

**Testimony of Kelly Keenan Aylward**  
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Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Moran, Members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on FY14 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. My name is Kelly Keenan Aylward, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Washington Office Director. WCS was founded with the help of Theodore Roosevelt in 1895 with the mission of saving wildlife and wild places worldwide. Today WCS manages the largest network of urban wildlife parks in the United States led by our flagship the Bronx Zoo. WCS helps address threats to over 25 percent of Earth's biodiversity in 60 countries around the world, employing more than 4,000 full-time staff including 170 Ph.D. scientists and 100 veterinarians, while generating \$414 million in economic activity annually.

The American conservation tradition is based on promoting sustainable use of our natural resources in order to preserve the world's species and environment for future generations. In recognition of the current fiscal constraints, it is important to note that effective natural resources management and conservation can have indirect benefits as well, including contributing to local economies and building capacity in developing countries. The Department of the Interior (DOI) reports that, in 2011, 435 million people visited national parks, refuges and federal lands, contributing an estimated \$48.7 billion in economic activity and supporting over 400,000 jobs.

On a global level, by supporting conservation, the U.S. is increasing capacity and governance in developing nations and improving our own national security as a result. For example, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) are working to combat illegal trade in wildlife and plants, which devastates the impacted species around the world, undercuts the success of legitimate U.S. industries, and finances transnational criminal networks. The illegal trade in elephant ivory is the top threat to Africa's elephants and is estimated to have resulted in the deaths of 25,000 African elephants in 2012 alone. It is estimated that the flow of illegal timber into the global marketplace alone results in the loss of approximately \$1 billion annually to U.S. forest industries as American businesses are undersold by the cheaper illegal supply. The illegal trade in wildlife products spreads diseases; and the criminal syndicates and rebel militias involved in the illegal wildlife and timber trade often participate in other illegal activities, like terrorism and trafficking in narcotics and weapons – all of which pose threats to U.S. national security.

This testimony will highlight both domestic and international programs at DOI and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) that are shaping the future of conservation.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

*State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program (SWG):* The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program gives states and tribes funding to develop and implement comprehensive conservation plans to protect declining wildlife and habitats before protection under the Endangered Species Act is necessary. This important program is supported by more than 6,200 organizations that have formed a national bipartisan coalition called Teaming with Wildlife of which WCS is a steering committee member. WCS recommends Congress provide robust funding for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants to implement State Wildlife Action Plans and maintains the non-federal match requirement at 35 percent in FY14. In helping to leverage these funds, WCS continues its highly

successful conservation grant program with financial support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. As of 2011, the grants, which require a 1:1 match, support non-profit conservation organizations managing applied, on-the-ground projects focused on implementing priority conservation actions for landscape scale resiliency. Priority is given to projects protecting areas of high biological value and designated as a high priority in a strategic habitat conservation plan. Since the grant program was established in 2006, WCS awarded \$10.2 million for 99 wildlife conservation projects across 467 states.

*Multinational Species Conservation Fund (MSCF):* Global priority species--such as tigers, rhinos, African and Asian elephants, great apes, and marine turtles--face constant danger. The U.S. has a legacy of leading international wildlife conservation efforts for these species and the MSCF program exemplifies this by being the only dedicated source for global species conservation by any government donor. MSCF programs have helped to sustain wildlife populations by controlling poaching, reducing human-wildlife conflict, and protecting essential habitat, while promoting U.S. economic and security interests in far reaching parts of the world. Despite their modest funding levels, these programs have an outsize impact because they consistently leverage three or four times as much in matching funds from corporations, conservation groups, and national governments making them highly efficient. For example, with financing from the Rhino-Tiger Fund, WCS has provided training and equipment to 200 rangers in partnership with the Government of Thailand's efforts to capture a gang of tiger poachers. In 2011, two ringleaders were captured and cell phone photos of the poached tigers provided evidence that led to their conviction. In February 2012, they received sentences of 4 and 5 years in prison – the harshest sentences ever given in Thailand to wildlife poachers. In 2009, with support from the African Elephant Conservation Fund, WCS launched a new project in collaboration with Bauchi State Government to improve levels of protection and reduce rates of elephant poaching in Yankari Game Reserve. Yankari Game Reserve contains the largest surviving elephant population in Nigeria, and one of the largest remaining in West Africa. WCS has been able to make substantial progress in building the capacity of the ecoguard staff and empowering local authorities to manage this population. Despite years of extreme poaching pressure, the number of elephants killed this year has been kept to a minimum through constant effort and surveillance. A strong team of ecoguards is now using state of the art technology (Cybertracker GPS enabled handheld devices) to detect illegal activities and report back to authorities in an efficient way, using realtime data and illustrative maps. Over 30 ecoguards have received refresher training and law enforcement skills continue to be reinforced. Successful prosecution rates have improved and penalties imposed by the court have increased as a result of this increased law enforcement effort. Over the last year alone, over 118 arrests have been made resulting in fines and, at least 5 cases, imprisonment of over a year. WCS requests that the FY13 enacted level of \$9.48 million is maintained in FY14. Additionally, WCS requests that Congress ensure that proceeds raised from the sale of MSCF semipostal stamps are supplementary funds to annually appropriated funds pursuant to section 2(c)(1)(B) of the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-241).

*Wildlife Without Borders Global and Regional Programs:* These programs are a great investment in addressing cross-cutting threats to ecosystems and wildlife such as disease outbreaks, human-wildlife conflict, and the bushmeat trade. Wildlife Without Borders (WWB) is making lasting impacts through capacity building, technical support and training, local community education

and citizen science. Created in 2010, the WWB Critically Endangered Species Conservation Fund has provided over \$570,000 in grants to protect the most imperiled species on the planet. A portion of this funding is helping to expand a successful WCS project in the Patagonian steppe of Argentina designed to prevent human-wildlife conflict between goat herders and the extremely rare Andean cat. When a goat has recently given birth, a puppy is purchased and given to the herder. The puppy is taught to nurse from the mother goat alongside the kid, imprinting the puppy and resulting in social bonds. By adulthood, this “guard dog” becomes the goat herd’s greatest protector, fending off carnivore predators, such as the Andean cat. Since acquiring the guard dogs, participating families have had no goats killed, resulting in herding livelihoods being protected and fewer retribution killings against these critically endangered cats. In FY14, WCS recommends funding the Wildlife Without Borders Global and Regional Programs commensurate with the FY13 appropriated level of \$6.3 million.

### **U.S. Forest Service**

*International Program:* The Forest Service International Program (FSIP) levels the playing field in international trade for U.S. timber producers and reduces illegal logging by providing specialized experience. This improves the sustainability and legality of timber management overseas, which translates to less underpriced timber on the world market. FSIP, through partnerships with USAID and the U.S. Department of State, helps to improve the resource management in countries of strategic importance to U.S. security. Resource scarcity and unregulated extraction of natural resources—whether it be water, food, timber, or minerals—has tremendous potential to stimulate unrest and corruption, both of which undermine democracy, rule of law and stability. With technical and financial support from USFS, over the past three years WCS has developed a multi-faceted fire-fighting and prevention project in Slavyanka Municipality, a 460 km<sup>2</sup> area of the Russian Far East, working in close collaboration with the municipal government. In 2010 and 2011, the WCS fire brigade put out 145 fires, and developed a new approach to on-the-ground fire-fighting using high-elevation outposts, which has dramatically reduced response time and resulted in the apprehension of several arsonists red-handed. WCS also renew firebreaks; operates a system of local fire wardens; published several articles in local newspapers, sponsored announcements over the radio and supported lectures in local schools; worked with multiple stakeholders to improve coordination and fire control planning, and monitored burn reductions using satellite imagery. The project has succeeded in reducing the area burnt in our model area by an estimated 83 percent in 2010 and 99 percent in 2011, compared to what would have burned without interventions. FSIP has increasingly leveraged modest funding from Congress to make a big impact for the U.S. taxpayer. For every federal dollar invested in FSIP, four additional dollars is leveraged in matching funds and other contributions from partners. WCS requests that the FY13 enacted level of \$8 million for the FSIP is maintained in FY14.

### **U.S. National Park Service**

*Office of International Affairs:* In 1961, the U.S. government initiated its first international conservation program with the creation of the Office of International Affairs (OIA). Since then, this office has facilitated technical assistance and exchange projects with counterpart agencies globally building on the legacy of American leadership in national parks management. OIA is also the managing agency for World Heritage Sites located in the United States. Thanks to this program, NPS is working on collaborative areas of trans-frontier concern, including at the

Beringia Shared Heritage Initiative (U.S. - Russia), which WCS has been involved with as part of our ongoing conservation efforts in Arctic Alaska. WCS is currently studying the behavior and survivorship of migratory birds that travel to Teshekpuk Lake in Alaska's National Petroleum Reserve to nest each year, as well as the impacts climate change is having on Alaska's walrus populations. The international work conducted by NPS is not only about helping other countries protect their parks and heritage. It is about bringing home best practices and learning from international engagement that could benefit the American national park system. WCS recommends maintaining the FY13 enacted level of \$886,000 for the OIA in FY14.

### **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

*Urban Waters Federal Partnership:* Since 2001, WCS has partnered with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to administer \$16.6 million to support 20 grassroots organizations to cleanup efforts to physically restore the South Bronx waterfront along the Bronx River as well as educational outreach to help local residents understand the importance of preserving wild spaces. As a result of this investment, over 3,000 people canoe on the river annually, eight acres of river habitat has been restored or preserved; 7,000 students instructed, 1,500 educators have been trained and several tons of trash from the river and its shores have been removed. WCS is continuing this leadership role through the newly established Urban Waters Federal Partnership, which is a partnership between 13 federal agencies to reconnect urban communities with their waterways. WCS organized a community engagement forum on October 24 in conjunction with the EPA Urban Waters October 23-25, 2012 National Training Workshop in Washington, DC. The community engagement forum facilitated interactions between local organizations, federal agencies representing the Federal Waters Partnership and other stakeholders that came together to attend EPA Urban Waters' National Training Workshop. The forum also highlighted the role of community based organizations involved in water quality issues, clean up and urban water restoration, conservation and stewardship while emphasizing their contributions through environmental education and training in their local communities. WCS encourages robust funding in FY14 to continue and expand the efforts of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership.

In conclusion, I appreciate the opportunity to share WCS's perspectives and make a case for increased investment in conservation in the FY14 Interior, EPA and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. Conservation of public lands is an American tradition and, as far back as 1909, Theodore Roosevelt recognized that the management of our natural resources requires coordination between all nations. Continued investment in conservation will reaffirm our global position as a conservation leader, while improving our national security and building capacity and good governance in developing countries. Thank you.