

**Testimony of the Wildlife Conservation Society**  
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**Submitted to House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and**  
**Related Agencies**  
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Chairwoman Granger, Ranking Member Lowey, Members of the Subcommittee: thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Fiscal Year 2014 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act regarding Biodiversity, Global Health and Energy Accounts. The Bronx Zoo-based Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) was founded more than 115 years with the mission of saving wildlife and wild places worldwide through conservation action, science and education. WCS fieldwork helps address threats to over 25% of Earth's biodiversity in more than 60 countries around the world. As an implementing partner of the U.S. government overseas, WCS is closely involved with the priorities around opening diplomatic and technical relations with Burma, wildlife trafficking and biodiversity conservation, emerging pandemic threats, deforestation and sustainable agricultural expansion, and building resilient communities in the face of increased natural disasters. WCS has seen firsthand how good natural resource management can stabilize conflict prone regions while the exploitation and degradation of natural systems drive insecurity.

Witnessing the Wildlife Conservation Society at work demonstrates how conservation helps achieve U.S. national security and economic objectives in foreign policy. For the last 20 years in Burma, WCS has been instrumental in establishing the world's largest tiger reserve, doubling the acres under protected area management, establishing the first river protected area and integrating the priorities of ethnic minorities into land use planning strategies that will sustain the country's rich endemism. Elsewhere, WCS is dedicated to stopping wildlife trafficking; reducing armed conflict over scarce natural resources in countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan; preventing the spread of diseases between animals and humans; securing land tenure and promoting indigenous rights to protect tropical forest habitat in the Amazon; fortifying the sources of drinking water for rural communities in the developing world; developing National Parks to promote budding ecotourism and hospitality sectors in biodiversity rich nations like Gabon, South Sudan, Madagascar, and others; working with hunters to protect tigers and tiger prey from poaching; and building resiliency in vulnerable communities that rely on fisheries and other natural resources for their livelihoods.

As the Subcommittee balances the nation's fiscal challenges with national security and economic interests, it is important to note that international conservation comprises about 1% of U.S. foreign assistance, which, in turn, is only 1% of the federal budget. This modest investment in sustainable natural resource management in places like Afghanistan, Burma, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and elsewhere reduces conflict around scarce resources and serves to promote stability and avoid potential costly future military interventions. This testimony will focus on programs at US Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. State Department, and the U.S. Department of Treasury's contributions to the Global Environment Facility – all these agencies administer programs where conservation delivers on security and development goals.

**USAID Biodiversity:** In many regions, the exploitation and degradation of natural systems are already having significant impacts on security and stability. USAID's Biodiversity Conservation

Programs help protect some of the largest and most at-risk natural landscapes while boosting economic security, regional stability and human health. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, where WCS is the only U.S. based conservation organization at work, desertification from unsustainable land use, soil erosion caused by deforestation, and water contamination have been highly detrimental to the region's inhabitants. Reversing these destructive trends is key to good governance and capacity building, which is essential for effective local management and security. In South Sudan, the world's newest democracy, WCS is working with US Government and private support to reduce inter-ethnic violence by establishing community owned and managed protected areas that deliver security and sustainable development opportunities.

Indigenous territorial management in Northern Bolivia through the Initiative for Conservation in the Andean Amazon (ICAA) has reduced deforestation along roads four-fold in comparison to neighboring areas. This reduction has been achieved through the development of consensus around land use; implementation of forest management projects including handicrafts, ecotourism, forestry and agro forestry initiatives; development of internal natural resource use regulations; and implementation of a territorial control strategy based on physical delimitation of vulnerable perimeters and community control. This reduction in deforestation represents 1,400 hectares per year and five million total CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent between 2008 and 2015.

Africa's natural resources have become not just the cause but also the currency for instability and conflict as soaring prices for ivory have unleashed large-scale black markets that are helping to finance armed insurgencies and even terrorism. Skyrocketing demand for ivory and other high-value wildlife parts has created a poaching crisis that is decimating wildlife populations, robbing developing countries of economic opportunities and generating huge profits for well-organized and well-armed criminal syndicates. In Central Africa, despite a long history of conflict, the Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) brings 6 nations and three US Government agencies together to save Africa's gorillas and forest elephants and to promote rational land-use planning and sustainable development which in turn decreases forest destruction and degradation. The catastrophic loss of elephants in Chad and Cameroon at the hands of heavily armed North Sudanese and Chadian horseman, and other recent alarming declines in elephants in areas across Central Africa, reinforces the need to create an effective wildlife law enforcement network to train forces in Central Africa to deter and respond to the national security risks posed by organized trafficking not only in ivory and rhino horn, but potentially also linked to other forms of organized crime. Site-based law enforcement programs are essential, complemented by transboundary controls and demand reduction programs. The illegal wildlife trade emphasizes the importance of incorporating conservation and natural resource management into a larger conflict-prevention strategy. At our Bronx Zoo-headquarters, the annual *Run For the Wild* on April 27<sup>th</sup> is dedicated to raising awareness of the elephant poaching crisis and raising money from individuals to support site-based protections.

Unfortunately, the President's FY14 Budget Request is not available at this time. The Administration's FY13 budget request did not include a line item for the USAID Biodiversity Program and the FY13 Congressional Budget Justification reveals that only \$87 million is requested to address biodiversity challenges around the world, compared to the \$200 million enacted in FY12 SFOPs. WCS recommends that the USAID Biodiversity line item be restored and funded at \$200 million (the FY12 Enacted level) of which \$25 million is requested for CARPE/CBFP, \$20 million for the Andean Amazon Conservation Initiative, \$5 million for wildlife conservation in Southern Sudan, \$10 million to address the escalating elephant poaching crisis, \$1 million for Guatemala's

Maya Biosphere Reserve, \$2 million to implement and enforce the Lacey Act (section 8204 of Public Law 110-246), and \$500,000 for tiger conservation in the Russian Far East transferred to the US Forest Service pursuant to the Foreign Assistance Act Sec. 632(a).

**Sustainable Landscapes:** Forests are essential for regulating water flow, capturing rainfall for drinking water and often preventing catastrophic flooding and soil erosion. Forests supply direct food, economic resources and medicinal products to the over 1.6 billion people who live in them, and are vital to the healthy ecosystems we all depend on. U.S. support will give developing countries the ability to address the drivers of deforestation and degradation, halt illegal logging and restore degraded lands. This has direct economic benefits for U.S. producers as well: unfair competition from illegally harvested timber in developing countries costs the U.S. timber industry \$1 billion annually. The Administration's FY13 request of \$130.5 million for Sustainable Landscapes includes \$113.5 million for Development Assistance and \$17 million for Economic Support Funds to protect tropical forests from deforestation and degradation. WCS requests funding to USAID and State Department for Sustainable Landscapes be level with the FY12 Enacted amount of \$137 million. It remains important that funding for Sustainable Landscapes be separate and additional to USAID Biodiversity funding.

**Resilience, Adaptation and Predictive Capabilities:** Some of the world's poorest countries are experiencing increased droughts, floods, cyclones, tsunamis and other extreme weather events. These regions need technical and financial assistance to monitor changes and integrate nature-based adaptation strategies into plans that address infrastructure, health, agriculture, natural resources management, disaster risk reduction and conflict mitigation. As part of ongoing efforts to protect ecosystems and improve the livelihoods of the people living in Africa's Albertine Rift WCS has helped the Uganda National Forest Authority to determine the economic value and services the forests provide for the surrounding communities. The Administration FY13 Request for USAID and State Department Adaptation programs was \$190 million and included \$141 million for Development Assistance and \$42 million for ESF. This is up from \$184.5 million in FY12 Enacted SFOPs. WCS supports \$190 million for adaptation assistance. WCS also recommends that USAID integrate climate change and natural resource management into the Feed the Future program that has the potential, if structured properly, to provide sustainable supply chains, build climate resilient communities and reduce emissions.

**USAID Emerging Pandemic Threats (EPT) Program:** In FY13, the Administration requested \$53 million for USAID's Pandemic Influenza and Other Emerging Threats (PIOET) Office, in USAID's Global Health Bureau, **down from \$189 million in FY09 and a dramatic 38% cut from the current year.** WCS requests that PIOET be fully funded at \$90 million in FY14, which will enable current levels of effort to continue to protect vital global interests. These investments are intended to fight the emergence of zoonotic diseases that spread between people and animals by building essential human and institutional capacity to prevent disease transmission at its source, and controlling its spread locally and across borders regionally and globally. Since 2009, the PIOET/EPT Program has collected samples from over 35,000 wild animals at high risk interfaces and discovered over 200 new potentially zoonotic viruses from wild animals in countries where the risk of disease emergence is high. The governments of Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Bangladesh, and Bolivia were assisted by USAID EPT-funded partners in responding to disease outbreaks. The program has built viral family diagnostic capacity in 33 countries; and more than 1,500 human, animal, and environment health professionals from 20

countries have been trained in the prevention, timely detection, confirmation, preparedness and response to zoonotic diseases outbreaks. Sustaining these investments is essential for US national security and public health interests.

**The Global Environment Facility (the GEF):** The US is one of more than 30 donors to the GEF where about 1/3 of all funds are directed to biodiversity conservation in the developing world. WCS is an implementing partner of the GEF in South Sudan and is pending final approval on a new partnership in Burma to develop the country's natural resource management strategy. WCS has experienced firsthand the importance of leveraging US leadership into a globally funded mechanism to promote global priority projects. WCS requests that the U.S. Treasury transfers the U.S. contribution to the GEF at the amount consistent with its pledge to the GEF-5 Replenishment and pay down its arrears to the extent possible in FY14.

**Tropical Forest Conservation Act (TFCA):** This debt-for-nature swap program has lead the way in developing crucial forestry conservation programs in tropical countries that leverage additional funding for conservation from private sector partners. The Administration did not include a line item for the Tropical Forest Conservation Account at the U.S. Treasury Debt Restructuring Program in FY13. WCS requests that the TFCA line item be restored in FY14 SFOPS and funded at FY12 Enacted levels of \$12 million.

**In conclusion,** WCS appreciates the opportunity to share its perspectives and recommend modest funding for international conservation in the FY14 SFOPs Appropriations Act. Conservation investments are in our national security interest and assist in building capacity, strengthening governance and stabilizing regions prone to conflict and unrest.