

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Matthew Cartwright
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairs Cartwright and Pingree and Ranking Members Aderholt and Joyce:

As you begin the process of crafting the Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) appropriation bills to fund the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), we strongly 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. Thousands of animal and plants depend on the Endangered Species Act for survival, yet it has been systematically and severely underfunded for decades. Significantly more funding is critical to recover and conserve our Nation's most imperiled species.

The world is in the midst of a staggering and unprecedented wildlife extinction crisis. Once common wildlife and plant populations are crashing around the world, and scientists warn that one million animal and plant species are heading towards extinction, many in the next few decades, due to habitat loss, climate change, wildlife exploitation and other human activities. Insects and other important pollinators around the world are rapidly declining. Hundreds of butterfly species across the American West are vanishing as the region becomes hotter and drier. The eastern monarch butterfly population, which once numbered over a billion, has declined by 85% in just two decades, while the western population of monarch butterfly has crashed by 99.9%. Only 1,914 western monarchs were recorded overwintering in California this year, indicating that the migration has already collapsed. In North America alone, scientists estimate that bird populations have declined by 30 percent in the past 50 years, and globally nearly one-third of freshwater fish are threatened with extinction. But perhaps most glaringly, the devastating global impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate just how dangerous it can be when we fail to sufficiently protect biodiversity.

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 FWS and 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 requires both a significant commitment and sufficient 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 accelerating threats of climate change and habitat loss. 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.

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 poor policy. 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. If Congress does not provide the funding increases necessary for FWS and NMFS to carry out their statutory obligations, endangered species could continue to move closer to extinction. More importantly, our nation could lose even more of our precious wildlife heritage.

For FY22, we request the following funding increases for FWS endangered species conservation:

- \$27.3 million for recovery
- \$8 million for planning and consultation
- \$8.7 million for ESA listing
- \$16.6 million for the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund

We also request level funding at \$13.3 million for FWS Candidate Conservation.

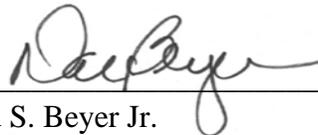
Finally, in the last few years we have seen a number of imperiled marine species reach crisis status. There are now only about 360 North Atlantic right whales remaining, with possibly as few as 70 breeding females. Scientists now predict the species could be functionally extinct by 2040 if current trends continue. The Southern Resident killer whale population is at its lowest levels in 20 years. Vaquitas—the smallest and most endangered marine mammal on Earth—have plummeted by 90% in recent years, and scientists estimate that there are likely only 10 vaquitas left in the world. Their extinction is virtually assured without bold, immediate action. Each of these tragic declines underscore the dangers of being complacent and not providing robust funding to NMFS. Thus, we recommend a \$25 million increase in funding to the agency’s protected resources budget to ensure that none of our amazing marine species slip irrevocably towards extinction.

All of this funding is critical to save more species from extinction and put America's imperiled animals and plants on the path to recovery. We look forward to working with the Subcommittee to ensure that these programs are adequately funded in FY22.

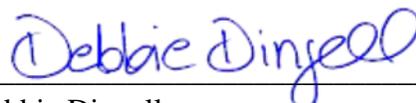
Sincerely,



Raul Grijalva
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

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