

Questions of the Honorable Debbie Dingell
House Committee on Natural Resources

HEARING

Legislative Hearing on H.R. 3742, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, and H.R. 2795, the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act of 2019

October 17, 2019

OPENING STATEMENT

Thank you, Chairman Huffman and Ranking Member McClintock, for convening this important hearing to discuss bipartisan legislation to address the biodiversity crisis in our country.

We are in the midst of an unprecedented biodiversity crisis. Without a change in the way we finance fish and wildlife conservation, the list of federally threatened and endangered species will grow from nearly 1,600 species today to thousands more in the future.

Just last month, we discovered that the number of birds in the United States and Canada have fallen by 29 percent since 1970 – a decline of almost 3 billion fewer total birds.

These developments threaten our common environmental heritage, reduce opportunities for outdoor recreation, and will require costly and aggressive “emergency room measures” under the Endangered Species Act if not addressed soon.

The cost of inaction is immense – the longer we wait to address this issue, the more resources we will ultimately need to safeguard our nation's wildlife and environment.

This is why the Recovering America's Wildlife Act is necessary.

The legislation provides \$1.4 billion in dedicated, annual funding to the states, territories, and Native American tribes for proactive conservation efforts for the 12,000 species of wildlife and plants identified under federally-approved State Wildlife Action Plans.

This bold investment in our nation's wildlife will pay significant dividends. It will allow states to take proactive action that will prevent at-risk species from becoming endangered.

Additionally, ten percent of the funds in the legislation will go toward threatened and endangered species, which aids in recovery efforts of those most at-risk, iconic species.

The broad group of stakeholders supporting the Recovering America's Wildlife Act underscores the need for action and the support for this approach.

Leading conservation organizations, sportsmen's groups, and businesses all support the legislation for good reason – it utilizes proven funding mechanisms, boldly addresses pressing conservation needs, and prevents the need for more costly interventions in the future.

We have received letters of support from a bipartisan group of six Great Lakes governors, as well as groups like the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation and countless tribal organizations. I would like to ask unanimous consent to enter these into the record.

[hold pile of letters up for effect]

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act is the product of months of work and consultation with these stakeholders and has broad bipartisan support.

We have a conservation, economic, and moral rationale to act in order to protect and recover America's wildlife for future generations.

This is an opportunity to take historic action to address a pressing conservation need, and I strongly urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Thank you and I yield back.