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Swinomish Indian Tribal Community

A Federally Recognized Indian Tribe Organized Pursuant to 25 U.S.C. § 476
* 11404 Moorage Way * La Conner, Washington 98257 *

October 2, 2019

Honorable Raul Grijalva
Chairman, House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for the Recovering America's Wildlife Act and its Tribal Title

Dear Honorable Washington State Congressional Delegation:

I am writing to express the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community's strong support for the reintroduction of Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) and the inclusion of a new tribal title. We respectfully request your support and co-sponsorship in the House of Representatives to help pass this important bill. In the Senate we respectfully request development, co-sponsorship, and support of a companion bill. We greatly appreciate Representatives Kilmer, DelBene, and Larsen for their early co-sponsorship of the recently reintroduced House bill.

The Swinomish Tribe is a political successor in interest to certain tribes and bands that signed the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott, which reserved to us, among other rights, the right to fish at our usual and accustomed places and to hunt on our traditional lands. Our tribal members co-manage wildlife with the State of Washington and are active stewards of wildlife and their habitat in northwestern Washington. For our tribal members, many of these wildlife species are treaty-reserved resources, with immeasurable cultural, spiritual, and economic value.

We strongly support RAWA because it is a bipartisan effort that would provide much needed funding for States *and* tribes to manage fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need, as well as their habitats. Developed based on recommendations from the Blue-Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources, RAWA will dedicate some \$1.3 billion to states annually and \$97.5 million to tribes to further wildlife conservation.

Wildlife management is currently grossly underfunded in the United States. State fish and wildlife agencies agree that existing Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act revenues (derived from a 10-11% federal excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition) are insufficient to address the broad array of fish and wildlife management issues in the United States. Moreover, tribes have never received funding under this Act and currently receive no stable, dedicated funding to carry out their enumerable wildlife management responsibilities.

In Washington we are blessed with a diverse array of fish and wildlife, many of which are iconic, culturally and ecologically significant species. However, many of our species face increasing challenges, are in steep decline, and may soon face becoming endangered. We believe we must rise to this challenge and proactively manage our wildlife resources—before they become federally listed endangered species.

Proactive management of wildlife requires resources to study population trends and develop science-based management strategies. It also requires capacity to coordinate management with tribal, state, local, and federal governments, because in most cases wildlife traverse jurisdictional boundaries. Yet, current funding for both tribes and states only provides a mere fraction of what is needed to conserve our species and ecosystems.

There are many indispensable conservation management opportunities on tribal lands throughout the nation. Tribes influence the management of a natural resource base of nearly 140 million acres, both on- and off-reservation, including more than 730,000 acres of lakes and reservoirs, over 10,000 miles of streams and rivers, and over 18 million acres of forested lands. Tribal lands provide vital habitat for more than 525 federally-listed threatened and endangered plants and animals, many of which are both ecologically and culturally significant to tribes. Therefore, funding through the Recovering America's Wildlife Act must be inclusive of tribes and must dedicate non-competitive resources to assist tribes with our wildlife conservation efforts.

Proactive conservation is essential for our nation's fish, wildlife and habitat resources, essential for the health of our planet and that of the humans who live upon it. It is also good for taxpayers and good for business – promoting and ensuring outdoor activities, healthier air

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and water, human health, jobs, and a better economy now and for future generations. Therefore, the Swinomish Tribe strongly endorses this year's Recovering America's Wildlife Act with a tribal title, and encourages you to please co-sponsor and support its passage. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brian Cladoosby".

Chairman Brian Cladoosby

Spee-Pots

Swinomish Indian Tribal Community

Cc: Senator Patty Murray

Senator Maria Cantwell

Congresswoman Susan DelBene

Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal

Congressman Denny Heck

Congressman Adam Smith

Congressman Derek Kilmer

Congressman Rick Larson