

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

Mister Chairman, Ranking Member and Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for the record. Founded in 1947, Defenders has more than 1.2 million members and supporters and is dedicated to the conservation of wild animals and plants in their natural communities.

North America is fortunate to have some of the most abundant and diverse wildlife on Earth, more than 200,000 known species in the U.S. alone. This unique and irreplaceable heritage is treasured by all Americans both for its aesthetic value as well as for the very tangible benefits it provides as a resource. For example, a third of our food is pollinated by birds, bats, and insects; wildlife-associated recreation generated \$145 billion in economic benefits in 2011;<sup>1</sup> bats provide at least \$3.7 billion in pest control services to the agricultural industry annually;<sup>2</sup> and the value of ecosystem services from habitat in the contiguous 48 states is estimated at \$1.6 trillion annually.<sup>3</sup> Budget cuts since FY 2010 to Federal programs that conserve wildlife and habitat have severely undermined sound management. Inadequate funding will likely lead to irreparable harm to vulnerable species and habitat. Our nation's wildlife is a treasure and well worth the investment to properly care for it.

Thirteen riders that would have undermined protections for imperiled species and the Endangered Species Act (ESA) were either included in, or awaiting a floor vote on, the FY 2016 House Interior appropriations bill. Defenders strongly opposed these riders and while all should rightfully have been removed from the final omnibus, we appreciate that all but one were stricken.

### **Fish and Wildlife Service**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is our nation's premier wildlife conservation agency. FWS needs adequate funding if it is to recover threatened and endangered species and protect migratory birds and fish, species of global conservation concern and other trust species, and stop or prevent wildlife crimes.

Cooperative Recovery – Defenders supports the requested increases of \$1.5 million in Recovery under Ecological Services, \$1 million in National Wildlife Refuge System Operations and Maintenance, and \$300,000 under Migratory Bird Management. This initiative is supporting more efficient and strategic efforts across landscapes to recover threatened and endangered species on National Wildlife Refuges and surrounding lands and has already supported delisting of two species.

Renewable Energy – Defenders supports the President's request of \$11.1 million to fund renewable energy related Planning and Consultation and Service Science programs. The Service supports approvals of renewable energy projects while ensuring they comply with relevant environmental laws, and conducts research to assess potential impacts of energy development on sensitive lands and wildlife in the West and to identify mitigation strategies.

Ecological Services – Defenders supports the requested increase of \$18.3 million for Ecological Services. The requested increase is critically needed for high priority efforts:

- **Listing:** The FWS has made substantial progress in listing decisions in recent years and the requested \$2.3 million increase will help to continue that progress for the 60 current candidate species and to meet its other listing responsibilities.
- **Recovery:** Defenders strongly supported and appreciates the Subcommittee's decision to maintain recovery for threatened and endangered species as a separate program element in responding to the FWS request to restructure the Ecological Services budget. Recovery is the goal of the ESA and transparency in tracking amounts directed to this crucial end is of the highest priority. In general, the average inflation-adjusted dollars per species for recovery has decreased every year since FY 2010; moreover, according to the most recent FWS Recovery Report to Congress, hundreds of listed species have no recovery plans or extremely outdated ones. We therefore strongly support, at the very least, the requested \$7.2 million increase for Recovery.
- **Planning and Consultation:** The \$6.6 million increase will support crucial Section 7 consultations under the ESA so that projects can move forward while minimizing harm to listed species. Adequate resources to increase the scientific and technical capacity of FWS to conduct consultations on pesticide registrations is particularly important.
- **Conservation and Restoration:** The \$2.2 million increase will support continued conservation for candidate species as they await listing and also includes an increase to support additional staff to provide technical assistance and other support to landowners in implementing the unprecedented sagebrush steppe conservation plans.
- Defenders opposes the elimination of funding for the Wolf Livestock Loss Demonstration Program that assists livestock owners co-existing with wolves, and we urge its restoration.

National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) – Our National Wildlife Refuge System is the largest land and water system in the world dedicated to wildlife conservation. Refuges provide enormous benefits to the American people, generating \$2.4 billion each year for local economies. Defenders supports the \$25.2 million increase in the request, which includes funding for inventory and monitoring, rebuilding lost capacity to manage wildlife and habitat, and pollinator restoration. We also support legislative language proposed by the administration that would provide authority to recover compensation from responsible parties who injure or destroy Refuge System or Hatchery System resources similar to that provided to the National Park Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and allows compensation to be applied directly to the cost of restoration without further appropriation by Congress.

Science Support – The requested \$3.6 million increase will help to answer pressing questions about climate adaptation and other landscape level ecological changes as well as about conservation of monarch butterflies and other declining species, White-Nose Syndrome that is devastating bat populations, and other agency management challenges.

Migratory Bird Management – U.S. bird populations have experienced precipitous declines in recent years. Defenders supports the \$2.5 million requested increase which includes funding for needed upgrades in aviation management and survey and monitoring programs, and for building resilience of bird species and their habitats through the Joint Venture partnerships.

Office of Law Enforcement – The request is essentially flat despite the fact that only one in five current ports of entry are staffed with wildlife inspectors. Funding for inspectors is covered by user fees which have not been increased since 2008. Defenders is recommending the inclusion of report

language directing the FWS to complete an analysis of possible additional sources of funding required to increase the capacity of the port inspection program.

International Affairs – Defenders supports the requested \$1.1 million increase which includes funding to advance the President’s National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking.

Other key grant programs – Defenders supports the requested funding amounts for the Multinational Species Conservation Fund, the Neotropical Migratory Bird Fund, the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund and State and Tribal Wildlife Grants.

## **Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management**

The U.S. Forest Service (FS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are essential to the conservation of wildlife and habitat in the U.S., yet funding is inadequate to address significant challenges to sustain these resources. A top priority for Defenders is ensuring that uses proceed in a sustainable 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 and in low conflict areas. Given their large land ownerships, it is imperative that both agencies participate fully in landscape level conservation and management efforts. We are encouraged by BLM’s innovative efforts in the Western Solar Program and consider it an example of how land management agencies can improve landscape level decision-making for energy development.

FS Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management/Integrated Resource Restoration (IRR) – Defenders supports the decision to abandon the request for an IRR line item given our concern that wildlife program activities could be marginalized under IRR and that hard timber targets could detract from integrated restoration. The request for Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management is flat-funded, a 9.6 percent reduction in real dollars from FY 2010. We support funding the program at least at the FY 2010 level of \$143 million to begin to address the loss of biologists at the forest level that has occurred in recent years.

FS Land Management Planning/Inventory and Monitoring – The request again proposes merging these two programs into a single line item. Defenders is concerned about consolidating these functions unless and until the agency can demonstrate its ability to meet its responsibilities under each program independently. We urge continued funding as separate programs at no less than the FY 2016 level.

FS Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program – We support the request for continued funding at the current level for this cost-effective program established to stabilize employment, offer a reliable wood supply, restore forest and watershed health, improve wildlife habitat, and reduce both the costs of fire suppression in overgrown forests and the risk of uncharacteristic wildfires.

FS Forest and Rangeland Research (FS R&D) – We urge a \$4 million increase for FS R&D, a return to the FY 2015 level which included \$27.1 million for Wildlife and Fish R&D. Adequate funding for this program is crucial in providing relevant tools and information to support sustainable management of National Forest System lands as well as non-federal forest lands. Generally, we are concerned that the Forest Service may lack adequate applied scientific capacity both in R&D and the

National Forest System to implement critical planning and management actions, including the 2012 Planning Rule.

BLM Wildlife and Fisheries Management – Defenders supports the \$19.4 million increase requested to support implementation of the sixty-eight resource management plans that were amended to address conservation of the sage-grouse. FWS determined not to list the grouse under the ESA largely due to this effort and associated measures. Success in conserving sage-grouse will depend upon adequate funding for implementing the plans.

BLM Threatened and Endangered Species Management – According to agency reports, the BLM has funding to implement only about 10 percent of the work it is required to do in recovery plans for ESA listed species on BLM lands, but the administration's request includes just a \$131,000 increase for FY 2016. Defenders supports an increase of \$1 million over the request which simply restores the budget to the FY 2010 level and will better help move listed species to recovery.

BLM Renewable Energy – Full funding of the \$29.2 million request, essentially flat with FY2016, will help BLM continue to proceed with renewable energy development on public lands while avoiding areas with natural resource conflicts, including conflicts with sensitive wildlife species.

BLM Resource Management Planning, Assessment and Monitoring – The \$17.1 million increase in the request will support new high priority planning efforts, data collection and monitoring crucial to the sage-grouse conservation strategy and other key initiatives, and continued development of a new geospatial initiative to better monitor ecological conditions and trends on the landscape.

## **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:

National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center/Climate Science Centers – A \$4.5 million increase in the request will support scientific needs in planning for climate change adaptation and building resiliency of ecosystems.

Ecosystems – A \$13.7 million increase in the request will help to support development of crucial scientific information for sound management of our nation's biological resources including research into declines of native pollinators, threats to sensitive landscapes, such as the Arctic and sagebrush steppe, and impacts of drought and climate change across the country.

## **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)**

Defenders supports the proposal in the request for full and permanent funding of LWCF that will help to save some of the 6,000 acres of open space, including wildlife habitat, that are lost each day in the U.S.<sup>4</sup> Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

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<sup>1</sup> The 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation, USFWS, 12/12

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/332/6025/41.summary?sid=853248fd-6760-4341-93d0-2aaccab9ea450>

<sup>3</sup> The Economics Associated with Outdoor Recreation, Natural Resources Conservation and Historic Preservation in the United States, Southwick Associates, 9/29/11

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.fs.fed.us/openspace/coop\\_across\\_boudaries.html](http://www.fs.fed.us/openspace/coop_across_boudaries.html)