

STEVE COHEN
9TH DISTRICT, TENNESSEE
2104 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

TELEPHONE: (202) 225-3265
FAX: (202) 225-5663

167 NORTH MAIN STREET
SUITE 369
MEMPHIS, TN 38103

TELEPHONE: (901) 544-4131
FAX: (901) 544-4329

WWW.COHEN.HOUSE.GOV

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4209

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
SUBCOMMITTEES:
CHAIR – CONSTITUTION, CIVIL RIGHTS AND
CIVIL LIBERTIES
COURTS, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, AND THE
INTERNET
CRIME, TERRORISM AND HOMELAND SECURITY
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SUBCOMMITTEES:
AVIATION
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT
RAILROADS, PIPELINES AND HAZARDOUS
MATERIALS
WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEES:
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS
WATER, OCEANS, AND WILDLIFE
COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION
IN EUROPE (U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)

Natural Resources Committee Member Day Testimony

Congressman Steve Cohen

May 6, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman, for the opportunity to address the Natural Resources Committee.

Water is our most important natural resource. Without it, there would be no life. I hope that the Committee will hold hearings on the work United States Geologic Survey (USGS) is doing to study aquifer contamination. While some contamination is the natural result of geology and hydrology, other contamination is caused by humans, such as from wastewater runoff, mining and drilling activities, or pipeline spills. This is an especially important issue in my district, where the Memphis Sand Aquifer serves as the primary source of drinking water for the City of Memphis. The Committee should examine the USGS's work to better understand how actions taken today can determine groundwater quality in the future.

The USGS is also critical to our understanding of tectonic plates and earthquakes. When many people think of earthquakes, they typically think about the West Coast or the "Ring of Fire" in the Pacific Ocean, which are particularly relevant to some of my colleagues on this Committee. However, the New Madrid seismic zone in the eastern and central U.S. is very active, and the cause of earthquakes in this zone is not fully understood. It is essential that the Committee support USGS on its earthquake research so that we can better understand New Madrid earthquakes and their effects on the region.

The Committee should consider a hearing to address the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) unsustainable model of continuous removals of wild horses and burros on federal land. Under the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act, the BLM implemented an ongoing mass roundup

strategy of wild horses and burros from our nation's public land and shifting them to costly short- and long-term holding. As a result, there are approximately 53,000 animals in holding – a number that will only increase if the BLM continues to rely on a failed system of mass removals. Unfortunately, holding facilities, like the roundups themselves, are often harmful to the health and well-being of these animals. Equally troubling is that large-scale removals from the range, without comprehensive supplemental fertility control efforts, actually lead to increased population growth rates through compensatory reproduction. Continuing to funnel wild horse and burros en masse into holding is unsustainable. Rather than adding to the already large population of animals in holding, the Committee should work with BLM identify more humane and cost-effective options that better fulfill the agency's statutory mandate.

The Committee should also fully support the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service so that they can oversee and implement the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The ESA protects 1,666 animal and plant species in the United States, 394 of which are considered threatened and 1,272 are endangered. Several of the protected species, including 6 types of freshwater mussels, are native to Tennessee. The Committee may also consider measures beyond the existing Endangered Species Act and the National Wildlife Refuge System that may help to protect native species that are at risk of extinction.

While I was unable to participate in last week's Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee hearing on Accessibility for People with Disabilities on National Parks and Public Lands, I was appreciative of the discussion. As the witnesses said so well, there are many ways to make these areas more accessible and I look forward to working with my colleagues, the Administration, and others to make it easier for more people to enjoy our country's public lands.

Thank you again, Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman, for this opportunity. I look forward to discussing these and other issues with you during Natural Resources Committee hearings.