

RIDERS HARMFUL TO WILDLIFE AND HABITAT IN FY 2014 HOUSE INTERIOR APPROPRIATIONS BILL

The House bill includes about three dozen damaging anti-environmental riders. Below are some that would seriously harm wildlife and habitat. Please oppose the inclusion of any of these provisions in the final FY 2014 appropriations bill.

Undermining Endangered Species Protections

Delaying a Listing Decision for the Imperiled Sage-Grouse – Sec. 120 would defer a scheduled listing decision for greater sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act by at least one year. The rider would not only delay a long-overdue listing decision for sage-grouse, but it could stall current conservation efforts with negative consequences for the grouse, public lands management, landowners, and other stakeholders. The rider also would set a negative precedent of Congress micro-managing individual, science-based administrative listing decisions prescribed by the ESA and once in the bill could be extended indefinitely. Finally, the Committee report needlessly questions the veracity of science and conservation prescriptions for the sage grouse, and directs BLM to support states in conservation planning which the agency is already doing.

Undermining Sound Science in Listing Decisions – Language in Title I would impose harmful and burdensome hurdles on the ability of the FWS to consider the best available science when making critical decisions relating to endangered species.

Avoiding Protections for Candidate Species – The Committee report directs the FWS to reevaluate its work plans pursuant to court-approved settlement agreements with conservation organizations that obligate the Service to make listing determinations for each of the candidate species under the ESA by 2017.

Undermining Protections for Endangered Mexican Wolves – The Committee report urges reconsideration of a proposal to designate the Mexican wolf an endangered subspecies of gray wolf as part of broader FWS proposal to delist gray wolves in the rest of the lower 48 states.

Overriding Protections for Our Public Lands

Preventing Establishment of New Wildlife Refuges – Language in Title I would prohibit the FWS from using any funds to administratively establish or expand the boundaries of any National Wildlife Refuge even though the agency must go through a rigorous public process to do so. This would effectively stop the growth of the Refuge System.

Weakening National Forest Planning and Public Participation – One provision (Sec. 407) would exempt the FS from the requirement to revise forest management plans solely because they are more than 15 years out-of-date continuing to indefinitely stall progress toward a forest restoration paradigm that supports forest and ecosystem health for our water and wildlife. The provision also prohibits the FS from updating guidelines for evaluating forest lands that may qualify for wilderness designation, delaying needed improvements in the process. Another provision (Sec. 432) would remove even this reduced public participation currently allowed for FS projects approved through Categorical Exclusions under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Undercutting Sound Management of Rangelands – Several provisions would promote unsustainable grazing on public lands. One of these (Sec. 114) would require exhaustion of all administrative remedies before a citizen suit could be filed to challenge decisions concerning grazing on BLM lands. A second (Sec. 119) would exempt from NEPA compliance grazing permits that allow ranchers to trail livestock across public lands. A third (Sec. 411) would exempt NEPA compliance for grazing permits that are overdue for environmental review. A fourth (Sec. 434) would amend the Federal Land Policy and Management Act to double the maximum authorized term of federal grazing permits from 10 to 20 years. Finally, a fifth (Sec. 453) would require that vacant grazing allotments be made available to permittees under certain conditions.

Tying the Hands of Federal Land Managers – This provision (Sec. 438) arbitrarily limits the ability of federal land managers to close lands to hunting, fishing, or recreational shooting for all future years even though such closures may be warranted to conserve fish and wildlife populations or to protect public safety.

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