

Congressman Matt Cartwright

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER, OCEANS, AND WILDLIFE

Committee Hearing on “H.R. 2748 – SAFEGUARDING  
AMERICA'S FUTURE AND ENVIRONMENT (SAFE) ACT”

September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019

- Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify here today and for the consideration of this critical bill.
- I would like to thank Senator Whitehouse who has been instrumental in drafting and advancing this legislation.
- I would also like to thank the great champions in the environmental community, particularly the Defenders of Wildlife, for lending their expertise to this effort. I would like to give a special thank you to Aimee Delach for testifying today at this hearing and for her support.

- Extreme weather events have become progressively more frequent and destructive in the past decades. This escalation in frequency and intensity puts our ecological and economic stability at risk.
- Last year alone, extreme weather cost our economy \$91 billion. Over the past decade, it has cost our economy \$761 billion.
- Polar sea ice has declined by an average annual rate of 13,500 square miles since 1979—the equivalent of losing an area of sea ice larger than the state of Maryland every year. This loss causes oceans to heat faster which, in turn, results in weather and climate disruptions around the world.
- Moreover, higher sea levels mean that storm surges push further inland. So, not only are storms more severe, but they also have a wider area of effect.

- The disruptions to our ecosystems from extreme weather will have far-reaching consequences for our economy. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, in 2016, outdoor recreation accounted for 2.2% of the American GDP. Moreover, a survey from 2017 estimated that the industry provided 7.6 billion jobs across the nation.
- A healthy ecosystem not only impacts outdoor recreation, hunting, and fishing, but also life-sustaining infrastructure like the availability of medicines, drinking water systems, our agricultural industry, and our ecosystems' ability to store carbon.
- It is imperative that we prepare for the effects of climate change and extreme weather, and that we also focus specifically on climate change's impact on our natural resources. For that reason, I introduced H.R. 2748, the SAFE Act.

- The SAFE Act fortifies our national and local climate resiliency. It ensures that Federal agencies AND states have plans in place to mitigate the effects of climate change on our nation's important natural resources. It also enhances our government's scientific capabilities to study strategies to attenuate the effects of climate change.
- The SAFE Act establishes a National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaption Strategy Joint Implementation Working Group. This will serve as a forum for interagency coordination and consultation on the development of the National Fish, Wildlife, And Plants Climate Change Adaptation Policy.
- The bill directs the Working Group to adopt and revise the National Strategy, as well as publish a biannual report for the public on the implementation of the National Strategy.

- It establishes a National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center that is tasked with developing scientific knowledge, tools, and strategies to address the effects of climate change on the environment.
- Additionally, it establishes an Advisory Committee on Climate Change and Natural Resource Sciences, which would advise the Working Group on the current science of climate change and strategies for climate change adaptation.
- Lastly, the SAFE Act requires states to develop a State Adaptation Plan detailing the state's efforts to address climate change.
- I believe that the SAFE Act would play a critical role in helping us plan for the impacts of climate change. For that reason, I hope and urge the Committee to favorably consider this legislation.
- Thank you, and I yield back.