



## A CALL TO ACTION FOR THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION

**D**efenders of Wildlife believes that we all share a common interest in the protection of America's spectacular wildlife and our great systems of public lands that offer endless opportunities for hiking, fishing, wildlife watching and other pursuits Americans value. Working together on the conservation agenda outlined below, we can prevent species extinction, safeguard and restore our wildlife and public lands and uphold our conservation legacy for future generations.

### 1. Protect and restore our endangered and threatened plants and wildlife.

- Strongly oppose all proposed legislation that would undermine the integrity and effectiveness of the ESA.
- Make imperiled species recovery, not just staving off extinction, the focus of endangered species permitting and mitigation.
- Use emerging technologies, such as satellite imaging and data analytics, to overcome financial and staffing barriers to monitoring the status of listed species and their habitats and verifying compliance with ESA permits.
- Promote transparency by posting online key public documents relating to the issuance of ESA permits, biological opinions and incidental take authorizations.
- Ensure that the impacts of climate change are fully addressed in key ESA decisions.
- Ensure that federal agency decisions do not harm critical habitat in ways that undermine species recovery.

### 2. Defend and responsibly manage our federal public lands.

- Maintain the integrity of the laws, policies and agencies that protect wildlife and its habitat within the National Wildlife Refuge System, the National Forest System, the National Park System and the National System of Public Lands administered by BLM, and maintain the right of all Americans to benefit from these public lands and resources by vigorously opposing efforts to dispose of the federal estate.
- Enhance wildlife habitat connectivity by establishing a comprehensive landscape-scale program managed by the responsible federal agencies—in collaboration with states, tribes and private landowners—to identify and protect wildlife corridors and to coordinate wildlife management across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Manage and defend national wildlife refuges from damaging activities and unauthorized incursions, while continuing the



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strategic growth of the National Wildlife Refuge System to conserve vital wildlife resources nationwide.

- Implement comprehensive landscape-scale management and mitigation strategies to conserve imperiled species and their habitats on public lands.
- Emphasize the importance of conservation and climate resiliency in public lands planning and management.
- Identify and protect habitat strongholds on public lands to conserve and recover threatened and endangered species.

### 3. Invest in responsible renewable energy development that minimizes impacts to wildlife.

- Adopt and implement a smart-from-the-start approach to the siting of renewable energy projects on public lands that directs development to low-conflict areas and already degraded lands.
- Conduct a five-year review of BLM's Solar Energy Program beginning in 2017 to reassess predicted future demand for solar development on public lands and the need for new solar energy zone designations.
- Fund important research and development efforts to better understand and address the impacts of renewable energy development on wildlife.
- Facilitate responsible transmission planning and development that embrace the smart-from-the-start approach to renewable energy.
- Implement efficient and effective wildlife permitting programs that promote wildlife conservation and facilitate responsible renewable energy development.
- Apply smart-from-the-start concepts and applicable policies and initiatives to planning for federal infrastructure projects.

#### 4. Protect wildlife from the impacts of climate change.

- Maintain global leadership in emissions reductions by fully supporting the Paris Climate Agreement, moving forward with targeted emissions reductions, and committing to policies that will enable our country to set a more ambitious emissions target by 2020.
- Rapidly phase down the leasing of federal fossil fuels and account for and minimize greenhouse-gas emissions from all sources on federal lands and waters.
- Advance national climate adaptation policy by implementing the National Fish, Wildlife and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy and other federal adaptation strategies and ensuring that adequate funding is available to support these efforts.
- Ensure that federal agencies incorporate climate adaptation into decision-making, including on endangered species conservation and natural resources management, by implementing the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA guidance.
- Increase the scientific capacity of federal agencies to understand and plan for the impacts of climate change by fully supporting federal cooperative and interagency climate science programs and initiatives.

#### 5. Encourage initiatives by private landowners, states and tribes to conserve imperiled species and habitats.

- Secure appropriations to fully fund voluntary U.S. Department of Agriculture wildlife and forestry conservation programs on private lands authorized through the Farm Bill and further expand those programs to benefit imperiled species and carnivores.
- Incentivize conservation of at-risk species by offering regulatory predictability and assurances for credible and transparent science-based initiatives by state, tribal and private landowners.
- Promote strategic private lands conservation programs by linking incentive funding through the Farm Bill and other programs to the goals and objectives of state, regional and national conservation initiatives, including the State Wildlife Action Plans.
- Support increased funding for the State Wildlife Grant Program and programs under the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund.
- To the maximum extent possible and consistent with federal laws, support the coordination of federal land management activities with parallel conservation initiatives on state, tribal and private lands with the goal of creating a national network of conservation lands.

#### 6. Strengthen our role as an international leader in imperiled species conservation.

- Accelerate steps to reduce the demand for illegal wildlife and wildlife products and end wildlife trafficking in the United States.
- Promote and adopt measures in multilateral environmental and trade agreements to reduce and end wildlife trafficking throughout the world.
- Maintain America's historical role as the dominant voice for conservation under CITES.

#### 7. Help our youth and diverse and changing communities connect with our federal public lands and wildlife conservation heritage.

- Step up efforts to engage young Americans and diverse communities in nature and encourage them to visit, enjoy and build memories and traditions on our public lands.
- Diversify the agency staffs that manage and protect our wildlife, public lands and environment.
- Defend government transparency and public access laws.

#### 8. Maintain our commitment to conservation based on sound science.

- Develop information on species and habitat condition to support natural resource assessment and planning at appropriate scales.
- Require federal departments and agencies to cooperatively develop and apply shared scientific information to species conservation and resource planning and management, especially on lands and waters administered under shared or multiple jurisdictions.
- Encourage the use of independent science reviews to support the quality and credibility of federal conservation and management decisions.
- Employ technological innovations to improve scientific data collection, analysis and communication.
- More clearly distinguish policy decisions from science decisions.

For more details, see Defenders' transition report, *A Conservation Agenda for the Next Administration* available at <http://www.defenders.org/publications/wildlife-conservation-agenda-2017-2021-DOW.pdf>

