

July 3, 2025

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House
Washington D.C., 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Oppose the Harmful President's Budget Proposal for Endangered Species Programs in FY2026

Dear Chairwoman Collins, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro,

On behalf of our organizations and our combined millions of members and supporters, we urge you to oppose efforts to defund Endangered Species Act (ESA) programs as you craft the Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) appropriations package. Specifically, we request that you reject the egregious proposal outlined in the President's budget that effectively calls for an almost 60% cut to the national ESA program while doubling its workload. The cut would destroy the highly effective, collaborative national effort to save America's imperiled wildlife from extinction.

As you know, the ESA is America's most effective law to protect biodiversity and prevent the extinction of our most vulnerable animals, fish, and plants. At least 99% of species listed under the ESA have been saved from disappearing forever, and hundreds are on the road to recovery despite decades of insufficient funding. The ESA is also broadly popular; according to a study published earlier this month, 84% of Americans across the political spectrum support the ESA, and this level of support has held steady for over 30 years¹. The ESA represents a promise to conserve wildlife for future generations, and the American public supports the ESA because the law has thus far made good on this promise.

Unfortunately, the President's FY26 budget for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) threatens the continued success of the ESA and the existence of the imperiled species it protects. In the topline budget for the Ecological Services department, FWS's flagship

¹ <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/conl.13111>

program for implementing the ESA, the administration requests a major administrative change and funding cut that would effectively destroy the program. The budget proposes to move Protected Resources, the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) endangered species program, into FWS' endangered species program without identifying any additional funding for a massively expanded workload. Annual funding for NMFS's Protected Resources program is over \$250 million, while FWS's Ecological Services program receives just under \$300 million. On top of the new responsibilities, the budget proposes a \$37 million cut to FWS's endangered species program. As a consequence of the budget request, Ecological Services would effectively suffer a devastating cut of almost 60%. Its budget would be reduced by half while its workload would double.

Ecological Services has been chronically underfunded for decades, which has led to a backlog in species listings, missing and delayed recovery plans, and insufficient spending on recovery actions for numerous listed species. As of May 2025, approximately 17% of FWS-listed species are missing final recovery plans, and approximately 10% have no recovery guidance whatsoever². If Congress was to follow the President's FY26 budget request for endangered species, the damage to one of America's most important and effective conservation programs would be immediate, devastating, and potentially irreversible.

Iconic American species like the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, and humpback whale are among the thousands of species with us today thanks to the ESA, and we are a better nation because of it. It is no surprise that an overwhelming majority of Americans across the political spectrum support the ESA and want to see it protected. Congress must now do its part to protect the ESA and the species that depend on it for their existence. The disastrous ESA cuts proposed in the President's FY26 budget request must be rejected.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Bird Conservancy
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Animal Welfare Institute
CalWild
Carnivore Coexistence Lab
Cascade Forest Conservancy
Cascadia Wildlands
Center for Biological Diversity

² https://defenders-cci.org/app/recovery_plans/

Conservancy of Southwest Florida
Conservation Law Foundation
Creation Justice Ministries
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice Action
Endangered Habitats League
Endangered Species Coalition
Environmental Action Committee of West Marin
Environmental Center of San Diego
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Environmental Protection Information Center- EPIC
FOUR PAWS USA
Friends of Blackwater, Inc.
Friends of Merrymeeting Bay
Friends of Nevada Wilderness
Friends of the Earth
Grand Canyon Wolf Recovery Project
Great Lakes Wildlife Alliance & Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
GreenLatinos
Guardians of the Wolves
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association
Heartwood
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
Juniata Valley Audubon Society
Kettle Range Conservation Group
Klamath Forest Alliance
Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center
Law Offices of Laurie E. Dallos, PLLC
League of Conservation Voters
Los Angeles Audubon Society
Los Padres ForestWatch
Maine Audubon
National Wolfwatcher Coalition
Natural Resources Defense Council
New Hampshire Audubon
Northern Rockies Conservation Cooperative
NY4WHALES

NYC Plover Project
Oceana
Oregon Wild
Orleans Audubon Society
People & Pollinators Action Network
People and Carnivores
Poder Latinx
Project Coyote
Project Eleven Hundred
Public Interest Coalition
Rachel Carson Council
Reintegrating Wildness
Resource Renewal Institute
Save Animals Facing Extinction
Save Our Allegheny Ridges
Save Our Sky Blue Waters
Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition
Save the Manatee Club
Sawtooth Science Institute
Sea Turtle Conservancy
Sheep Mountain Alliance
Sierra Club
Silvix Resources
Sky Island Alliance
Society for the Protection of Insects
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Species Unite
Team Wolf
The 06 Legacy
The Rachel Carson Council
The Urban Wildlands Group
Trap Free Montana
Trap Free Montana Public Lands
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Walker Lake Working Group, Inc
Washington Wildlife First
West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
Western Nebraska Resources Council

Western Watersheds Project
Western Wildlife Conservancy
Whale and Dolphin Conservation, North America
Wild Watershed Broads
WildEarth Guardians
Wildlife for All
Winter Wildlands Alliance
Wolf and Wildlife Advocates
Wolf Conservation Center
Wolf Hollow
Wolves of the Rockies
Wyoming Coalition for Animal Protection
Wyoming Untrapped
Wyoming Wildlife Advocates
Yaak Valley Forest Council