

Testimony submitted by Leda Huta, Executive Director, Endangered Species Coalition on behalf of our member organizations regarding FY 2011 Interior Appropriation for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Endangered Species Program.

- **Earth Cause Organization * International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute * Federation of Fly Fishers * Western Nebraska Resources Council Center for Plant Conservation * Center for Biological Diversity * WildEarth Guardians * Endangered Habitats League * Alliance for the Wild Rockies * Biodiversity Conservation Alliance * Friends of the San Juans * Gulf Restoration Network * Wildlife Center of Virginia National Audubon Society * Sierra Club * Center for Native Ecosystems * The Otter Project * Wild South * Conservation Northwest * Animal Welfare Institute**

March 19, 2010

The Honorable James Moran
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and the millions of members we represent nationwide, we urge you to fully fund programs of the Endangered Species Act at the levels outlined below during the Fiscal Year 2011 appropriations process.

The Endangered Species Act is a safety net for wildlife, plants and fish that are on the brink of extinction. The Act has been successful in preventing the extinction of many of our nation's species, including Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, wolves, grizzly bears and wild salmon. In today's era of climate change, it is needed more than ever. However, for years the Endangered Species Act has been chronically underfunded, making it increasingly difficult for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service experts to carry out their responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act.

CORE ENDANGERED SPECIES PROTECTIONS

The four Fish and Wildlife Service endangered species operating accounts are key to effective implementation of the Endangered Species Act. All four program areas are currently experiencing at least a 30 percent staffing shortage due to budget constraints, an unacceptable vacancy rate. While we are asking for increases in all of these program areas, our community is particularly concerned about the listing program. At the current rate of listing, the program is effectively broken. The future of the Endangered Species Act is in danger when this first essential step of its implementation is not occurring. To adequately implement the endangered species program, funding must gradually increase for the four main accounts to at least \$305 million by 2016, an increase of \$125.5 million over FY 10. The numbers below represent an increase of 37.6 million over FY 2010 enacted levels of 179.5 million

Listing – This account funds the protection of new plants and animals under the Endangered Species Act, as well as habitat critical to recovery. Currently, more than 249 domestic and 20 foreign species sit on the candidate waiting list for protection, creating an estimated backlog of more than \$200 million. Candidate species wait an average of 19 years to be listed and since 1975, 64 have gone extinct while waiting – seven times the number that have disappeared under the full protection of the ESA. To eliminate this backlog over the next five years, we request an increase this year for a FY 11 appropriation of \$32.1 million.

Recovery - While the Endangered Species Act has been extremely successful at preventing wildlife from going extinct, the purpose of the Act is to protect and **recover** endangered and threatened fish, plants and wildlife. It is difficult to estimate the true needs for the recovery program—current estimates place it at approximately \$100 million. The coalition would like to see the recovery program funded at no less than \$95 million for FY 11.

Consultation – The consultation program is an important part of the checks and balances system to ensure that endangered fish, wildlife, and plants are protected on the ground. There has been a dramatic increase in demand for consultations recently, jumping from 40,000 in 1999 to 67,000 in 2006. Shortage of personnel in this program area causes delays of project reviews thus creating conflicts between agencies. The consultation budget also funds the Service’s work with non-federal entities for permitting and development of Habitat Conservation Plans, all of which must be consistent with recovery. However, lack of funding prevents the Fish and Wildlife Service from ensuring that these plans are properly developed, implemented and monitored. To adequately implement the consultation program would require an overall program budget of \$122.4 million. We request \$75 million for FY 11.

Candidate Conservation - This program provides interim protections for species while they await listing, but it should not be used to systematically avoid listing species. These interim protections can help to ensure a species does not go extinct while on the candidate list. As mentioned above fish, plants and wildlife on the candidate list go extinct at a much higher rate than those with full protection – in part because of severe understaffing for this program. Given the large number of candidate species, a doubling of this program's staff is justified to ensure adequate implementation.

ADDITIONAL ENDANGERED SPECIES PROTECTIONS

Cooperative Endangered Species Fund – This fund provides grants to states for wildlife and habitat conservation activities on non-federal lands for listed and candidate species. At least 65 percent of federally listed species are found on non-federal land. Without the proposed increases states will fall further behind in their ability to independently work to protect at risk species. Crucial conservation activities funded by these grants include: research, species status surveys, habitat restoration, captive propagation and reintroduction, planning assistance, and land acquisition by states for Habitat Conservation Plans and recovery. To adequately fund state endangered species conservation activities a total of at least \$160 million is needed. We therefore request an increase of \$15 million this year for a total appropriation of \$100 million in FY 11 including 20 million for conservation grants to states.

Landowner Incentive and Private Stewardship Grants – These grants provide funding for voluntary conservation actions taken by landowners to conserve at-risk plants and animals on private lands, which benefits us all. The Landowner Incentive program awards competitive grants to state and tribal conservation agencies for their work with private landowners and tribal lands, while the Private Stewardship program provides funding directly to individuals and groups implementing private land conservation actions. In 2007, funding was awarded to efforts in 46 states. Regrettably, neither program was funded in the FY 10 Interior appropriations bill due to budget constraints; these important programs should be re-started in FY 11. The demonstrated need for these programs has far outstripped available funding in the past – the amount requested for worthy projects on average totaled two to three times the yearly available funding. To support private landowners in their voluntary conservation efforts, a gradual increase to \$77 million is needed by FY 16 in these two incentive programs. We request that these programs be restored to their FY 07 levels of \$23.7 million for the private landowner and tribal lands grants and \$7.3 million for the stewardship grants. However, while these voluntary incentives programs are

important for the recovery of our nation's imperiled species, they should not be funded at the expense of the Fish and Wildlife Service's core endangered species programs.

BLM Wildlife and Fisheries Management and Threatened and Endangered Species Management

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) controls habitat that supports more than 300 federally listed or candidate species. This program, along with their Fisheries and Wildlife Management program, funds inventory and monitoring, habitat restoration, endangered species recovery, and other proactive conservation activities vital to maintaining healthy, functioning ecosystems and fish, wildlife, and plant populations. Recently, an average of 30 percent of these funds have been used to pay for the compliance activities of the BLM's energy, grazing, and other non-wildlife related programs. Traditionally, funding for compliance work has come from benefiting programs. In addition, the programs are substantially understaffed. For example, the BLM has only one biologist per 591,000 acres of land, and more than \$300 million is needed annually just to implement actions assigned to BLM in recovery plans for listed species. BLM only gets ten percent of what they actually need for threatened and endangered species. In addition to restoring the funds diverted to benefit other program areas, we request an increase of \$25 million over FY 10 levels to begin meeting this program's needs, for a total appropriation of \$65.4 million in FY 11 for wildlife and fisheries management and 32.6 million for threatened and endangered species management.

The Endangered Species Act is a broadly supported law and has been very successful in preventing extinctions. But without the necessary funding, the Act's true goal of restoring endangered species to healthy populations will be much more difficult to accomplish. We ask you, as a member of the Appropriations Committee, to fully fund Endangered Species Act programs this year. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Leda Huta
Executive Director
Endangered Species Coalition

Rob Fisher
Executive Director
Earth Cause Organization

David Phillips
Executive Director
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth
Island Institute

Phil Greenlee
Board President
Federation of Fly Fishers

Buffalo Bruce
Staff Ecologist
Western Nebraska Resources Council

Kathryn Kennedy
Executive Director
Center for Plant Conservation

William Snape, III
Senior Counsel

Center for Biological Diversity

Nicole Rosmarino, Ph.D.
Wildlife Program Director
WildEarth Guardians

Dan Silver
Executive Director
Endangered Habitats League

Michael Garrity
Executive Director
Alliance for the Wild Rockies

Duane Short
Wild Species Program Director
Biodiversity Conservation Alliance

Stephanie Buffum Field
Executive Director
Friends of the San Juans

Cynthia Sarthou
Executive Director
Gulf Restoration Network

Edward E. Clark, Jr.

President
Wildlife Center of Virginia

Mike Daulton
Senior Director of Government Relations
National Audubon Society

Debbie Sease
National Campaign Director
Sierra Club

Bethany Gravell
Executive Director
Center for Native Ecosystems

Allison Ford
Executive Director
The Otter Project

Tracy Davids
Executive Director
Wild South

Dave Wertz
Science and Conservation Director
Conservation Northwest

Cathy Liss
President
Animal Welfare Institute