

April 08, 2025

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
The Capitol S-128  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Vice Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
The Capitol S-128  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
The Capitol H-307  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1036 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**Re: FY2026 Funding Request for the National Marine Fisheries Service's Protected Resources Science and Management Program**

Dear Chair Collins, Vice Chair Murray, Chair Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro,

Since President Trump took office in January, he and Elon Musk have unlawfully and indiscriminately orchestrated massive cuts to government programs and the Federal workforce. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ("NOAA") has lost over 10% of its workforce, with more cuts to agency staff expected as a result of Trump's reduction in force directives. Many of the individuals terminated from their roles at NOAA were responsible for monitoring the impacts of climate change, keeping the public well informed of any threatening weather events, and managing the nation's fisheries and marine ecosystems. For example, one scientist whose job was to protect imperiled orcas from an oil spill — and who was named 2023 employee of the year for the western United States — was fired with no warning. The sheer volume of these unprecedented terminations means that important agencies within NOAA, including the National Marine Fisheries Service, will likely be severely diminished and unable to carry out even their most basic administrative duties. The loss of these passionate and competent federal workers could not come at a worse time.

Our oceans are undergoing profound changes as a result of ever-increasing human activities. Nearly 66% of the marine environment has been significantly altered by our actions, including habitat destruction, pollution, noise from oil and gas and mineral exploration, and shipping. We are seeing greater change happening at a faster rate, and the impacts are more imminent than previously anticipated. More than one-third of all marine mammals face extinction in the coming decades due to threats from climate change, fisheries bycatch, pollution, exploitation and habitat loss. Unless urgent action is taken to curb greenhouse gas emissions, marine systems are likely to experience mass extinctions that rival the "Great Dying" that occurred 250 million years ago, in which around 90% of ocean life is believed to have vanished. This should serve as a wake-up call to society and Congress that much more must be done.

The National Marine Fisheries Service is responsible for the conservation, protection and recovery of more than 165 endangered and threatened marine species under the Endangered Species Act, as well as whales, dolphins, porpoises, seals and sea lions under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The agency is charged with protecting and recovering some of the most critically endangered marine species on the planet. For example, the North Atlantic right whale will be functionally extinct by 2040 unless stronger protections are immediately put in place, including the rapid development and deployment of ropeless fishing gear and more protective vessel speed limits. The Gulf of Mexico Rice's whale — the only great whale known to live entirely off the U.S. coast — is down to just 50 individuals. The population has been devastated by years of oil and gas development and still hasn't fully recovered from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon spill. The Fisheries Service is also responsible for protecting the 73 remaining Southern Resident orca whales, dwindling populations of North Pacific right whales, and the critically endangered Vaquita, of which fewer than 7 remain. These species cannot afford a lapse in protection.

While we recognize that significant funding increases are unlikely in the short term, we must also recognize that the biological needs of our most imperiled marine species do not simply change based on which political party is in power. Each of the above-mentioned species requires at least \$25 million to stabilize their populations and put them on the path to recovery. Further, to truly save the hundreds of other species under the Fisheries Service's care, Congress must fully fund the Marine Mammals, Sea Turtles, and Other Species program. This means increasing the program's budget by \$300 million annually. However, given the political reality we face, Congress should, at the very minimum, maintain existing funding for the program while doing everything it can do ensure protections are put in place for the hundreds of NOAA employees who were unjustly fired.

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To combat the current wildlife extinction crisis, Congress must take bold, meaningful action before it's too late. 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 species. That means providing sufficient funding for these critically endangered marine animals and protecting the federal workers dedicated to saving them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Center for Biological Diversity  
Advocates for Snake Preservation  
Attorneys for Animals  
Beyond Pesticides  
Black Warrior Riverkeeper  
Bold Visions Conservation  
Climate Communications Coalition  
Conservation Congress  
Conservation Law Foundation

Delaware-Otsego Audubon Soc. (NY)  
Desert Tortoise Council  
Endangered Habitats League  
Endangered Species Coalition  
Friends of Merrymeeting Bay  
Friends of the Earth  
Friends of the Eel River  
Gallatin Wildlife Association  
Glynn Environmental Coalition  
GreenLatinos  
Greenpeace USA  
Humboldt Waterkeeper  
Inland Ocean Coalition  
inNative  
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute  
Intheshadowofthewolf  
La Purisima Audubon Society  
Lehigh Valley Audubon Society  
Long Beach Alliance for Clean Energy  
Los Padres ForestWatch  
Maine Audubon  
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners association  
National Wolfwatcher Coalition  
NC WARN  
Next 100 Coalition  
Northeast Oregon Ecosystems  
NY4WHALES  
Oasis Earth  
Ocean Conservation Research  
Oceana  
Oregon Wild  
Predator Defense  
Protect Our Woods  
Raptors Are The Solution  
Rouse House Organics  
San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society  
Sanctuary Education Advisory Specialists SEAS  
Save Animals Facing Extinction  
SAVE THE FROGS!  
Selkirk Conservation Alliance  
Social Compassion in Legislation  
Surfrider Foundation  
Swan View Coalition, Inc.  
The International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council  
The Safina Center  
Washington Wild

Watershed Alliance of Marin  
Western Watersheds Project  
Wild Virginia  
Wildlife for All