

Testimony of the Wildlife Conservation Society
Submitted to House Appropriations Subcommittee State, Foreign Operations, and Related
Agencies
March 3, 2015

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Chairwoman Granger, Ranking Member Lowey, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY2016 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act regarding Biodiversity, Wildlife Poaching & Trafficking, the Global Environment Facility, Energy and Global Health Accounts. The Bronx Zoo-based Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) was founded with the help of Theodore Roosevelt in 1895 with the mission of saving wildlife and wild places. Globally, WCS works to protect 25 percent of the world's biodiversity in more than 60 countries around the world. WCS manages more than 200 million acres of protected lands, employing more than 4,000 staff including 200 Ph.D. scientists and 100 veterinarians. In our view, the largest threats facing conservationists today are wildlife poaching and resource exploitation; climate change; zoonotic diseases; and sustaining the world's natural capital to support human livelihoods.

U.S. government investments in international conservation promote U.S. national and economic security objectives in foreign policy. As an implementing partner of the U.S. government overseas, WCS is closely involved with a myriad of development activities that promote natural capital that sustains our societies, our economies and the planet's ecological systems. At the same time, increasing pressures on natural resources and biodiversity loss are driving scarcity, attracting large scale criminal and terrorist related activities around poaching, overfishing, trafficking and lawlessness. These organized criminals undermine the rule of law and rob developing countries of economic opportunities, leaving our future well-being dependent upon making the world increasingly stable, secure and safe.

Targeted investments to promote the health and wellbeing of people in other countries and the natural resources they rely upon, are not only consistent with humanitarian and moral values but drive our foreign policy goals of opening up foreign markets to American products. As the Congress and the Subcommittee develop the budget for FY16, it is important to note that international conservation comprises less than 1% of U.S. foreign assistance, which, in turn, is less than 1% of the non-defense discretionary federal budget. This modest investment in sustainable natural resource management in places like Afghanistan, Burma, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guatemala, Peru, Vietnam and elsewhere reduces conflict around scarce resources and promotes local law enforcement and the rule of law. This testimony will focus on programs at the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the U.S. Treasury's contributions to the Global Environment Facility – as well as the need to increase intelligence sharing among these agencies and others like the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of the Interior to combat terrorist and criminal syndicates engaged in wildlife trafficking.

USAID Biodiversity: The USG is a global leader in biodiversity, forest and marine conservation investments which are delivered largely through the USAID Biodiversity Program and prioritized around the recently released USAID Biodiversity Policy. These programs help protect some of the

largest and most at-risk natural landscapes and the livelihoods of millions of people who directly depend on natural resources for their survival and economic growth. Partnerships by USAID, foreign governments, the private sector, local peoples and conservation organizations leverage additional investments and build good-will toward the United States around the world. One of the largest initiatives is the Sustainable Conservation Approaches in Priority Ecosystems (SCAPES) which supports conservation efforts in 19 countries, from the forest slopes of the Andes Mountains to the African savannas and the Mongolian steppe. Local capacity for biodiversity conservation is strengthened through SCAPES transboundary field activities while addressing threats from poaching, habitat loss, climate change, disease and unsustainable agriculture.

Indigenous territorial management in Northern Bolivia through the **Initiative for Conservation in the Andean Amazon (ICAA)** has reduced deforestation along roads four-fold in comparison to neighboring areas. This reduction has been achieved through the development of consensus around land use; implementation of forest management projects including handicrafts, ecotourism, forestry and agro forestry initiatives; development of internal natural resource use regulations; and implementation of a territorial control strategy based on physical delimitation of vulnerable perimeters and community control. This reduction in deforestation represents 1,400 hectares per year and five million total CO₂-equivalent between 2008 and 2015.

In Central Africa, despite a long history of conflict, the **Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE)** brings 6 nations and many U.S. government agencies together to save Africa's elephants and forest gorillas through anti-poaching, land-use planning and sustainable development which in turn decreases forest destruction and degradation. CARPE is the primary vehicle for U.S. government investment in the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, an international initiative with more than 40 governmental and non-governmental partners. The latest implementation phase has shifted from establishing use-rights through multi-stakeholder land use plans to building anti-poaching and law enforcement capacity in elephant landscapes. In a region where nearly half of the forests are under concession to timber companies, protected areas have grown by more than 12.5 million additional acres.

Guatemala's Maya Biosphere (MBR) is the largest intact forest in Central America, rich with archeological sites and indigenous peoples dependent upon the forest for their livelihoods. With close proximity to the northern border, the forest--and fires set in around it--serve as cover for the trafficking of many illegal commodities. WCS trains park ranger in law enforcement, species monitoring and carbon counting. Home to the largest remaining scarlet macaw population, the forests and protected areas are monitored closely for disruptions that would spread disease to the macaw hatchlings or increase habitat loss from deforestation.

U.S. Forest Service International Programs (FS-IP) promote sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation internationally by linking the skills of the field-based staff of the Forest Service with partners overseas to address the most critical forestry issues. FS-IP regularly leverage the internal expertise of its wildlife biologists, forest economists, hydrologists, disaster and fire management specialists, and policy makers to build capacity in foreign countries. Some of the world's most threatened forests in the Amazon, Congo, Russia and Indonesia are undergoing improved forest management while forest sustainability policies are being promoted in other forests around the world. WCS and others, in partnership with FS-IP are recovering habitats of the world's endangered Siberian Tiger, Monarch Butterfly and Panda. In international trade, FS-IP work to level

the playing field for U.S. timber by reducing the amount of illegal or underpriced timber on the world market.

The President's FY16 Budget Request does not include a line item for the USAID Biodiversity Program or any of the subaccounts within the Biodiversity Program such as CARPE, ICAA, Maya Biosphere Reserve, U.S. Forest Service, or the Lacey Act. WCS recommends that the USAID Biodiversity line item be restored and funded at \$250 million, equal to the FY15 enacted level, of which at least \$39.4 million be allocated to CARPE, \$20 million to the Andean Amazon Conservation Initiative, \$1 million to Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve, \$2 million to implement and enforce the Lacey Act (section 8204 of Public Law 110-246), \$1 million to Dept of Justice Environment and Natural Resources Department to conduct additional wildlife trafficking workshops overseas, and \$5 million to the US Forest Service pursuant to the Foreign Assistance Act Sec. 632(a).

Combating Wildlife Poaching and Trafficking: The illegal trade in endangered wildlife products, including ivory, rhino horns, pangolins, tiger parts, shark fins, turtle shells and other parts, is worth at least an estimated \$8 to \$10 billion annually. Increasing profits and low deterrence associated with wildlife trafficking is attracting greater involvement of criminal and terrorists groups--the same organized crime groups engaged in trafficking drugs, humans and weapons. In 2012 alone, WCS estimates that 35,000 African elephants were poached for their ivory--that is an average of 96 elephants per day or one poached every 15 minutes. Continued poaching at these rates may mean the extinction in the wild of forest elephants within a decade. WCS works in partnership with USAID, U.S. State Department International Narcotics Control & Law Enforcement (INL), and U.S. State Department Office of Environment and Science (OES) to implement anti-poaching, law enforcement and capacity building programs around investigations, prosecutions and convictions. Park rangers and anti-poaching patrols are being trained in SMART, the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool, to log and geo-reference patrol routes, poaching incidents and criminal evidence to target law enforcement efforts to the greatest threats.

Following an Executive Order to Combat Wildlife Trafficking, the Administration unveiled its National Implementation Plan in February 2015, outlining a whole of government integrated approach to investing in high-need areas of work involving expertise across several federal agencies. In November 2013 the USG crushed its stock of confiscated ivory followed in 2014 by similar ivory crushes conducted by the governments of China, Vietnam, Hong Kong and others. This USG Strategy and subsequent Implementation Plan serve as model policies for other source and demand countries to contribute political, diplomatic and financial support to saving endangered species from the poaching crisis. Recently, the government of China announced a 1-year moratorium on imports of ivory in advance of a diplomatic visit by Prince William, the Duke of Cambridge, demonstrating a softening of China's global stance on combating wildlife trafficking.

The FY15 Consolidated Appropriations Act includes a Congressional directive for \$55 million to combat wildlife poaching and trafficking to be implemented by USAID and the U.S. State Department. The FY16 Administration Request did not include a similar line item. Rep. Grace Meng is spearheading a Members letter to Appropriators requesting not less than \$55 million to combat wildlife trafficking, and WCS supports this position implementing its field operations to protect wildlife, strengthen law enforcement, disrupt trafficking networks, shutdown criminal syndicates and terrorist groups, address corruption and reduce demand for endangered species parts

and products. WCS also recommends USAID and U.S. State Department monitor and evaluate existing investments to ensure limited resources are being directed to the most appropriate activities and locations.

The Global Environment Facility (the GEF): The US is one of more than 30 donors to the GEF where about 1/3 of all funds are directed to biodiversity conservation in the developing world. WCS is a partner of the GEF in Burma to develop the country's natural resource management strategy. The first of its kind nation-wide assessment of biodiversity and its threats will contribute significantly to donor priorities around sustainable development of natural resources and land use planning. The GEF is also developing a framework for a new stream of financing to combat wildlife trafficking to which WCS is actively contributing. WCS supports the Administration's FY16 Budget Request for the Treasury Department to transfer \$168.2 million to the GEF, which honors the USG pledge to the GEF replenishment and pays down past owed amounts.

Sustainable Landscapes: Forests are essential for regulating water flow, capturing rainfall for drinking water and often preventing catastrophic flooding and soil erosion. Forests supply direct food, economic resources and medicinal products to the over 1.6 billion people who live in them, and are vital to the healthy ecosystems we all depend on. Sustainable Landscapes support for reducing deforestation through sustainable management practices helps to protect these essential storehouses of biodiversity and carbon, as well as the essential goods and services that they provided people around the globe, including the United States. U.S. support will give developing countries the ability to address the drivers of deforestation and degradation, halt illegal logging and restore degraded lands. This has direct economic benefits for U.S. producers as well: unfair competition from illegally harvested timber in developing countries costs the U.S. timber industry \$1 billion annually. WCS requests funding to USAID and State Department for Sustainable Landscapes level with FY15 levels. As the **Green Climate Fund** comes into implementation it will be important to sustain commitments to the USAID global climate change programs while offering seed funding to the Green Climate Fund.

USAID Emerging Pandemic Threats (EPT) Program: These investments fight the emergence of zoonotic diseases that spread between people and animals by building essential human and institutional capacity to prevent disease transmission at its source, and controlling its spread locally and across borders regionally and globally. Since 2009, the PIOET/EPT Program has collected samples from over 35,000 wild animals at high risk interfaces and discovered over 200 new potentially zoonotic viruses from wild animals in countries where the risk of disease emergence is high. The governments of Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Bangladesh, and Bolivia were assisted by USAID EPT-funded partners in responding to disease outbreaks. The program has built viral family diagnostic capacity in 33 countries; and more than 1,500 human, animal, and environment health professionals from 20 countries have been trained in the prevention, timely detection, confirmation, preparedness and response to zoonotic diseases outbreaks. Sustaining these investments is essential for U.S. national security and public health interests. In FY16, WCS supports the FY15 enacted level of \$72.5 million for the Pandemic Influenza and Other Emerging Threats (PIOET) Office, in USAID's Global Health Bureau, to restore funding beyond the Administration FY16 Request of \$50 million.

In conclusion, WCS appreciates the opportunity to share its perspectives and recommend critical but modest funding for international conservation in the FY16 SFOPs Appropriations Act.

Conservation investments are in our national security and economic interests and assist in building capacity, strengthening governance and stabilizing regions prone to conflict and unrest.