

**TESTIMONY OF MARY BETH BEETHAM**  
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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES**  
**APRIL 16, 2013**

Mister Chairman, Ranking Member and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Mary Beth Beetham, Director of Legislative Affairs for Defenders of Wildlife. Founded in 1947, Defenders has more than one million members and supporters and is dedicated to the conservation of wild animals and plants in their natural communities.

North America is fortunate to have some of the most abundant and diverse wildlife on Earth, more than 200,000 known species in the U.S. alone. This unique and irreplaceable heritage is treasured by all Americans both for its aesthetic value as well as for the very tangible benefits it brings as a resource. For example, a third of our food is pollinated by birds, bats, and insects; wildlife associated recreation generated \$145 billion in economic benefits in 2011;<sup>1</sup> bats provide at least \$3.7 billion to the agricultural industry in pest control services each year;<sup>2</sup> and the value of ecosystem services from habitat in the contiguous 48 states is estimated at \$1.6 trillion annually.<sup>3</sup> Federal programs that protect wildlife and habitat have been chronically underfunded. The full impact of sequestration on these programs is not yet known, but it is likely to be significant. Even worse, continued cuts will likely lead to irreversible harm to vulnerable species and habitat. Our nation's wildlife is a treasure and well worth the investment to properly care for it.

### **Fish and Wildlife Service**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is our nation's premier wildlife conservation agency. We were deeply disappointed that the agency received some of the largest percentage cuts in H.R. 6091, the FY 2013 House Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. FWS needs robust funding, not cuts, if it is to recover listed species and protect migratory birds and fish, species of global conservation concern and other trust species, and stop or prevent wildlife crimes.

Renewable Energy – FWS must have robust funding for several programs to ensure that renewable energy development and associated transmission is sited in a way that prevents harm to species such as bald and golden eagles, bats, whooping cranes, California condors, seabirds, bats and desert tortoise. This includes funding for consultation in the Endangered Species program, inventory and monitoring in the Migratory Bird program, and proper enforcement of needed protections by the Office of Law Enforcement.

Cooperative Recovery – The FWS has begun a praiseworthy new initiative to implement recovery actions for species listed under the Endangered Species Act on National Wildlife Refuges and surrounding lands. This requires targeted funding for several programs, including National Wildlife Refuges, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Fisheries, Adaptive Science, and Endangered Species Recovery. This initiative supports more efficient efforts across landscapes to recover threatened and endangered species.

Endangered Species – Conservation and recovery of imperiled species will be impossible without strong funding for the Endangered Species program. Funding is critically needed to support:

- Under the Listing program, progress in protecting approximately 180 candidates, many of which have awaited protection for years, including the red knot, Pacific fisher, Pacific walrus, New England cottontail rabbit, and other species desperately in need of protection;
- Under the Consultation program, evaluation of tens of thousands of projects to ensure they can move forward while not significantly harming listed species, a crushing workload for agency personnel;
- Under the Recovery program, work to restore more than 1,400 listed U.S. species so that ESA protection is no longer necessary;
- Under the Candidate Conservation program, development and implementation of effective measures to stabilize and improve the status of candidate species;
- Under the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund, the work of states to protect threatened and endangered species.

Defenders also strongly supports reinstatement of the Wolf Livestock Loss Demonstration Program currently funded through the Recovery program that assists livestock owners to co-exist with wolves. This valuable program is intended to both compensate ranchers for livestock losses due to wolves and to implement proactive, nonlethal methods to prevent future losses.

National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) – Our National Wildlife Refuge System is the largest land and water system in the world dedicated to wildlife conservation. Refuges provide enormous benefits to the American people, generating more than \$4.2 billion each year for regional economies. Many are located along our coasts where they serve valuable functions in protecting communities from floods and storm surges. Initial reports on probable sequestration impacts include the closure of 121 refuges or visitor facilities on weekends, reduced law enforcement, and the significant reduction or elimination of seasonal staff that are responsible for vital work such as protecting sea turtle and bird nests on beaches. The Refuge System deserves robust funding, not cuts. Even flat funding harms the System – just to maintain the management capability to operate properly –to fuel refuge vehicles and pay increasing utility bills, facilities rent, and other costs while *not* counting any cost of living increase for personnel – the Refuge System needs an annual increase of at least \$8 million. Moreover, in recent years, the Refuge System has absorbed about \$440 million in uncompensated funding from natural disasters, nearly the amount of a full year’s funding.

Cooperative Landscape Conservation and Adaptive Science – The increasingly large-scale and complex nature of threats to the conservation of our natural resources along with decreasing financial resources has created a need to work more effectively and efficiently across jurisdictional boundaries. This comprehensive initiative is helping natural resource management agencies improve landscape-level coordination of conservation efforts and provide science and technical capacity to tackle today’s complex environmental problems. This program will also serve a key role in implementing the recently released National Fish, Wildlife and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy, an effort that was directed by this Subcommittee in FY 2009 and FY 2010, that will help public and private decision makers prepare for and reduce the current and future impacts of climate change on species, habitats, ecosystems, and the people and economies that depend on them.

International Affairs – Funding is crucial to sustain vital efforts to provide crucial capacity building, education, and training for personnel responsible for priority species and habitats of global concern and for the increased permitting, research and monitoring workload for species subject to trade, including native U.S. species such as sturgeon and freshwater turtles.

Office of Law Enforcement – The *Washington Post* recently highlighted the work of the Office of Law Enforcement in fighting illegal trade, breaking up smuggling rings, and other criminal activities that harm wildlife. Without robust funding, the program will be unable to maintain its highly trained force of special agents, inspectors, and forensic scientists.

Migratory Bird Management – U.S. bird populations, including native Hawaiian birds, ocean birds, coastal shorebirds, and desert, shrubland, and grassland birds have experienced precipitous declines in recent years. Continued strong funding is critical to survey and monitor, reduce hazards, manage permits, and restore habitat for migratory birds.

Other key grant programs – Defenders supports continued needed funding for the Multinational Species Conservation Fund, for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Fund, and for the State and Tribal Wildlife grants.

### **Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (FS) are essential to the conservation of wildlife and habitat in the United States, yet their resources are not adequate to meet significant challenges. A top priority for Defenders is ensuring that renewable energy development on these lands proceeds in a balanced way that maintains the ecological integrity of our public lands and waters, conserves wildlife habitat and populations, and contributes to agency efforts to successfully recover our most imperiled wildlife. We urge strong oversight to ensure that any energy development is done in an environmentally sensitive fashion. Given their large land ownerships it is imperative that both participate fully in landscape level conservation and management efforts.

FS Integrated Resource Restoration (IRR)/Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management – We expect that the administration will again propose merging a number of accounts, including Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management, into an integrated budget. However, Defenders supports maintaining strong funding for Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management and continuing IRR as a 3-year pilot as directed by Congress in the final FY 2012 Omnibus appropriations bill so that the agency can demonstrate its ability to adequately protect habitat for fish and wildlife under the consolidated program.

FS Land Management Planning/Inventory and Monitoring – We also expect the budget to again propose merging these two programs into a single line item. As with IRR, we are concerned about such a consolidation unless the agency can demonstrate its ability to carry out its responsibilities under these two programs and urge continued discrete funding for each.

FS Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) – We support full funding of \$40 million for this proven cost-effective program that was established specifically to create job stability, achieve reliable wood supply, restore forest and watershed health, improve wildlife habitat, and reduce the costs of fire suppression in overgrown forests, and reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfires.

FS Forest and Rangeland Research (FS R&D) – Strong funding for FS R&D is crucial in providing relevant tools and information to support sustainable management of National Forest system lands as well as non-federal forest lands.

BLM National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy – We expect that the Administration will again request \$15 million in the BLM Wildlife Management program specifically for sage-grouse conservation planning in 10 western states, which is an increase over prior years' funding for amending Resource Management Plans, inventorying, monitoring and mapping habitat, and conducting restoration. Almost half of all sagebrush habitat has been destroyed and remaining habitat is fragmented and degraded. Over the 42 years between 1965 and 2007, population decline was estimated at 3.1 percent each year. This modest funding increase is desperately needed to support a broad effort to reverse this iconic bird's decline.

BLM Renewable Energy – Robust funding is important to continue regional land use planning studies and environmental reviews of potential wind energy zones. These studies will help to identify future renewable energy zones that will avoid areas with potential natural resource conflicts, including conflicts with sensitive wildlife species such as sage-grouse, eagles, and desert tortoise.

BLM Resource Management Planning – Maintaining funding for Resource Management Planning is crucial to address 57 new plans which the agency expects to complete within the next three to four years. Since 2000, the BLM has completed over 74 RMP revisions and major plan amendments.

BLM Challenge Cost Share – Defenders continues to support this program, one of the few sources of BLM funding for proactive wildlife and habitat conservation projects on the ground.

## **U.S. Geological Survey**

The U.S. Geological Survey provides the basic science necessary for conservation of fish, wildlife and habitat. We urge support for robust funding in the following programs:

Ecosystems – For crucial scientific information needed to soundly manage our nation's biological resources including ongoing research on White Nose Syndrome that is devastating bat populations and work to assess impacts to wildlife, especially bats and birds, from the development and placement of wind energy projects and transmission from direct strikes, habitat fragmentation, and construction and maintenance of infrastructure.

Climate and Land Use Change – Continued funding for the National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center/DOI Climate Science Centers and Science Support for DOI Bureaus to address scientific needs in planning for adaptation to climate change.

## **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)**

Finally, each day, 6,000 acres of open space in the U.S., including wildlife habitat, is lost to fragmentation and destruction.<sup>4</sup> Once these lands are lost, they can never be recovered. Defenders supports continued strong funding for the LWCF. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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<sup>1</sup> The 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation, USFWS, 12/12

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/332/6025/41.summary?sid=853248fd-6760-4341-93d0-2aeeab9ea450>

<sup>3</sup> The Economics Associated with Outdoor Recreation, Natural Resources Conservation and Historic Preservation in the United States, Southwick Associates, 9/29/11

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.fs.fed.us/openspace/coop\\_across\\_boudaries.html](http://www.fs.fed.us/openspace/coop_across_boudaries.html)