

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

September 30, 2019

Mr. Stephen Guertin
Deputy Director for Policy
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Guertin,

Thank you for appearing before the Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife to provide testimony on H.R. 925, H.R. 1747, H.R. 2748, H.R. 2854, H.R. 2918, H.R. 2956, H.R. 3399, H.R. 4340, H.R. 4341 and H.R. 4348 on Tuesday, September 24th, 2019. As a follow-up to your testimony, please find the enclosed additional questions submitted by members of the Committee for inclusion in the final hearing record. Please provide your written responses to: Ms. Casey MacLean, Subcommittee Clerk, **no later than October 8th, 2019**. Committee Rule 3(o) requires responses within 10 business days of the last day of the hearing.

We greatly appreciate your time and insight, and we remain grateful for your contribution to the Committee's work. Should you have any questions, please contact Ms. MacLean at (202) 226-7673 about this request.

Sincerely,



Jared Huffman
Chair

Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife

Enclosure

Questions for the Record

Questions from Representative Jared Huffman

Mr. Guertin, during the hearing you made a commitment to comply with my request for a copy of agency communications with the Westlands Water District and other non-federal parties on the biological opinions that are currently being developed for the Central Valley Project. Will this requested information be provided by October 11, 2019, as I and Chairman Grijalva have requested?

Questions from Representative Nydia Velázquez

Mr. Guertin, as you may know, in 2017 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's career scientists completed a draft biological opinion regarding the impacts of three toxic pesticides (*malathion*, *diazinon*, *chlorpyrifos*) on endangered species, and that review was effectively killed by Secretary Bernhardt for political reasons.

The scientists concluded that chlorpyrifos, a deadly pesticide that causes neurological developmental problems in children, is putting 1,399 species on a path to extinction.

- Mr. Guertin, can you please tell me what steps the Service is taking right now to implement on-the-ground conservation activities to protect any endangered species from chlorpyrifos?

Similarly, Mr. Guertin, the career scientists at the Service expressed alarm that many endangered plants could be wiped out by pesticides because even just a single exposure could kill the pollinators that these plants depend upon.

- Given the Service's decision in 2018 to reverse a ban on neonicotinoid insecticides on wildlife refuges and the Service's continued failure to complete — or even take any meaningful action — to make progress on pesticide consultations, please tell me what specific conservation actions on-the-ground that the Service is taking right now to protect pollinators from pesticides?

Questions from Representative Gregorio Sablan

Mr. Guertin — Where is U.S. Fish and Wildlife's strategic management plan for the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument? On January 6, 2009, President George W. Bush issued

Presidential Proclamation 8335 establishing the Marianas Trench National Monument, in recognition of the unique biological, ecological, geological and cultural heritage of the lands, waters, and submerged lands of the Mariana Ridge. The Monument proclamation ensured the protection of rare and scientifically significant marine resources including the biologically rich waters of the archipelago's northern islands, as well as the unique geological and volcanic phenomena of the Mariana Ridge. Before and after the proclamation signing, promises were made to the people of the Northern Marianas by federal officials that have not been kept.

Secretarial Order 3284 issued on January 16, 2009 – just ten days after the Monument proclamation – granting authority to the Secretary of Interior to manage the monument was delegated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Fish and Wildlife was directed to prepare management plans and promulgate implementing regulations in two years – by January 2011.

Over eight and a half years later these is still no management plan. Little to no federal resources have been expended to promote the Monument. There is no Visitors Center and no plans for one. There has been scant public education and outreach programs. As a result, scientific exploration and research, tourism and recreational activities have not been realized. My constituents have been asking the federal government to make good the promise of the Monument from day one.

- What can you tell me about the status of the Strategic Management Plan that is supposed to be provided by the Fish and Wildlife Service? When will it be issued? What work has Fish and Wildlife done in preparations for completion, and what steps if any are still needed? Will we ever see a management plan?

Questions from Representative Jeff Van Drew

FWS does a lot of work with the National Fish Habitat Conservation Partnership. The National Fish Habitat Conservation Partnership is an established program that already has a list of success stories.

- How would this bill contribute to the current efforts?
- Can you give some examples of how public-private partnerships have been successful under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act?

How much could coastal districts who rely heavily on healthy habitat to support fisheries and other wildlife for birdwatching, recreation, fishing, and tourism stand to lose economically should wetlands continue to be lost?

How do wetlands benefit hunters and fishermen?

How will the \$18 million increase in annual appropriated funds further wetland conservation?

In addition to providing answers to the above questions, we respectfully request a follow-up to the commitments that you made to Committee members during the hearing. These include:

- In response to Mr. Huffman's concern over the delay in the Section 7 changes to the Endangered Species Act potentially affecting biological opinions, you committed to following up personally with the Department and to Mr. Huffman.
- In response to Mr. Grijalva's requests for documentation regarding potential political appointee changes to the new Endangered Species Act regulatory rules, and providing biological opinions on pesticides, you committed to speaking with the Department about the importance of transparency in this process.
- In response to Mr. Cox's question regarding the value of the rate of return per nutria trapped, you committed to providing for the record an estimate of the value of wetlands lost to nutria.