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**Testimony Regarding Fiscal Year 2015 Appropriations  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment & Related Agencies  
Submitted April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014**

On behalf of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), the nation's largest member-based conservation advocacy and education organization, and our more than four million members and supporters, we thank you for the opportunity to provide Fiscal Year 15 funding recommendations for the Department of the Interior and other agencies under the jurisdiction of this Subcommittee.

We understand the difficult budget choices facing Congress and the nation as we move forward under the constraints of the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25), and applaud Congress for replacing part of sequestration in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014. Disproportionate cuts to conservation programs are not consonant with the priorities of most Americans. These programs protect cherished lands and waters and conserve the natural resources that are vital to our nation's continued economic vitality. Recent studies estimate that outdoor recreation, and conservation account for \$1.06 trillion in overall economic activity and support 9.4 million jobs each year. Outdoor recreation alone generates more than \$49 billion in annual federal tax revenue.

NWF is concerned about proposed funding reductions to many of the federal government's programs that protect and conserve fish and wildlife, sustaining and restoring important ecosystems, and maintaining clean air and water. Perhaps of even greater concern are efforts to rewrite the nation's landmark environmental laws through the use of policy riders on the appropriations bill. **National Wildlife Federation urges the Subcommittee to make the necessary investments in our essential conservation and environmental programs and commitments in the FY15 appropriations bill, and to pass a bill free of such riders.**

National Wildlife Federation is overall supportive of the President's FY15 budget request, which we view as balancing fiscal responsibility with continued investments in essential conservation and environmental programs. Following, we offer recommendations for specific budget items and programs.

## **I. U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

### State and Tribal Wildlife Grants

The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program is the nation's core program for preventing wildlife from becoming endangered in every state. We are extremely concerned about the impact on the nation's wildlife of the nearly 30% cut this program has suffered in recent years. We urge Congress to honor its commitment to this effort by **maintaining funding at the FY14 enacted level of \$58.695 million.**

### Cooperative Landscape Conservation

The Fish and Wildlife Service's Landscape Conservation Cooperatives represent an important tool for leveraging federal, state, and private resources to achieve effective conservation outcomes and safeguard fish and wildlife resources from climate change. We urge Congress to address the real threats of climate change to fish and wildlife and **support the President's request of \$17.7 million for this program.**

### National Wildlife Refuge System

The National Wildlife Refuge System is home to thousands of species of wildlife. With over 560 refuges, this system provides outdoor recreational and tourism opportunities for the 46.5 million

Americans who visit refuges annually. And for every \$1 invested by Congress, refuges generate over \$4 in economic benefits to local communities. NWF, along with the **Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE)**, endorses the President's FY15 funding request of \$476.4 million for Operations and Maintenance for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

## II. U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

### Climate and Land Use Change

The USGS Climate and Land Use Change program provides research that allows other land management agencies to make science-based decisions important to resiliency and adaptation regarding climate change. **We support the President's requested funding level of \$149.1 million for Climate and Land Use, and of \$35.5 million for the DOI Climate Science Centers.**

### Ecosystems

The USGS Ecosystems program provides research that allows other land management agencies to make science-based decisions important to the conservation of our nation's wildlife and the habitats they depend upon. **We support the President's budget request of \$162 million for this program.**

## III. BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

### Trust Natural Resources Program

The BIA Trust Natural Resources (TNR) Program represents the largest amount of federal funding for tribal natural resource management. Over the last twelve fiscal years, funding for BIA has unacceptably lagged behind funding for other Interior agencies. Funding these programs should be a top priority of Congress for FY15. **In addition, we fully support the FY14 enacted level of \$184.295 million for TNR.** We are particularly supportive of the **\$9.948 million requested funding for tribal participation in the Cooperative Landscape Conservation** program to support tribal engagement in climate adaptation.

## IV. BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

### National Landscape Conservation System

The National Landscape Conservation System comprises some 27 million acres of congressionally and presidentially designated lands and waters, including National Monuments, National Conservation Areas, Wilderness, National Scenic and Historic Trails, and Wild and Scenic Rivers. These lands are some of the best places to experience the rich history and scenic beauty of the American West. **We ask Congress to support the President's FY15 request of \$66.5 million for the National Conservation Lands** in order to prevent critical damage to the resources found in these areas, ensure proper management, and provide for a quality visitor experience.

### Master Leasing Plan

The Master Leasing Plan concept is a cornerstone of onshore oil and gas program reforms announced by the Department of the Interior in 2010 and represent a positive step in restoring recognition of the fish and wildlife values on public lands. **National Wildlife Federation, as part of the Sportsmen for Responsible Energy Development coalition, strongly supports the Administration's requested increase of \$4.6 million to strengthen the oil and gas leasing program within the Oil and Gas Management budget, \$1 million of which enables the agency to perform regional planning for leasing and development through the Master Leasing Plan concept.**

## V. POWERING OUR FUTURE INITIATIVE

The Powering our Future initiative provides resources for six bureaus across DOI for renewable energy planning, leasing, and permitting activities. The initiative presents an opportunity for the nation to facilitate large-scale clean energy projects without compromising crucial wildlife interests and investments. It facilitates efficient permitting, identification and review of wind energy areas, and efforts to evaluate and protect the sage grouse, lesser prairie chickens, whooping cranes, golden eagles, and Indiana bats. NWF **strongly supports the President's request of \$94.8 million for FY15**, an increase of \$3 million from FY14 enacted. In addition, NWF supports legislative proposals, such as the Public Lands Renewable Energy Development Act, that would both incentivize and add certainty for renewable energy on public lands while paying back the land by providing resources for fish, wildlife, recreational opportunities, local communities, and states.

## **VI. U.S. FOREST SERVICE**

### Forest Fire Disaster Funding

In recent years, the U.S. Forest Service has been forced to dedicate a significant amount of funds in order to pay for wildfire suppression. **NWF supports the President's efforts to address this problem by including wildfire emergency funding processes in his FY15 budget that are similar to those of other natural disasters.** Currently, federal land management agencies must shift money away from vital agency programs in order to fund wildfire suppression costs. This practice negatively impacts land management programs including those that decrease long-term wildfire risk and costs and the associated loss to wildlife, habitat and recreation. We support legislative efforts to rectify this practice.

### Urban and Community Forestry Program

The Urban and Community Forestry program improves the forests where people live, work, and play. With urban tree canopies in decline, the program is critical to support carbon sequestration, energy conservation, storm water management, and air quality, while also providing cooling benefits in urban areas. **We support maintaining the FY14 enacted level of \$28.04 million.**

### Forest Service Research and Development

The President's requested Research and Development budget for FY15 is \$18 million lower than the FY14 enacted level. A reduction of this magnitude would thwart the Forest Service's ability to effectively work on wildlife conservation and habitat risk assessment. **We support maintaining the FY14 enacted level of \$293 million.**

## **VII. LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND**

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a tool for the federal government to acquire both state and federal land that is important to maintaining wildlife habitat as well as open space. National Wildlife Federation **strongly endorses the President's FY15 budget request of full funding for LWCF at \$900 million, with \$550 million in mandatory funding and \$350 million in discretionary funding.** We support all efforts to ensure LWCF is funded at its maximum authorized level, including legislative efforts to provide robust and dedicated funding outside of the budget process. Likewise, **NWF supports the President's request that \$15 million goes to improving access to public lands for sportsmen and outdoor recreationists**

## **IX. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

### Geographic Programs - Ecosystem Restoration Initiatives

America's Great Waters are the lifeblood of our nation. Sustained, consistent restoration funding is crucial for the successful implementation of multi-year ecosystem restoration plans. As such, we **strongly support the President's requested increase in funding for the Chesapeake Bay Program Office (\$73.1 million requested, an increase of \$3 million from FY14 enacted)** and

urge the Subcommittee to maintain funding for other regional efforts, including but not limited to the Long Island Sound Program and Puget Sound Programs. **We are concerned about the significant proposed funding decrease for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and support maintaining the FY14 enacted level of \$300 million.**

EPA National Estuary Program

The National Estuary Program (NEP) works to restore and protect nationally significant estuaries. The program focuses not just on improving water quality, but on maintaining the integrity of the whole system -- its chemical, physical, and biological properties, as well as its economic, recreational, and aesthetic values. **NWF is glad to see funding maintained for this program, and supports the President's FY15 request for \$26.7 million.**

Clean Water State Revolving Fund

Since the 1970's, CWSRF projects have helped improve the quality of wastewater treatment in communities throughout the country. Yet the job is far from complete and the nation faces trillions of dollars in funding needs to repair aging wastewater treatment systems and keep our rivers and streams pollution free. While we greatly appreciate the EPA's dedication to increasing green infrastructure options, we believe now, particularly when America's infrastructure is rated at D+ by the American Society of Civil Engineers, is not the time to cut resources from communities. NWF strongly opposes the \$430.9 million proposed cut to this program, and **urges funding at the FY14 level of \$1.44887 billion.**

Clean Water Act 319 Nonpoint Pollution Reduction Program

When Congress recognized the need for greater federal leadership in assisting with nonpoint source pollution reduction efforts, The Clean Water Act was amended to establish Section 319. Continued funding for the Nonpoint Source Management Program will provide state and local nonpoint source remediation efforts with the funds that are crucial to the implementation of these projects. As such we recommend that the Subcommittee **increase program funding from the \$164.9 million requested by the President to the FY14 enacted level of \$159.2 million.**

Climate & Air Pollution Reduction Programs

NWF supports EPA's priority goal of improving the country's air quality and taking action on climate change. **We support the requested \$234.7 million for addressing climate change,** an increase of \$45.2 million over FY enacted, allowing the Agency to support a full range of approaches for reducing carbon pollution and the risks posed to human health and the environment from climate change.

National Environmental Education Act (NEEA) Programs

EPA's Office of Environmental Education implements highly successful, nationwide environmental education programs. We are grateful for the Subcommittee's support of environmental education in previous years and **urge you to sustain funding for the National Environmental Education Act (NEEA) programs at the Environmental Protection Agency at the recent level of \$9.7M.**

## **X. EVERGLADES**

America's Everglades are one of the most unique ecosystems in the world. Protection of the remaining ecosystem and restoration of ecological function are critical for water supply, wildlife, water quality, recreation, tourism, and the economy of South Florida. A recent study indicates each dollar invested in restoring the Everglades will result in a four dollar return. Beginning in the 1980s, Congress made a commitment to restoring the Everglades by enacting the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. This Subcommittee has made substantial progress in furthering that promise in recent years—funding construction of a 1-mile bridge along the Tamiami Trail and authorizing the next phase of bridging. We urge Congress to continue this investment and **strongly**

support the President's budget request for \$62.4 million for the Everglades Comprehensive Environmental Restoration Plan.