February 26, 2019

The Honorable Nita Lowey Chairwoman Committee on Appropriations U.S. House of Representatives The Capitol H-305 Washington, DC 20515 The Honorable Kay Granger Ranking Member Committee on Appropriations U.S. House of Representatives The Capitol H-305 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Granger,

Last month, the United States lost another species forever: a species of tree snail from Oahu whose last individual, George, died after 14 years in captivity. With the shoestring budget that they had, conservationists did try to find a mate for George, but were unsuccessful. Like other losses in the ongoing biodiversity crisis, this extinction is a tragic one for the United States, a nation with the strongest wildlife conservation law in the world, the Endangered Species Act. Despite the protections the Act provides, decades of underfunding have held it back from realizing its full potential. Too many species sit in limbo at the edge of extinction — or as with George's passing — are being lost altogether, when we *can* ensure they remain part of our rich natural heritage.

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, we request that you provide the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service the critical funding the agency desperately requires for endangered species conservation and recovery. As we outline below, the data show that the Service requires a budget of \$486 million dollars across five programs to begin to make up for lost ground and put species on the path to recovery, starting in fiscal year 2020. Critically, this includes ensuring every listed species receives a minimum of \$50,000 per year for recovery. This funding package will allow the Endangered Species Act to be implemented in the way Congress intended when it dedicated our country to protecting the species and the habitats that need it most.

Listing

Listing a species — placing it under the Endangered Species Act's care — is the single best means of averting extinction. The Endangered Species Act is an incredible success for protecting species; 99% of listed species are still with us today. In contrast, nearly 50 unlisted species have been declared extinct while waiting for protections because of funding shortfalls. The FWS seven-year listing workplan² details how the agency will prioritize the evaluation of over 350 species for listing and is supported by many stakeholders. At current funding rates, it will take the Fish and Wildlife Service at least 10 years to process all of the remaining species that the agency has identified as potentially needing protection under the Act. <u>Based on the time and cost required to evaluate species for listing and status changes (such as delisting)</u>, we recommend increasing the listing program budget to \$51 million in 2020 and thereafter. This

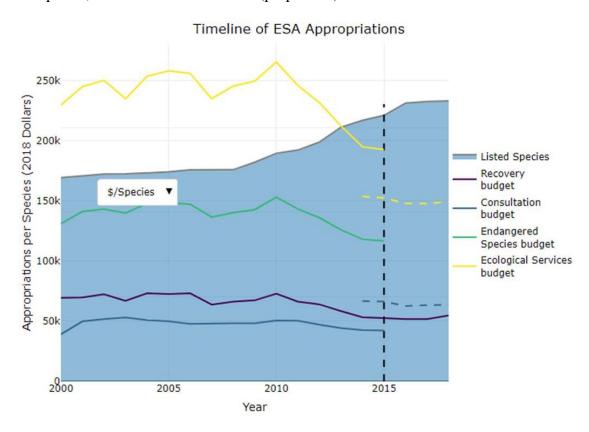
¹ See National Geographic, Lonely George the tree snail dies, and a species goes extinct (Jan. 8, 2019) available at: https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2019/01/george-the-lonely-snail-dies-in-hawaii-extinction/.

² U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Listing Workplan, 7-year workplan (Sept . 2016) *available at*: https://www.fws.gov/endangered/esa-library/pdf/Listing%207-Year%20Workplan%20Sept%202016.pdf.

recommendation is three times current funding and would allow the Service to process the entire listing backlog in less than four years. To ensure species receive the detailed scientific analyses they need to determine if they need to be protected by the Act, we urge Congress to fully fund the listing program.

Recovery

The Service's recovery program includes planning for recovery, implementing recovery actions, and tracking recovery progress. Because funding drives recovery progress, it is essential to provide sufficient resources for the recovery program: it is how the Service can ensure threats are minimized or removed so species are conserved. Unfortunately, recovery appropriations have been essentially flat over the past two decades, and when controlling for inflation and the number of listed species, have declined since 2010 (purple line):



Endangered Species Act funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has remained flat and even declined since 2010. Note that the funding for two components shifts after 2014 because of budgeting changes, but does not change the overall pattern. Data from FWS, shown in inflation-adjusted 2018 dollars.

More concerningly, according to the reports provided by the Fish and Wildlife Service that are required by Congress each year, hundreds of endangered species receive less than \$1000 a year for their recovery, with many receiving no funding from the Service at all.³ We strongly

³ See U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Federal and State Endangered and Threatened Species Expenditures (Fiscal

recommend that Congress provide a minimum of \$50,000 per year per species for recovery to make sure that no species slips through the cracks.

Accordingly, Congress can significantly reverse the slide of more animal and plants towards extinction, and put every species on a path to recovery by providing the Service with \$197 million for the recovery program in 2020, which is more than double the current—and insufficient—funding levels. This includes \$43.8 million for recovery planning, which is essential to guiding species back from the brink; \$137.8 million for recovery actions, which range from reducing poaching to invasive species control; and \$10.5 million for conservation status reviews that need to occur every five years.

Planning and Consultation

The Planning and Consultation program includes key processes that ensure species receive fundamental protections while allowing flexibility for infrastructure and other forms of development. The Service evaluates ("consults on") the effects of over 10,000 federal actions on listed species per year to help protect species and their habitat—including conducting highly technical analyses for issues such as pesticide effects—as part this program. Over the past two decades, the Service has worked with states, counties, and private landowners across the country to create over 1,000 Habitat Conservation Plans for to help conserve species. But this program is stressed: appropriations have been flat or declining since the early 2000's; nearly 1/5 of formal project evaluations run over deadlines; and the funding needed for conservation planning has dropped in past years, reducing the number of plans that have been completed.⁵

There are opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these processes, such as through the widespread adoption of technologies such as the Services' Integrated Planning and Conservation (IPaC) system and the addition of dedicated personnel to monitor compliance with the Act. For planning and consultation to be maximally effective and efficient, Congress needs to provide the Service with \$130.05 million in FY 2020 and beyond. This includes \$120 million for standard consultations; an additional \$750 thousand for pesticide consultations and \$450 thousand for IPaC development; \$7.5 million for voluntary conservation; and \$1.35 million for basic compliance monitoring that does not currently exist.

Conservation and Restoration

The Candidate Conservation component of the Conservation and Restoration program provides a key mechanism to help conserve species by improving their habitat and removing threats before they need to be listed. Early conservation action means species are more secure than waiting until species are on the brink of extinction, and it is much more cost-effective. The Service

Year 2016), available at: https://www.fws.gov/endangered/esa-library/pdf/2016_Expenditures_Report.pdf.

Evans et al., Species recovery in the United States: increasing the effectiveness of the Endangered Species Act, Ecological Applications (Jan. 2016), available at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289249207_Species_recovery_in_the_United_States_increasing_the_effectiveness_of_the_Endangered_Species_Act.

⁵ See U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Conservation Plans by type and U.S. FWS Region, available at: https://cci-dev.org/working papers/agreements overview.html.

currently has 23 candidate species designated,⁶ and assuming the cost of conserving candidate species is half of the cost and time of recovery, the Service needs \$8M for FY 2020-2024 to efficiently keep species back from the brink of needing the protections of the Act.

Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation

Congress recognized the need for the federal government to cooperate with the states and others to conserve species, and the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF) serves as an essential source of funding for states and conservation on private lands. Critically, at least half of all listed species spend a portion of their life cycle on private lands, and we need to provide the resources to facilitate recovery by everyone. The states cannot do this alone, whether because they lack the legal tools or the funding and other necessary commitments. To reverse the gap from previous funding shortfalls and match the current need for state and private lands conservation, the Service requires CESCF funding of at least \$100,000,000 for FY 2020 and beyond.

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The passing of George and the larger risk of mass extinction is a wake-up call to society and Congress that more must be done. Conserving our planet's natural heritage is a monumental challenge, but we can do more, and we know what to do for our most imperiled wildlife and plants. That means providing sufficient funding for the listing program to ensure species are recognized as imperiled; for planning and consultation to ensure basic protections are applied to species; for recovery planning and recovery work; and for collaborative work across public and private lands to ensure we work together to protect our natural heritage. The sooner we act, the more species can be saved from extinction, and the faster species can be recovered and delisted. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

All-Creatures.org
American Bird Conservancy
American Indian Mothers Inc.
Animal Welfare Institute
Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc.
Animas Valley Institute
Association of Zoos and Aquariums
Basin and Range Watch

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⁶ See U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Candidate Species Report, available at: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/report/table/candidate-species.html.

⁷ Stein et al., *Precious heritage: The Status of Biodiversity in the United States*, Oxford University Press (2000).

⁸ See Camacho et al., Assessing State Laws and Resources for Endangered Species Protection (Oct. 2017), available at: https://www.law.uci.edu/centers/cleanr/news-pdfs/cleanr-esa-report-final.pdf; see also Kurose et al., Unready and Ill-Equipped: How State Laws and State Funding are Inadequate to Recover America's Endangered Species (Feb. 2019), available at: https://centeractionfund.org/wp-content/uploads/CBD-AF-Unready-and-Ill-equipped-State-ESA-Laws.pdf

Battle Creek Alliance & Defiance Canyon Raptor Rescue

Bauman Foundation

Bay Area - System Change not Climate Change (BA-SCnCC)

Bedford Audubon Society

Bedford Co. Bird and Nature Club

Bird City Wisconsin

Bird Conservation Network

Black Canyon Audubon Society

Black Warrior Riverkeeper

Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project

Born Free USA

Boulder County Audubon Society

Boulder Rights of Nature

Bozeman Birders

Buffalo Field Campaign

Butterfly Farms.org

Cahaba River Society

California Native Plant Society

California Wolf Center

Californians for Western Wilderness

Cascades Raptor Center

Center for Biological Diversity

Center for Food Safety

Center for Snake Conservation

Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage

Citizens Against Ruining the Environment

Citizens Climate Lobby

Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge

Clean Water Action

Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection

Coast Range Association

Coastal Plains Institute

Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition

Colorado Wild Rabbit Foundation

Columbus Zoo and Aquarium

Comite Pro Uno

Conservation Congress

Conservation Northwest

Coosa Riverkeeper

Cuidadanos Del Karso

Cumberland-Harpeth Audubon Society

Defenders of Wildlife

Delaware Ecumenical Council on Children and Families

Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society

Delaware Valley Ornithological Club

Desert Tortoise Council

Dogwood Alliance

Earthjustice

Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Research

Eco-Eating

Endangered Habitats League

Endangered Species Coalition

Environmental Action Committee of West Marin

Environmental Committee for the San Lorenzo Valley

Environmental Investigation Agency

Environmental Protection Information Center

Eyak Preservation Council

Florida Conservation Voters

Food Democracy Now!

Food Empowerment Project

For the Fishes

Friends of Blackwater, Inc.

Friends of the Bitterroot

Friends of the Creeks

Friends of the Earth

Friends of the Eel River

Friends of the Locust Fork River

Friends of the Wild Whoopers

Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf & Wildlife

Fund for Wild Nature

Glynn Environmental Coalition

Golden West Women Flyfishers

Great Lakes Wildlife Alliance

Greater Hells Canyon Council

Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice

Greenpeace

Gulf Restoration Network

Hands Across the Sand/Land

Hawaii Preparatory Academy

Heartwood

High Country Audubon Society

Hills For Everyone

Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History

Hoosier Environmental Council

Howling For Wolves

Humboldt Baykeeper

International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute

Iowa Audubon

Juniata Valley Audubon Society

Justice for Wolves

Kairos Earth

Kettle Range Conservation Group

Klamath Forest Alliance

Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center

Kootenai Environmental Alliance

La Union Hace La Fuerza

Life of the Land

Los Angeles Audubon Society

Los Padres ForestWatch

Madison Audubon Society

Maguari-One Zoo Consultants

Maricopa Audubon Society

Mass Audubon

Massachusetts Forest Watch

Miami Waterkeeper

Mid-Michigan Stewardship Initiative

Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

Missouri Coalition for the Environment

Monmouth County Audubon Society

MountainTrue

Birding Under Nevada Skies

National Parks Conservation Association

National Wolfwatcher Coalition

Native Plant Conservation Campaign

Natural Resources Defense Council

NC WARN

Northcoast Environmental Center

Northeast Oregon Ecosystems

Northern Catskills Audubon Society, Inc.

Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society

Northwest Environmental Advocates

NY4WHALES

NYC Audubon

Ocean Conservation Research

Olympic Forest Coalition

One More Generation

Oregon Natural Desert Association

Orleans Audubon Society

Pacific Beach Coalition

Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology

People for Animal Rights

Peregrine Audubon Society

Physicians for Social Responsibility, Arizona Chapter

Port Crescent Hawk Watch

Prairie Dog Pals

Predator Defense

Prince George's County Audubon Society

Public Citizen

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER)

Raptor Services, LLC

Raptors Are The Solution

Reef Relief

Roaring Fork Audubon Society

Rockbridge Bird Club

Rocky Mountain Wild

Rootskeeper

Sacramento Audubon Society

Salem Audubon Society

San Diego Coastkeeper

San Fernando Valley Audubon Society

Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society

Santa Barbara Audubon Society

Save Animals Facing Extinction

Save Our Allegheny Ridges

Save Our Sky Blue Waters

Save the Biosphere

Save The Colorado

SAVE THE FROGS!

Save Wolves Now Network

Sequoia ForestKeeper®

Sierra Club

Skagit Audubon Society

Sustainable Arizona

Tennessee Native Plant Society

Tennessee Naturalist Program

Tennessee Ornithological Society

Trap Free Montana Public Lands

The 'Green Peace Corps'.org

The Cloud Foundation

The Cougar Fund

The Enchanted Biscuit

The Lands Council

The Rewilding Institute

The Safina Center

The Urban Wildlands Group

Toxic Free NC

Tracy Aviary

Trap Free Montana

Tucson Audubon Society

Umpqua Valley Audubon Society

Umpqua Watersheds, Inc.

Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition

Urban Bird Foundation

Urban Growers Collective

Utah Native Plant Society

Ventana Wilderness Alliance

Vermont Center for Ecostudies

Vermont Natural Resources Council

Virginia Society of Ornithology

Washington Crossing Audubon Society

Waterkeeper Alliance

West Berkeley Alliance for Clean Air and Safe Jobs

Western Environmental Law Center

Western Nebraska Resources Council

Western Watersheds Project

Whidbey Environmental Action Network

WILD HORSE EDUCATION

Wild Nature Institute

Wildcare Eastern Sierra

WildEarth Guardians

Wilderness Workshop

Wildlife Alliance of Maine

WildWest Institute

Wolf Veterinary Services

Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

Xun Biosphere Project