August 1, 2007

Dear Representative,

We urge you to support comprehensive federal legislation to help America's fish and wildlife, public lands, and oceans adapt to and survive global warming. For this reason we strongly support the Energy Independence, National Security, and Consumer Protection Act, multi-committee legislation expected to be considered shortly by the full House. The Natural Resources Committee title of the Act, formerly H.R. 2337, includes the Global Warming Wildlife Survival Act and related provisions that collectively represent a critical first measure to mitigate global warming's impacts on fish and wildlife. We also appreciate that the Energy Independence Act takes important steps toward restoring sound stewardship to the management of our public lands, ensuring responsible and
accountable energy development, development of alternative energy sources, and planning and action to address climate change and acidification impacts on our oceans and coasts.

Wildlife is a fundamental part of America’s landscape, and wildlife conservation is a core value shared by all Americans. Unfortunately, global warming poses the single greatest threat wildlife faces. To address the root cause of global warming, we must adopt significant reductions in greenhouse gases. We must also act to increase wildlife’s resiliency in the face of the complex threats global warming poses, so wildlife will survive until the benefits of reductions in emissions take effect.

The Global Warming Wildlife Survival Act and other provisions in the Natural Resources Committee’s title of the Energy Independence Act create a comprehensive, national framework to help address the threats global warming poses for fish and wildlife and their habitat on federal, state, tribal and private lands. The Survival Act directs the Interior Secretary, in consultation with other federal agencies, states, and the public, to establish a national strategy for assisting wildlife populations impacted by global warming, including consideration and integration of adaptation strategies in the planning and management of federal lands. Land management agencies receive the coordinated, federal scientific and management support they need to carry out their responsibilities for the nation’s wildlife populations.

Federal public lands are critical to the future of wildlife in America. The federal land management agencies are together responsible for the stewardship of more than 600 million acres, more than 25% of the landmass of the United States. Federal lands contain significant areas of high-value, contiguous wildlife habitat, help protect endangered and threatened species, help prevent species from declining to the point where Endangered Species Act listings are necessary, and help keep common species common, including species valued for hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities. These lands provide refuges for species impacted by the effects of global climate change and will play an important role in wildlife’s ability to adapt to those impacts. But the federal land systems and the federal agencies that manage them are in fiscal crisis. These agencies currently do not have the capacity or resources to address the complex impacts of global warming on the critically-important wildlife and land resources they are charged with protecting. The Natural Resources Committee title creates an Interagency Council on Climate Change, with important responsibilities to ensure that all federal land management agencies act expeditiously to address these issues.

Federally sponsored wildlife partnership programs provide significant federal resources for conservation activities of state, tribal, and private partners. They also serve as leverage to encourage funding for wildlife conservation at every level of the national landscape. Demands for these essential partnership programs far outstrip current funding and these programs, already extremely important, will become increasingly more so as global warming accelerates threats to wildlife and habitat. These include the endangered species program and federal migratory bird programs as well as many state-federal partnership programs, such as the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, that benefit wildlife throughout the nation.

The states also play an essential role in the national effort to protect wildlife from global warming’s impacts. Though the state fish and wildlife agencies only actively manage habitat on a relatively small percentage of the national landscape, their traditional leadership role managing wildlife resources takes on even greater importance with the recent completion of state comprehensive wildlife
conservation plans. These plans address wildlife populations at greatest need of conservation and provide a natural and accountable framework for coordinating conservation to protect wildlife, both game and non-game species, affected by global warming. The states currently receive federal funding to develop and implement these plans through the established State and Tribal Wildlife Grant program, which has a proven track record and provides a clear funding mechanism for tribal programs.

Under this legislation, federal funds are allocated in a balanced and equitable manner to wildlife conservation programs, at both the state and federal level, to support adaptation actions that will best increase the resiliency of fish and wildlife impacted by global warming. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service receives the resources necessary to implement federal wildlife laws and programs as well as various federal-state cost-share programs that benefit wildlife throughout the nation. Significant funding is authorized directly for states to ensure that they can play an effective role in helping wildlife adapt to global warming using their comprehensive wildlife conservation plans. Also, the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program that created those plans is permanently authorized.

The oceans and coasts are expected to be especially heavily impacted by climate change and increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide levels. Increased ocean acidity, rising sea levels, and detrimental changes to the distribution and abundance of fish, wildlife, and habitats are among some of the expected effects. Provisions in this section of the Energy Independence Act recognize the importance of the oceans in climate change and promote increased research and multi-jurisdictional planning to avoid and mitigate impacts. These provisions call on the Secretary of Commerce to draft a national strategy to address global warming’s impacts on ocean and coastal ecosystems, and authorizes him to provide financial and technical assistance and training to coastal states so that they can implement plans to reduce such impacts. It also establishes a National Integrated Coastal Ocean Observation System to improve the ability to document and predict climate change’s effects on oceans.

We strongly support these provisions of the Energy Independence Act because they provide the support and framework necessary to sustain wildlife against the effects of global warming, helps set America on the path toward energy independence, increases accountability in the management of federal energy resources, and spurs alternative energy development. We urge you to support these provisions and to pass the Energy Independence Act when it comes before the full House.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alaska Coalition of Washington  Allegheny Defense Project
Alaska Conservation Solutions  American Fisheries Society
Alaska Wilderness League  American Lands Alliance
Alaska Wildlife Alliance  American Rivers
Arizona Native Plant Society Conservation Committee
Arizona Wilderness Coalition
Arizona Zoological Society
Berks County Conservancy
Bethlehem Township Environmental Commission
Butte Environmental Council
California Oak Foundation/California Wildlife Foundation
Center for Native Ecosystems
Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection
Coalition of National Park Service Retirees
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice
Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch
Endangered Species Coalition
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges
Friends of Assabet National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Crane Meadows National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Ironwood Forest
Friends of Las Vegas National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Mid Columbia National Wildlife Refuges
Friends of Pondicherry National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Rockhound State Park
Friends of San Diego Wildlife Refuges
Friends of Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the 500
Friends of the Earth
Friends of the Minnesota Valley
Friends of Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge
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The Friends of John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum

The Trust for Public Land

The Upper Rockaway River Watershed Association

The Wilderness Society

Theodore Roosevelt Society, Inc

Tishomingo Refuge Ecology and Education Society

Union of Concerned Scientists

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

Valley Nature Center

WildCoast

Wildlands Project