

TESTIMONY OF MARY BETH BEETHAM
DIRECTOR OF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS, DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES
MARCH 21, 2012

Mister Chairman, Ranking Member and Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Mary Beth Beetham, Director of Legislative Affairs for Defenders of Wildlife. Founded in 1947, Defenders has more than one million members and supporters and is dedicated to the conservation of wild animals and plants in their natural communities.

Wildlife and its habitat are valuable national assets. Even in the face of dire fiscal realities investments in the protection of wildlife and habitat are a wise choice for our nation. Wildlife related recreation is a \$122 billion a year industry.^a Moreover, protecting wildlife and its habitat also supports healthy natural systems that provide clean air and water, food, medicines and other products. The value of benefits provided by natural habitats in the U.S. is estimated at more than \$2 trillion per year.^b Defenders was deeply disappointed in the large cuts for wildlife programs initially included in H.R. 2584, the FY 2012 House Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, and we appreciated the more balanced levels provided in H.R. 2055, the Consolidated Appropriations bill. Defenders opposes further cuts to crucial programs that conserve wildlife and habitat, and we support the modest but crucial increases in the President's request.

Fish and Wildlife Service

We urge the subcommittee to do as much as possible to protect the accounts of the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), our nation's premier wildlife conservation agency. We strongly support the following modest increases in the President's request and oppose one disappointing decrease:

Renewable Energy – A crucial \$4 million increase associated with renewable energy development that includes \$1.5 million for Endangered Species Program Consultation, \$750,000 for Conservation Planning Assistance, \$750,000 for Migratory Bird Management and \$1 million for the Office of Law Enforcement. This increase will help to ensure siting of renewable energy projects in a way that prevents harm to species such as golden eagles, seabirds, bats and desert tortoise.

Cooperative Recovery – A praiseworthy new initiative to implement recovery actions for species listed under the Endangered Species Act on National Wildlife Refuges and surrounding lands. The \$5.4 million increase includes \$2.5 million for Refuges, \$883,000 for Partners for Fish and Wildlife, \$800,000 for Fisheries Population Assessment, \$770,000 for Adaptive Science and \$400,000 in the Endangered Species program. This initiative will support more efficient efforts across landscapes to recover threatened and endangered species.

Endangered Species –

- A \$1 million increase to support consultations on pesticides that may impact listed species including the development of protocols to determine safe levels of exposure. This increase is vital to facilitate likely needed consultations on several hundred pesticides out of at least 739 pesticide cases identified by the Environmental Protection Agency that are scheduled for review by 2022.

- A \$1.6 million increase for listing species. This funding will support progress in listing more than 250 candidate species, many of which have awaited protection for years.
- A \$12.3 million increase for the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund to provide assistance to states to protect threatened and endangered species.
- A \$998,000 reduction for the Wolf Livestock Loss Demonstration Program that assists livestock owners co-existing with wolves. In light of the recent delisting of wolves in the Northern Rockies and Western Great Lakes and potential expansion of wolves into California, it is important to continue this valuable program which is intended to both compensate ranchers for livestock losses due to wolves and to implement proactive, nonlethal methods to prevent these losses. We urge restoration of this funding.

National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) – A net increase of \$9.1 million for NWRS Operations and Maintenance in the request includes not only the \$2.5 million for Cooperative Recovery but also \$3 million for baseline inventory and monitoring of refuge resources, \$3.6 million for Challenge Cost Share projects with partners and volunteer groups, \$1 million for law enforcement, and \$1.4 million for priority operations. Even with the increase, the request is still \$8 million below the FY 2010 level, even though refuges need an annual increase of a least \$8 million just to keep fuel in trucks and pay for rising utilities and other costs. Moreover, in 2011, devastating disasters including tornadoes, wildfires, hurricanes, an earthquake, and a tsunami caused more than \$190 million in damages to the Refuge System, an amount that totals nearly 40 percent of its budget that will put the System at further risk without supplemental disaster funding.

Cooperative Landscape Conservation and Adaptive Science – Threats to the conservation of our natural resources are increasingly large-scale and complex. Combined with decreasing financial resources, there is a need to work more effectively and efficiently across jurisdictional boundaries. This comprehensive initiative is helping the natural resource management agencies improve landscape-level coordination of conservation efforts and provide science and technical capacity to tackle today's complex environmental problems. We oppose any cuts to this activity.

Environmental Contaminants – A \$1.3 million increase in this program that has been flat since 2001 to help expedite and complete more restoration activities for Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration cases.

International Affairs – An \$83,000 increase which is the FY 2012 level with fixed costs to sustain vital efforts to provide crucial capacity building, education, and training for priority species and habitats of global concern and for the growing permitting, research and monitoring workload for species subject to trade, including native U.S. species.

Office of Law Enforcement and Migratory Bird Management – In addition to the increases requested for these two programs related to renewable energy development, Defenders wishes to underscore their vital importance for wildlife conservation in our nation. In FY 2011, the Office of Law Enforcement's 143 inspectors processed approximately 167,000 declared shipments of wildlife and wildlife products worth more than \$2.7 billion and the 219 special agents investigated nearly 13,000 cases, from breaking up smuggling rings to working with states to protect U.S. game species from poaching. The Migratory Bird Management program is working to reverse precipitous declines in U.S. bird populations including native Hawaiian birds, ocean birds, coastal shorebirds, arid lands birds, and grassland birds.

Other key grant programs – In addition to the increase for the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund referenced above, we support the President’s request for the Multinational Species Conservation Fund, \$9.98 million, for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Fund, \$3.8 million, and for the State and Tribal Wildlife grants, \$61.3 million.

Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (FS) are crucial to the conservation of wildlife and habitat in the United States, yet their resources are not adequate to meet significant challenges. A top priority for Defenders is ensuring that renewable energy development on these lands proceeds in a balanced way that maintains the ecological integrity of our public lands and waters, conserves wildlife habitat and populations, and contributes to agency efforts to successfully recover our most imperiled wildlife. We urge strong oversight to ensure that any energy development is done in an environmentally sensitive fashion. Given their large land ownerships it is imperative that both participate fully in landscape level conservation and management efforts.

FS Integrated Resource Restoration (IRR)/Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management – The budget has again proposed merging a number of accounts, including Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management, into an integrated budget. However, Defenders supports continuing IRR as a 3-year pilot as directed by Congress in the final FY 2012 Omnibus appropriations bill so that the agency can demonstrate its ability to adequately protect habitat for fish and wildlife under the consolidated program. We urge no less than the FY 2012 level of \$140 million for Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management. Even at that level, the program would be nearly \$25 million below the FY 2001 inflation adjusted level.

FS Land Management Planning/Inventory and Monitoring – The budget has again proposed merging these two programs into a single line item. As with IRR, we are concerned about such a consolidation unless the agency can demonstrate its ability to carry out its responsibilities under these two programs, especially given that in the coming year, the Forest Service will finalize and begin to implement a new forest planning rule that requires sufficient funding for critical inventory and monitoring activities, including the assessments that will be fundamental to the implementation of the new planning rule. We urge no less than the FY 2012 level for each of these two programs: \$39.9 million for Land Management Planning and \$161.7 million for Inventory and Monitoring.

FS Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) – We support the administration’s request of \$40 million for the CFLRP, a unique program that was established specifically to create job stability, achieve reliable wood supply, restore forest health, and reduce the costs of fire suppression in overgrown forests.

FS Forest and Rangeland Research (FS R&D) – Defenders supports the administration’s request of \$292.8 million for FS R&D. Within FS R&D our highest priority is the Wildlife and Fish Research and Development program that supports science-based fish and wildlife management on National Forest System lands and beyond such as grappling with the question of how changes in snow pack will impact wolverines and other climate vulnerability assessments.

BLM Sage Grouse – A critically needed increase of \$15 million in the BLM Wildlife Management program for sage grouse conservation in 10 western states includes \$10 million for amendments to

Resource Management Plans, \$2.5 million for on-the-ground habitat restoration, and \$2.5 million for inventory, monitoring and mapping. Almost half of all sagebrush habitat has been destroyed and this loss has been compounded by fragmentation of the remaining sage-grouse habitat. Over the 42 years between 1965 and 2007, population decline was estimated at 3.1 percent each year. This modest funding increase is desperately needed to support a broad effort to stop this iconic bird's decline and avert the need for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

BLM Renewable Energy – An increase of \$7.1 million for renewable energy includes support for regional land use planning studies and environmental reviews of potential wind energy zones. These studies will help to identify future renewable energy zones that will avoid areas with potential natural resource conflicts, including wildlife conflicts (especially sage grouse, golden eagles, desert tortoise or other sensitive species).

BLM Resource Management Planning – Another crucial increase is \$4.7 million for Resource Management Planning in this program that has been cut by nearly 25 percent since FY 2010 and needed to help address 47 plans under revision and another 45 that need revision.

BLM Challenge Cost Share – Defenders supports a total of \$7.5 million, same as the FY 2012 level for proactive wildlife and habitat conservation projects on the ground with partners.

U.S. Geological Survey

The U.S. Geological Survey provides the basic science necessary for conservation of fish, wildlife and habitat. We urge support for the following increases in the request:

Ecosystems – A \$16.6 million increase that includes \$1 million for research on White Nose Syndrome that is devastating bat populations. The base program also supports crucial scientific efforts needed to avoid harm to birds, bats, desert wildlife, and other species that could be impacted by the development of wind and solar energy.

Climate and Land Use Change – A \$500,000 increase for the National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center/DOI Climate Science Centers and a \$6.5 million increase in Science Support for DOI Bureaus to address scientific needs in planning for adaptation to climate change.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

Finally, each day, 6,000 acres of open space in the U.S., including wildlife habitat, is lost to fragmentation and destruction. Once these lands are lost, they can never be recovered. Defenders supports the requested increase of \$104.7 million for LWCF. A portion of the LWCF total, about \$108 million, is for an Interior-Forest Service collaborative interagency land acquisition program to protect strategic landscape-scale projects that at the same time meet core agency acquisition priorities. This innovative initiative will help to bring larger conservation benefits and build resilience across landscapes with scarce dollars. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

^a The Economics Associated with Outdoor Recreation, Natural Resources Conservation and Historic Preservation in the United States www.nfwf.org/Content/ContentFolders/NationalFishandWildlifeFoundation/HomePage/ConservationSpotlights/TheEconomicValueofOutdoorRecreation.pdf

^b Ibid