



May 23, 2019

Ms. Lily Wang  
Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources

Dear Ms. Wang,

It was my pleasure to testify on May 15 before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands hearing in Washington, D.C., at a hearing chaired by Rep. Deb Haaland, D-N.M.

Rep. Haaland has asked me to respond in writing to additional questions she didn't have time to ask me during the hearing. The following are my answers for the record:

Question from Rep. Haaland: "1. Earlier this month, a United Nations panel released a report which found that the health of ecosystems on which we and all other species depend is deteriorating more rapidly than ever," leaving up to 1 million species on the verge of extinction. In my home state of New Mexico, in-state bird populations have declined by 80 percent, with species such as the mountain chickadee and pygmy nuthatch disappearing. Studies also show that warm season habitat for Gila trout, a rare species found mostly in New Mexico, could decline by 70 percent. a. Mr. Deubel, you have testified to how you have experienced climate impacts to wildlife in our home state of New Mexico, but do you share the concerns of the UN report? And is the finding of more rapid deterioration of ecosystems and biodiversity consistent with your observations in New Mexico?"

Answer: The New Mexico Wildlife Federation was founded by Aldo Leopold, a pioneering conservationist. Among his contributions to our  
Deubel/Wang Page 2/ May 23, 2019

collective understanding of the natural world, Leopold focused heavily on the importance of having what he called a “land ethic.”

By that term, Leopold meant that a person has to meet their obligations not only within the human community, but within a larger community that includes “the soils, waters, plants and animals, or collectively, the land.”

Leopold wrote that having a land ethic changes the role of people from being conquerors of the land community to being a member and citizen of it. “It implies respect for his fellow-members and also respect for the community as such,” he wrote.

From that perspective, as well as the perspective of being a sportsman, a hunter and a father, I’m concerned about the UN report as well as any number of other reports that conclude climate change places the survival of countless species at risk.

Scientists are constantly unraveling new information about the many ways in which ecosystems and species are interconnected. I don’t assume that humankind can stand idly by and watch other species go extinct without expecting that such dramatic changes to the world will affect us directly.

Yes, I have observed the rapid deterioration of ecosystems and biodiversity in New Mexico. In my lifetime, I’ve seen fires on a historic scale leave vast areas of the Jemez Mountains denuded of trees. I’ve seen drought bring down untold millions of pinon trees, many of which previously had stood for centuries. I’ve seen areas that now have fewer birds and other wildlife species as a result of streams and springs that have dried up.

Question from Rep. Haaland: b. How does protecting wildlife habitat as wilderness or through other protective designations help protect vulnerable species and, in turn, safeguard opportunities for outdoor recreation?

Answer: Protecting wildlife habitat as wilderness has the effect of prohibiting motor vehicle travel. While some hardy souls will pack or ride horseback into the farthest corners of wilderness, as a practical matter most people won't. Accordingly, wilderness designations serve to provide wildlife populations with areas where they're relatively safe from disturbance during their critical breeding times, calving seasons and during winter months when they can lack the fat reserves to sustain being forced to run to avoid human disturbance.

Wilderness areas serve both as cradles and sanctuaries for New Mexico wildlife populations. Wilderness helps to ensure the healthy populations that New Mexico residents and visitors alike enjoy.

Question from Rep. Haaland: 2. Mr. Deubel, as I am sure you know, New Mexico has a thriving outdoor recreation economy - supporting twice as many jobs as the energy and mining industries combined. a. As a New Mexican, do you believe that reliance on fossil fuel extraction is in the best long-term interest of our state?

Answer: New Mexico is a big state without much in the way of public transportation. All of us who live here rely on motor vehicles to travel for our jobs, to take our kids to school and otherwise live our lives. Even most of the food we eat is trucked into our area. With that said, over the long-term, I believe that not only New Mexico but the world in general needs to study how to make our lives less dependent on fossil fuels. In New Mexico, we're blessed with abundant wind, solar and other resources and our future clearly demands we make progress in using those.

Question from Rep. Haaland: b. Considering how public lands energy development contributes to climate change, do you believe that some limits on extraction are reasonable, especially when those activities directly threaten recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat that may also be impacted by climate change?

Answer: Yes, I believe that New Mexico must identify certain areas of critical wildlife habitat and set them aside as places where energy production is off-limits. Areas such as bird breeding grounds, wildlife

Deubel/Wang Page 4/ May 23, 2019



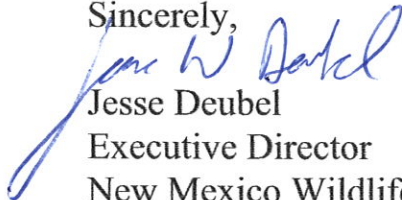
migration corridors and wildlife winter range should be respected and protected to ensure the survival and success of our precious wildlife resources.

Question from Rep. Haaland: Are you concerned that failure to respond to climate change will negatively impact New Mexico's economy?

Answer: Yes, I'm concerned that failure to respond to climate change will hurt the state's economy. Beyond that, failure to respond to climate change would pose an existential threat to mankind over the long term. The situation has reached crisis proportions.

That concludes my written testimony. Again, it has been an honor to testify before the subcommittee. If you have any questions about my testimony, or if I may be of service otherwise, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Jesse Deubel

Executive Director

New Mexico Wildlife Federation

cc: Rep. Deb Haaland