

**TESTIMONY OF MARY BETH BEETHAM**  
**DIRECTOR OF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS, DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE**  
**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES**  
**APRIL 10, 2014**

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> Cuts since FY 2010 to Federal programs that conserve wildlife and habitat have severely undermined sound management. Funding decreases in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Endangered Species program delayed the recovery of endangered Florida manatees by preventing crucial habitat restoration work. 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 a 27 percent cut in the FY 2014 House Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. FWS needs robust funding, not cuts, if it is to recover threatened and endangered species and protect migratory birds and fish, species of global conservation concern and other trust species, and stop or prevent wildlife crimes.

Cooperative Recovery – Defenders supports the President's requested increases of \$1.5 million in Conservation and Restoration under Ecological Services and \$300,000 under Migratory Bird Management. This initiative is supporting more efficient and strategic efforts across landscapes to recover threatened and endangered species on National Wildlife Refuges and surrounding lands.

Renewable Energy – Defenders supports the President's requested increases of \$1.1 million in Planning and Consultation under Ecological Services to support approvals of renewable energy projects while ensuring they do not significantly harm wildlife, and \$1.4 million under Service Science to assess potential impacts of energy transmission corridors on sensitive lands and wildlife in the West and to identify mitigation strategies.

Endangered Species – The President's request proposes a major restructuring of the Ecological Services Activity which includes the Endangered Species program. Defenders is concerned about whether the new structure will allow for adequate transparency and accountability, particularly in the large "General Program Activities" program elements. Before any such restructuring is permitted, the agency must show that it has adequate controls in place to ensure the strategic use of this

funding and a transparent process for developing priorities and reporting how funds are allocated. Absent this information, Defenders supports maintaining the current budget structure and requests increases for the endangered species portion of Ecological Services, \$21.7 million, which includes:

- A \$4 million increase to support the unprecedented effort to conserve the greater sage-grouse and its sagebrush habitat.
- A \$2.3 million increase for listing species. This funding will support progress in listing approximately 145 candidate species, many of which have awaited Endangered Species Act (ESA) protection for years.
- An \$11.1 million increase to support the recovery of the more than 1,500 listed U.S. species so that ESA protection is no longer necessary.
- Defenders opposes a \$1 million reduction for the Wolf Livestock Loss Demonstration Program that assists livestock owners co-existing with wolves, and we urge its restoration.

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 \$2.4 billion each year for local economies. A September 2013 memorandum from the System’s Chief detailed significant damage from budget cuts since FY 2010 with conservation effectiveness in numerous areas declining dangerously. The request includes a \$4.2 million increase which includes funding for Challenge Cost share projects with partners and volunteer groups and for law enforcement but it is not sufficient. Instead, Defenders supports an \$8 million increase over FY 2014 which is the minimal amount needed each year to keep up with operating costs such as fuel, utilities and rent. We also support legislative language proposed by the administration that would provide authority to recover compensation from responsible parties who injure or destroy Refuge System or Hatchery System resources similar to that of the National Park Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and allows compensation to be applied directly to repair the injury without further appropriation by Congress.

Cooperative Landscape Conservation – Defenders supports the President’s requested increase of \$3.3 million that will support the continued development and work of the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives that are working to solve complex problems across large landscapes.

Science Support – The requested \$14.4 million increase will help to answer pressing questions about climate adaptation and other landscape level ecological changes as well as about energy development, White-Nose Syndrome that is devastating bat populations, and other agency management challenges.

Migratory Bird Management – U.S. bird populations have experienced precipitous declines in recent years. Full funding of the program’s \$46.922 million request will support the program’s work to survey and monitor, reduce hazards, manage permits, and restore habitat for migratory birds.

Environmental Contaminants – Under Ecological Services, a \$1.2 million increase in Planning and Consultation will help to support the process for national consultations related to pesticide registrations and a \$2 million increase in Conservation and Restoration will help increase capacity to respond to impacts of contaminant releases.

Office of Law Enforcement – A \$2.5 million increase requested by the President will support wildlife science forensics and efforts to combat an unprecedented level of illegal trade in wildlife.

International Affairs – A \$1.1 million increase in the request will support local communities in reducing poaching of flagship species such as tigers, rhinoceros, and elephants.

Other key grant programs – Defenders supports the requested funding amounts for the Multinational Species Conservation Fund, the Neotropical Migratory Bird Fund, and the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund (CESF). We are opposed to the \$8.695 million cut for State and Tribal Wildlife grants and urge that the program be funded at no less than the FY 2014 level. In addition, we are opposed to the request to fund non-land acquisition planning and conservation grants from the Land and Water Conservation Fund under the CESF.

### **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 – The administration has again proposed merging a number of accounts, including Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management, into an integrated budget. Instead, Defenders supports maintaining funding for Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management at no less than the FY 2014 level and continuing IRR as a pilot so that the agency can demonstrate its ability to adequately protect habitat for fish and wildlife under the consolidated program. *“Evaluating the Integrated Resource Restoration Line Item: Results from Phase 1,”* a recent independent study of the pilot program through the University of Oregon and Colorado State University, indicated that a combination of hard targets, including hard timber targets, coupled with declining budgets, may reduce investment in wildlife conservation.

FS Land Management Planning/Inventory and Monitoring – The request again proposes 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 at no less than the FY 2014 level.

FS Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program – We support the requested increase of \$20 million for this proven cost-effective program established specifically to create job stability, achieve reliable wood supply, restore forest and watershed health, improve wildlife habitat, and reduce both the costs of fire suppression in overgrown forests and the risk of uncharacteristic wildfires.

FS Forest and Rangeland Research (FS R&D) – We are opposed to the \$17.490 million cut in the request for FS R&D and we urge funding at no less than the FY 2014 level. Adequate funding for this program is crucial in providing relevant tools and information to support sustainable management of National Forest System lands as well as non-federal forest lands. Generally, we are concerned that the Forest Service may lack adequate applied scientific capacity to implement critical planning and management actions, including the 2012 planning rule.

BLM National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy – Defenders supports continued full funding of the \$65.2 million request for the Wildlife and Fisheries Management program, a \$347,000 increase, which includes support for the greater sage-grouse planning initiative, on-the-ground habitat restoration, and monitoring. We recently released an analysis of all draft plans developed under the Planning Strategy, *“In the Red: How Proposed Conservation Plans Fail to Protect Greater Sage-Grouse,”* which found that the plans in their current form recommend inconsistent and inadequate conservation measures. We urge the Subcommittee to work with the agency to ensure that the plans are improved so that the final plans will be adequate to conserve and restore this iconic bird.

BLM Threatened and Endangered Species Management – According to agency reports, the BLM has funding to implement only about 10 percent of the work it is required to do in recovery plans for ESA listed species on BLM lands, but the request includes just a \$178,000 increase. Instead, Defenders supports an increase of \$1 million over the request which simply restores the budget to the FY 2010 level and will better help move listed species to recovery.

BLM Renewable Energy – Full funding of the \$29.2 million request, a \$171,000 increase, will help BLM to move forward with renewable energy development on public lands while avoiding areas with natural resource conflicts, including conflicts with sensitive wildlife species.

BLM Resource Management Planning – The \$5.2 million increase in the President’s request is crucial to support priority planning efforts for vast areas of BLM lands, including maintaining the currency of resource management plans.

## **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 the following increases:

National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center/Climate Science Centers – An \$11.6 million increase in the request will support scientific needs in planning for climate change adaptation and building resiliency of ecosystems.

Ecosystems – A \$9.2 million increase in the request will help to support development of crucial scientific information for sound management of our nation’s biological resources including research into declines of native pollinators and measures needed to avoid harming sensitive wildlife, especially bats and birds, from renewable energy development.

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

Defenders supports the proposal in the request for full and permanent funding of LWCF that will help to save some of the 6,000 acres of open space, including wildlife habitat, that are lost each day in the U.S.<sup>4</sup> 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)