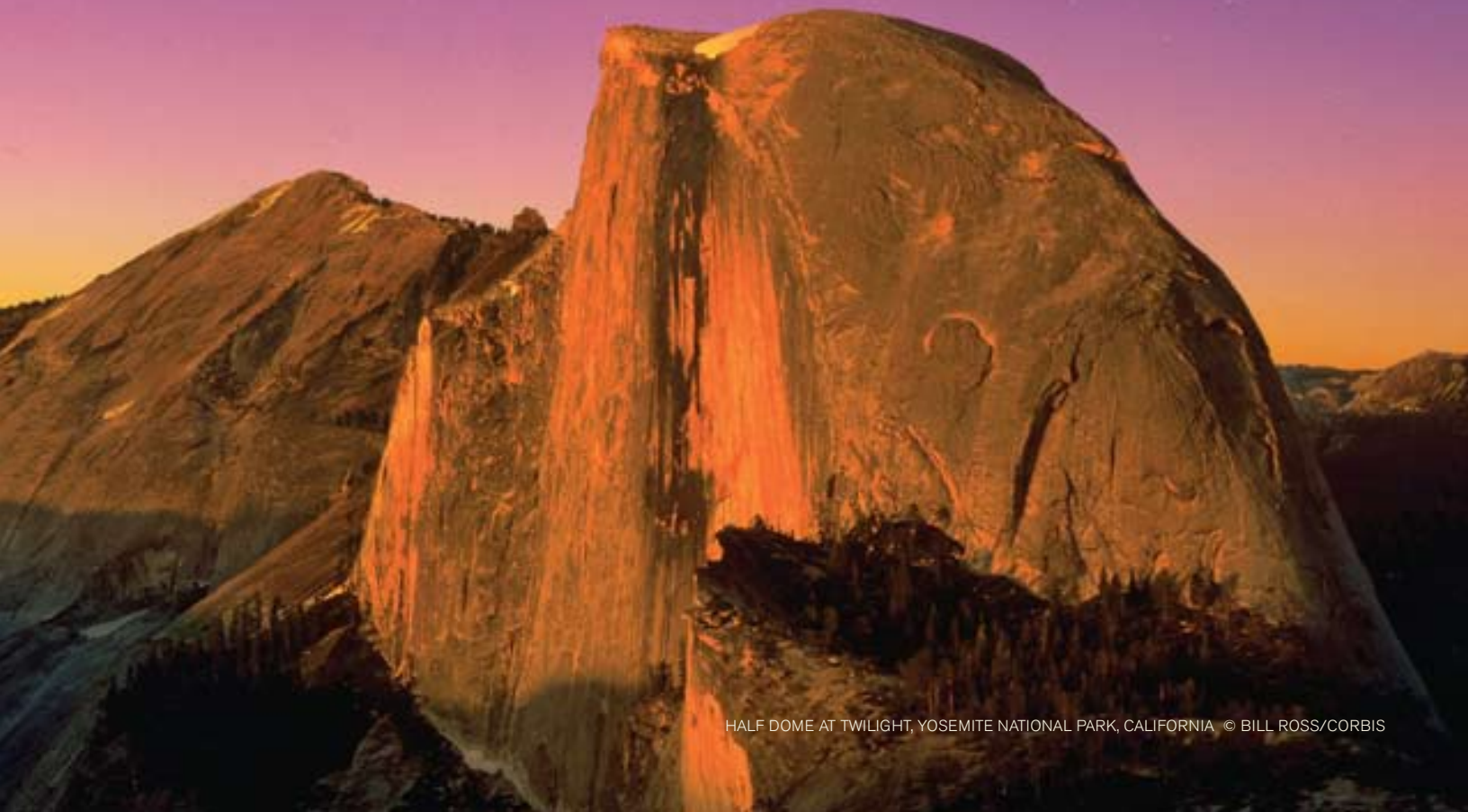
Promote strategic conservation through private lands programs by supporting legislation that links incentive program funding through the Farm Bill to the goals and objectives of state, regional and national conservation initiatives, including the state wildlife action plans.

Support legislation requiring that revisions of the state wildlife action plans include strategies for wildlife adaptation to climate change.

Support the integration of federal land management with state, tribal and private lands to create a national network of conservation lands, with particular emphasis on assisting wildlife adaptation to global warming.

Strong leadership has always been a keystone of the conservation commitment and legacy of the United States. Millions of Americans—and people from around the world—have benefited from the foresight of our nation’s great conservation leaders, in ways both tangible and abstract. Whether it’s the millions of dollars our national parks, forests and wildlife refuges generate for the economy; or the millions of dollars of healthcare costs we save by having cleaner water and better air quality; or the priceless memories that countless families have of a first glimpse of bison grazing in the shadow of Old Faithful, the value of our country’s commitment to conservation is incalculable.

After the past eight years of failed leadership, we need vigorous new leadership that will restore and expand our commitment to conservation. By fully funding and responsibly managing our federal lands; forging partnerships with states, tribes and private landowners; creating strategies to help wildlife adapt to changing global climate conditions; valuing the role of science; strengthening the laws that safeguard our most imperiled wild creatures; and re-engaging as an active partner in global environmental treaties, we can renew our connection to the natural wealth of our homeland. We need this new start. We need a promise that tomorrow will have an Old Faithful, a Ding Darling refuge and a Yosemite National Park—and the scores of species these and other parks and refuges protect—for our children and grandchildren.





DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE
1130 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036-4604
202.682.9400
www.defenders.org