

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 17, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20230

Dear Secretaries Zinke and Ross:

We write to express our opposition to the proposed rules (FWS–HQ–ES–2018–0006, FWS–HQ–ES–2018–0007, and FWS–HQ–ES–2018–0009) to amend the regulations for implementing sections 4 and 7 of the Endangered Species Act. The proposals, which in many instances are not consistent with the spirit of the law as Congress intended, rescind longstanding conservation regulations that have proven both effective and popular. We are deeply alarmed that the very agencies tasked with the conservation of our wildlife are seeking to drastically impair the protections for threatened and endangered species, the safeguards of critical habitat, and the consultation process between federal agencies.

The proposals would undermine essential conservation tools that have protected imperiled species and their habitats for decades. A particularly problematic theme throughout these vaguely-worded proposals is that none of them are likely to improve conservation of species. Given the many recent attacks on the Endangered Species Act and the environment from this administration, we have little reason to trust that these proposals will in any way benefit wildlife, and therefore do not support changing longstanding and effective regulations as species hover perilously close to extinction.

In particular, the sweeping changes include proposals that would: wrongly inject economics into what should be purely science-based decisions about listing imperiled species; create loopholes through which the agency can let controversial species go extinct by refusing to designate the full and necessary range of critical habitat due to “societal conflict” and other non-scientific considerations; deprive threatened species from automatically receiving protections from killing, trapping and other forms of harm and commercial exploitation; ignore the impacts of climate change on species’ habitat; and further imperil endangered species by blinding federal agencies to the broad consequences of their actions.

As the premier wildlife conservation agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) must enforce the Endangered Species Act based on

what best available science dictates to ensure species' long-term survival. Today, most imperiled species occupy small fractions of their historical habitat and range. The need for species protections has not decreased over the decades since the Endangered Species Act was enacted. Rather, increased threats from development and a changing climate necessitate the strong and full enforcement of the law now more than ever.

Scientists estimate that we could lose 75 percent of all species in the coming centuries, with the potential for half of all species facing extinction by the end of the century. Species' extinction is happening at a rate at least 100 times greater than what would be considered normal; in just the last 40 years, we have lost half of all wild animals on Earth according to the World Wildlife Fund.

Our nation's imperiled wildlife cannot afford to have their lifeline for survival undercut. At this moment in history, we should be working to strengthen, not weaken, the nation's best tool for helping to stave off the tragedy of extinction.

We stand in firm opposition to the three proposed rules, and we ask FWS and NMFS to instead take proactive measures to prevent permanent extinction of imperiled species.


We look forward to your response.

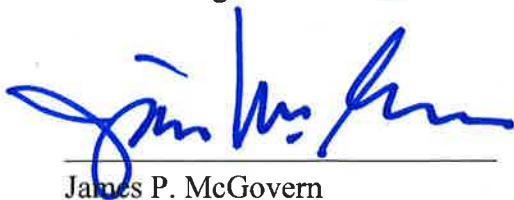
Sincerely,

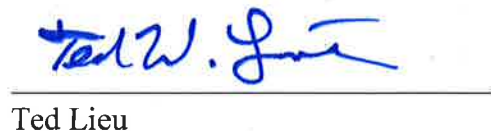

Donald S. Beyer Jr.


Raúl Grijalva


Debbie Dingell

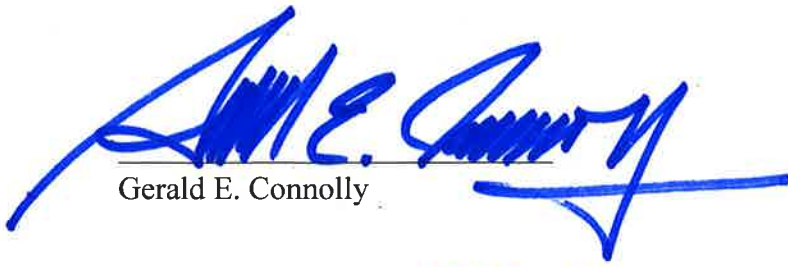

Mark Pocan

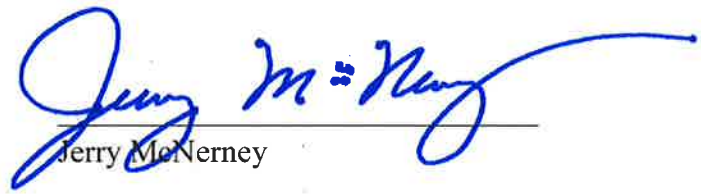

James P. McGovern


Ted Lieu


Darren Soto


Chellie Pingree


Gerald E. Connolly


Jerry McNerney


Betty McCollum


Bill Foster


Nanette Barragan


Grace Meng


Charlie Crist

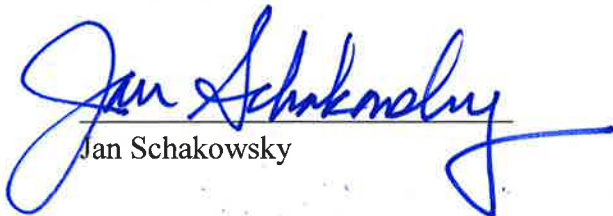

Marcy Kaptur


Carol Shea-Porter


Barbara Lee


Kathy Castor


Mike Quigley


Jan Schakowsky

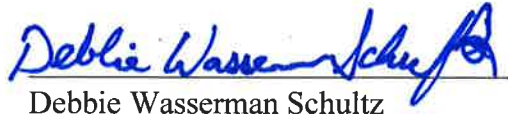

Jared Huffman


Anna G. Eshoo


Earl Blumenauer



Rick Larsen



Debbie Wasserman Schultz



Niki Tsongas



Adam Smith



Rosa L. DeLauro



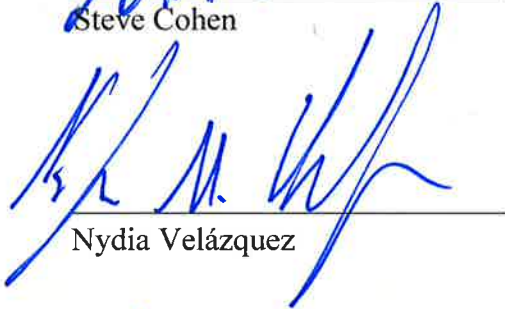
Joe Courtney



Steve Cohen



Alan Lowenthal



Nydia Velázquez



Ruben Gallego



Brenda L. Lawrence



A. Donald McEachin



Salud Carbajal



Mike Thompson



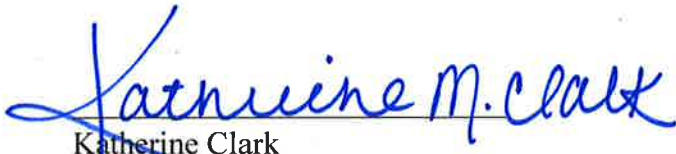
James R. Langevin

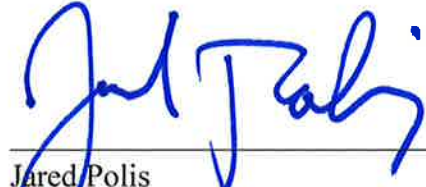


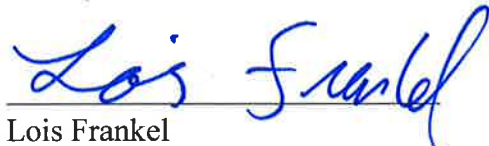
Grace F. Napolitano


Pramila Jayapa


Peter A. DeFazio


Katherine Clark


Jared Polis


Lois Frankel


Frederica S. Wilson


Denny Heck


Diana DeGette


Brian Higgins


Tulsi Gabbard



Eddie Bernice Johnson


Jackie Speier


Lucille Roybal-Allard


John Garamendi


Emanuel Cleaver, II



Seth Moulton


Mark DeSaulnier


Ann McLane Kuster



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott


Scott H. Peters


Albio Sires


Matt Cartwright


William R. Keating



Zoe Lofgren


Eric Swalwell


Jamie Raskin



Adam B. Schiff


David N. Cicilline


Brendan F. Boyle


Bonnie Watson Coleman


Anthony Brown


José E. Serrano



Tom O'Halleran



Adriano Espaillat



Suzanne Bonamici



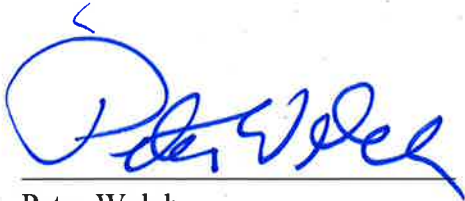
André Carson



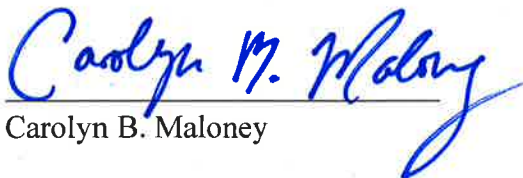
Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan



Daniel T. Kildee



Peter Welch



Carolyn B. Maloney



Alcee L. Hastings



Tony Cardenas



Vicente González



Ted Deutch



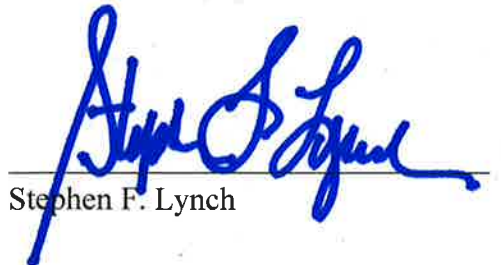
Jimmy Panetta



Hakeem Jeffries



Doris O. Matsui



Stephen F. Lynch



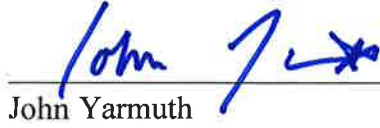
Eleanor Holmes Norton



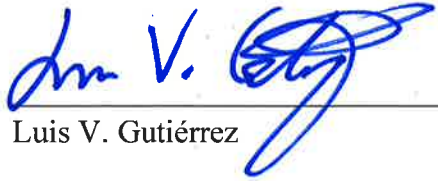
Ruben J. Kihuen



Daniel W. Lipinski



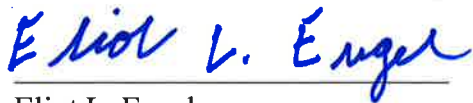
John Yarmuth



Luis V. Gutiérrez



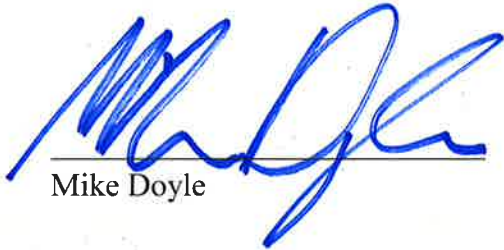
Norma J. Torres



Eliot L. Engel



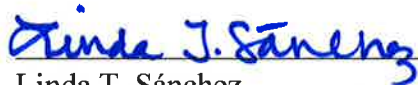
Susan A. Davis



Mike Doyle



J. Luis Correa



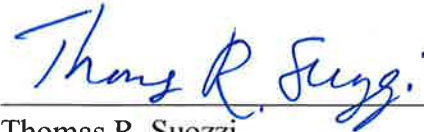
Linda T. Sánchez



Keith Ellison



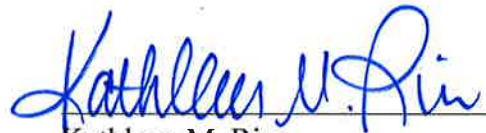
Paul Tonko



Thomas R. Suozzi



Lloyd Doggett



Kathleen M. Rice

Judy Chu
Judy Chu