

**Testimony of Kelly Keenan Aylward**  
**Washington Office Director for the Wildlife Conservation Society**  
**Before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the**  
**Interior, Environment and Related Agencies**  
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My name is Kelly Keenan Aylward, and I am the Washington Office Director for the Wildlife Conservation Society. I would like to thank Chairwoman McCollum, Ranking Member Joyce, and the members of the Subcommittee for providing this opportunity to deliver testimony in support of funding in the FY20 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for the Multinational Species Conservation Fund, Office of International Affairs, Office of Law Enforcement, and Cooperative Landscape Conservation Program accounts at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the International Forestry program at the U.S. Forest Service.

WCS was founded with the help of Theodore Roosevelt in 1895 with the mission of saving wildlife and wild places worldwide. Today, WCS manages the largest network of urban wildlife parks in the United States, led by our flagship, the Bronx Zoo. Globally, our goal is to conserve the world's largest wild places, focusing on 16 priority regions that are home to more than 50% of the world's biodiversity. We have offices in almost 60 countries and manage more than 200 million acres of protected areas around the world, employing more than 4,000 staff including 200 Ph.D. scientists and 100 veterinarians.

The American conservation tradition is based on promoting sustainable use of our natural resources in order to preserve the world's species and environment for future generations. In recognition of the current fiscal constraints, it is important to note that effective natural resources management and conservation has indirect economic benefits, including contributing to local economies through tourism and other means. Internationally, by supporting conservation, the U.S. is increasing the capacity of other nations to respond to extreme weather, drought, and wildfires, thus strengthening governance in these developing nations, which improves U.S. national security. That is why WCS and partners have launched the *Natural Security Campaign* ([www.naturalsecurity.us](http://www.naturalsecurity.us)) to demonstrate that investments in international conservation can help prevent global conflicts, reduce international crime, guard against natural disaster, and promote legal and fair trade.

**FWS—Multinational Species Conservation Fund—\$15 Million:** Global priority species, such as tigers, rhinos, African and Asian elephants, great apes, and marine turtles, face constant danger from poaching, habitat loss and other serious concerns. MSCF programs have helped to sustain wildlife populations by controlling poaching, reducing human-wildlife conflict, and protecting essential habitat—all while promoting U.S. economic and security interests in far reaching parts of the world. These programs are highly efficient, granting them an outsized impact because they consistently

leverage two to four times as much in matching funds from organizations like WCS, foreign governments, local NGOs, and private foundations.

WCS has had great success on projects using funds from the MSCF. One Great Ape award to WCS in FY17 is supporting a 5-year project to secure the Cross River gorilla population in Nigeria and Cameroon. WCS is protecting the intact, old growth forest that is home to the less than 300 gorillas that remain and a number of forest dependent communities by establishing an effective network of core protected areas and corridors linking habitat between the two countries despite pressures from Chinese developers and the provincial government's interest in building a "Super Highway" through this critical habitat.

WCS is grateful that the Committee appropriated \$11.6 million for the program in FY19, an increase of \$500,000 from the previous year and the first increase of any kind for the program in 3 years. I urge the Subcommittee to consider a larger increase for FY20 to \$15 million. There are some very strong reasons to do so. Poaching and wildlife trafficking remain a serious threat to all of the species covered by the Species funds. The illegal killing of rhinos for horns and African elephants for ivory continues, and there is growing concern that endangered Asian elephants are being poached for their skin, which is used in jewelry and for specious medicinal purposes in rural areas in Southeast Asia.

It is also important to mention that the Senate-passed lands package includes the provisions of the WILD Act, which would reauthorize the MSCF and expand the Marine Turtle Conservation Act to include tortoises and freshwater turtles. About 60 percent of all of the 330 modern species of tortoises and freshwater turtles are listed as threatened, endangered, or are already extinct in the wild according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Ten species are known to have wild populations of less than 100 individuals. The statutory language in the WILD Act ensures that no cuts would occur to grants to marine turtle projects if the legislation is passed, meaning that additional funding is necessary to ensure that grant funding is available for the newly added species. I hope that the Subcommittee will consider these points when determining its allocation.

**FWS—International Affairs—\$18 Million:** The FWS International Affairs (IA) program supports efforts to conserve our planet's rich wildlife diversity by protecting habitat and species, combating illegal wildlife trade, and building capacity for landscape-level wildlife conservation. The program provides oversight of domestic laws and international treaties that promote the long-term conservation of plant and animal species by ensuring that international trade and other activities do not threaten their survival in the wild. Within IA, the FWS Regional Programs for Africa, Eurasia, and the Western Hemisphere seek to address grassroots wildlife conservation problems from a broad, landscape perspective, building regional expertise and capacity while strengthening local institutions.

The IA program works hand-in-glove with the MSCF, supporting the conservation of species that are not specifically addressed by the species funds and providing support for conservation of entire habitats, even in cases where they happen to cross political boundaries. Big cats like jaguars and snow leopards are great examples of why this program is important. These species need large territories to provide the prey they need to survive and thrive, and protection from poachers and others that infringe upon protected areas to conduct illegal activities. The IA program supports WCS projects that are striving to help these species through scientific study, habitat conservation, and working with local communities to conserve these animals.

The final FY19 bill contained level funding for the International Affairs program. WCS asks that the subcommittee increase funding for the program to \$18 million so that this program can better support efforts to conserve landscapes and vulnerable species.

**FWS—Office of Law Enforcement—\$85 Million:** The U.S. remains one of the world’s largest markets for wildlife and wildlife products, both legal and illegal. A small group of dedicated officers at OLE are tasked with protecting fish, wildlife, and plant resources by investigating wildlife crimes—including commercial exploitation, habitat destruction, and industrial hazards—and monitoring international trade to intercept illegal products like wildlife and timber and facilitate legal commerce. As the United States developed and implemented a comprehensive strategy to combat the growing crisis of wildlife trafficking over the last several years, many of the new responsibilities placed on FWS are enforced by OLE, and WCS supports increasing funding for the agency to \$85 million. Additional funding for the program will support their efforts to maximize the scope and effectiveness of FWS’ response to the international wildlife trafficking crisis. It will ensure OLE has an adequate number of law enforcement agents deployed to enforce laws against wildlife trafficking in the U.S. effectively and allow the agency to continue to support coordinated law enforcement actions against wildlife trafficking overseas through the deployment of 11 FWS attachés in U.S. embassies in countries where substantial trafficking in wildlife occurs. Additional funding will allow at least 2 additional personnel to be stationed in embassies and missions that serve as key transit points for illegal wildlife and stronger enforcement against illegal timber and wildlife products entering the U.S.

**FWS—Cooperative Landscape Conservation—\$13 Million:** Many of the domestic conservation programs in this bill provide funding to states to implement their conservation goals. But wildlife does not recognize political boundaries, and scarce conservation dollars can best be spent when effective planning and coordination takes place across entire ecosystems. The CLCP funds a network of 22 Landscape Conservation Cooperatives in the U.S. and Canada, which use a collaborative approach between Federal, State, tribal and local partners to identify landscape scale conservation solutions and work collaboratively to meet unfilled conservation needs, develop decision support tools, share data and knowledge, and facilitate and foster conservation

partnerships. The final FY19 appropriations bill cut funding for this program by approximately \$500,000. WCS encourages the Committee to return funding to the FY18 level of \$13 million for this program to maintain support for landscape planning and design that will improve the condition of wildlife habitat and improve resilience of U.S. communities.

WCS is working to compliment the efforts of the CLCP through our Climate Adaptation Fund. Established by a generous grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Climate Adaptation Fund supports ground breaking, science based projects, using traditional and new conservation tools applied in strategic ways to help wildlife and ecosystems adapt to a range of climate impacts in the U.S.

**USFS—International Forestry—\$10 Million:** The US economy has lost approximately \$1 billion per year and over 200,000 jobs due to illegal logging, which is responsible for 15-30% of all timber by volume. The FS-IP program works to level the playing field by reducing illegal logging and improving the sustainability and legality of timber management overseas, translating to less underpriced timber undercutting U.S. producers. Through partnerships with USAID and the Department of State, FS-IP helps to improve the resource management in countries of strategic importance to U.S. economic and national security.

With technical and financial support from FS-IP, WCS has been working to conserve a biologically rich temperate forest zone called the Primorye in the Russian Far East for over a decade, focusing on the Amur tiger and Far Eastern leopard and their habitat, species with approximately 400 and 35-40 individuals remaining the wild, respectively. Human encroachment, illegal logging, and widespread use of agricultural burning fracture and threaten the habitat of these endangered animals and increase human wildlife conflicts. Since the Amur tiger and Far Eastern leopard are dependent on large tracts of intact, functional forest ecosystems, WCS has been focusing on these two species as a means to address larger biodiversity conservation and scientific-technological capacity building goals throughout the region. WCS supports an appropriation of \$10 million for FY20, a small but important increase in funding for this program.

I appreciate the opportunity to share WCS's perspective and to make a case for maintaining modest increases in federal investments in conservation in the FY20 Interior, the Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. Conservation of public lands is an American tradition and, as far back as 1909, Theodore Roosevelt recognized that the management of our natural resources requires coordination between all nations. Continued investment in conservation will reaffirm our global position as a conservation leader, while improving our national security and building capacity and good governance in developing countries.