

October 8, 2019

The Honorable Jared Huffman  
Chairman  
Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee  
Committee on Natural Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Huffman,

On behalf of Defenders of Wildlife and the Center for Biological Diversity, we are writing to identify several important improvements we believe must be made to the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H.R. 3742). The bill represents a once in a generation opportunity for dedicated wildlife funding. As currently written, however, we believe it does not adequately respond to the extinction crisis our planet is currently facing. It is vital that the legislation be improved to create a more equitable balance between fulfilling the nation's commitment to endangered species recovery and achieving the bill's other purposes.

The looming specter of extinction, driven by climate change, land development and exploitation of wildlife, is the overwhelming threat that conservation must address. Several studies have recently concluded that annual species recovery spending should be \$1.6-\$2.3 billion.<sup>1</sup> The need for increased funding has also been echoed by over [1,600 scientists](#) in a recent letter published in *Science* and follows the comprehensive IPBES Global Assessment on species extinction and loss of biodiversity.

While we strongly support the provision of additional funding for wildlife conservation, H.R. 3742 fails to respond adequately to this pressing need for funding for species at imminent risk of extinction. H.R. 3742 would provide \$1.3975 billion annually in dedicated federal funding to support states and tribes in conserving species identified by the states and tribes as species of greatest conservation need, but only directs 10% of this funding to the conservation of species actually listed as threatened or endangered under federal or state law. To address our most urgent wildlife conservation challenge, we strongly believe the proportion of funding allocated in the bill for management and recovery of listed threatened and endangered species must be very substantially increased.

Moreover, we believe the amount of funding for listed species should depend on the number of such species in each state. The current allocation formula in H.R. 3742, which follows the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Acts apportionment, takes into account the size of a state, leaving smaller states that contain an abundant number of critically endangered species,

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<sup>1</sup> Available at [https://defenders-cci.org/files/ESA\\_recovery\\_costs\\_2019.pdf](https://defenders-cci.org/files/ESA_recovery_costs_2019.pdf) and <https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/biodiversity/pdfs/Shortchanged.pdf>.

such as Hawaii and the territories, shortchanged due to their geographic size. This formula would deprive imperiled species in such states of funding critically needed for their recovery.

We also believe an accountability mechanism should be added to the bill that would require states to amend their State Wildlife Actions Plans, with approval from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to include a detailed plan for spending the new federal funding.

Lastly, if findings are retained in the bill, we believe they should focus on the strong national interest in conservation of wildlife, particularly imperiled species, as justifying the provision of federal funding for states to conserve species on the brink of extinction. It is critical that we set the right tone for this legislation in the face of unprecedented biodiversity loss.

We applaud your strong leadership and ongoing efforts to defend the Endangered Species Act and secure additional funding for wildlife. We look forward to working with you to ensure that H.R. 3742 better addresses the national interest in conservation of imperiled species.

Sincerely,

Defenders of Wildlife  
Center for Biological Diversity