

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 27, 2019

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable José Serrano
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
H-310, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice
Science and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman McCollum, Chairman Serrano, Ranking Member Joyce, and Ranking Member Aderholt:

As you consider the fiscal year 2020 Interior and Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations, we urge you to support robust funding for Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing, planning and consultation, species conservation and restoration, and recovery process, all of which have been systemically and severely underfunded for many years.

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.” The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) employ, to great effect, a suite of mechanisms to carry out the law’s aim of conserving endangered and threatened species and the habitat upon which they depend. Their efforts have successfully prevented the extinction of 99 percent of all species listed as threatened or endangered under the Act.

However, developing, coordinating, implementing, and managing all the recovery tools and partner activities in a cohesive and effective manner for species’ recovery requires significant commitment and resources. Strong funding for Ecological Services supports FWS’s work with partners at the state and local level both to recover listed species and to conserve candidate species and their habitats so that the need for listing is reduced or even eliminated. 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 recovery funding is evident from the more than 480 U.S. listed species that lack recovery plans and 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 consequences of climate change. 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.

We recommend increasing the recovery budget by \$20 million this year and increasing the consultation budget by \$5 million this year. If Congress does not provide the funding increases necessary for FWS and NMFS to carry out their statutory obligations, the agencies may face greater exposure to litigation. More importantly, our Nation could lose even more of our precious wildlife heritage.

We also request robust funding for ESA listing, candidate conservation and grants to states in FY 2020. 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 by law only follows the best available science — is simply poor policy. We recommend that the listing budget be increased by \$6 million this year. Likewise, underfunding the Conservation and Restoration and the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund — which provides grants to states undermines the strong partnerships that the FWS is working to build is simply counterproductive. We recommend that these be increased by \$2 million and \$11 million respectively.

Finally, in the last two years we have seen the Southern Resident killer whales and the North Atlantic Right Whales approach crisis status, with the killer whale population at its lowest levels in 20 years and zero Right Whale births in 2018. Both species underscore the dangers of being complacent and not providing robust funding to NMFS. We recommend a \$20 million increase in funding to the agency’s protected resources budget to ensure that none of our amazing marine species slips towards extinction.


These funding increases are critical to recover and conserve our Nation's imperiled species and ultimately protect America’s natural heritage.

Sincerely,


Donald S. Beyer Jr.


Debbie Dingell


Raul M. Grijalva

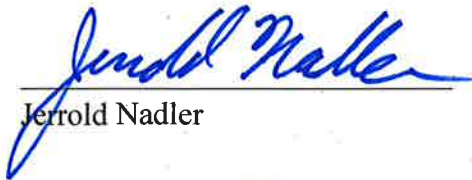

Steve Cohen



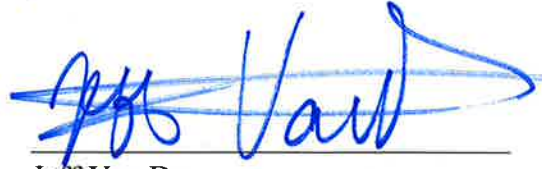
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David N. Cicilline



Jerrold Nadler



Jeff Van Drew



Bill Pascrell, Jr.



Suzanne Bonamici



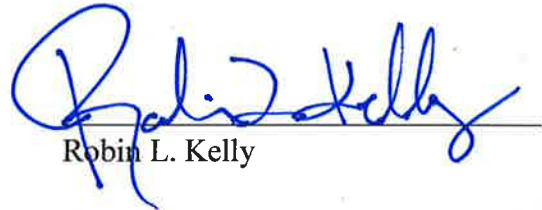
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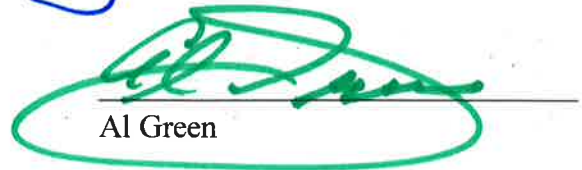
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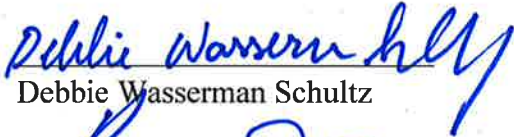
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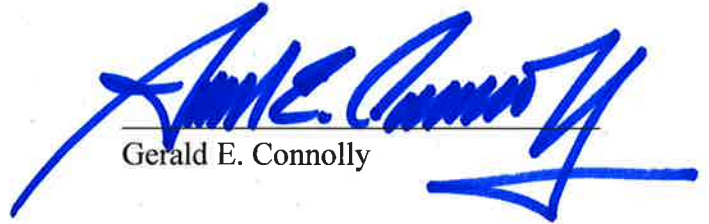
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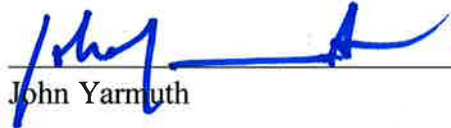
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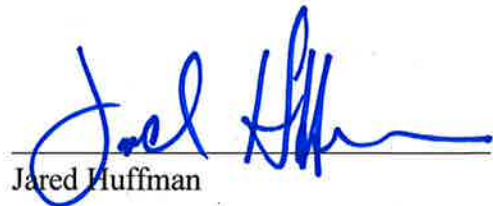
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