

May 10, 2017

The Honorable Ken Calvert, Chairman
House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum, Ranking Member
House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

On behalf of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, an organization that unites and amplifies the voices of American sportsmen and women through federal policy and funding solutions, I am writing in support of stable funding levels for several key programs within the fiscal year 2018 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. Thank you for your work to ensure strong funding levels for these programs in the FY2017 Omnibus Appropriations Act. Programs within your subcommittee directly support our nation's recreational fishing and hunting and outdoor recreation economies with millions of Americans annually generating \$887 billion in economic revenue through these activities.

As we enter the FY2018 budget cycle and another year of a challenging fiscal environment, TRCP continues to recognize the need for fiscal austerity, while encouraging this subcommittee to invest in the natural resource programs within the U.S. Department of Interior and its agencies, the U.S. Forest Service and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that sustain fish and wildlife habitat and drive hunting and fishing opportunities, sportsmen's access, and economic improvements to rural America. TRCP wishes to work with you and the authorizing committees on identifying stable funding solutions for resource management planning on public lands; sage grouse conservation efforts; fish and wildlife habitat management; wildfire funding needs; maintenance of roads and trails; and on-the-ground Chesapeake Bay and Great Lakes restoration efforts. The subcommittee's strong annual funding for these programs represents a prudent investment in our country's future and enhances the public's access to healthy fish and wildlife habitat, as well as boosting recreational hunting and fishing opportunities.

BLM Resource Protection and Maintenance: Resource Management Planning, Assessment & Monitoring.

TRCP supports an increased level of funding for the BLM Resource Management Planning, Assessment & Monitoring subactivity within the BLM Resource Protection and Maintenance account. This subactivity includes funding for BLM's high priority planning efforts including the initiation of new resource management plans, plan evaluations and implementation strategies. Ensuring BLM has the resources necessary to integrate the most recent state and federal fish and wildlife data; current trends in hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation and land use activities; and ongoing energy development within the planning process is paramount for ensuring the agency is achieving desired conditions across the more than 247 million acres of BLM-managed public lands. TRCP support the BLM Land Use Planning function and its focus on collaboration with local communities and State and tribal governments, as well as on science-based analysis.

BLM Wildlife and Fish Habitat Management.

TRCP supports strong funding levels for the BLM Wildlife and Fish Habitat Management account and the agency's work through this account to support the maintenance, restoration, and enhancement of fish,

wildlife and their habitats on public lands throughout the BLM system. Important BLM activities such as conducting inventories of fish and wildlife resources and developing cooperative management plans while providing for responsible recreation and commercial uses are critically important for BLM's ongoing work with state fish and wildlife agencies and local communities across the West.

Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation. TRCP supports the FY2017 enacted funding levels of \$69 million for the BLM's focus on sage-grouse conservation. Greater sage-grouse habitat has experienced a precipitous decline across the West, and ongoing collaboration across public and private lands is needed to ensure this species remains off the Endangered Species list. These efforts also benefit other game species such as mule deer and support recreational hunting and associated rural jobs across much of the West. Sportsmen and women are at the frontlines of this joint effort and have contributed over \$130 million to sage-grouse management and conservation since 2000. The TRCP thanks this subcommittee for your work to oppose new sage-grouse language in the final FY2017 Omnibus Appropriations Act. In addition to continued support for BLM sage-grouse funding, we continue to encourage this subcommittee to oppose efforts to attach sage-grouse rider language during the FY2018 appropriations process.

North American Wetlands Conservation Act. TRCP supports the FY2018 *Dear Colleague* letter that was circulated by Representatives Young, Thompson, LaMalfa, and Lowenthal to the full House Appropriations Committee on March 22. The letter encourages appropriators to fund NAWCA at strong levels, with grants totaling more than \$1.48 billion and leveraging \$4.34 billion in contributions from nonfederal partners to restore migratory birds and other wildlife habitat within the FWS allocated spending.

National Fish Habitat Action Plan & Partnerships. This account within the FWS funds the National Fish Habitat Partnership, a coalition of outdoor, hunting, angling, industry, and other conservation organizations, that work together to address the loss and degradation of fish habitat in critical waterways throughout America. TRCP supports this plan and requests \$7.3 million to further the water restoration efforts in our country.

National Wildlife Refuge System. The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE) Coalition is a partnership of diverse conservation groups that wish to see the National Wildlife Refuge System's Operations and Maintenance funding supported at a strong level. CARE requests, and TRCP supports, \$900 million annually for the FWS's Refuge System by FY2021, with \$586 million allocated for FY2018.

Land and Water Conservation Fund. TRCP strongly supports robust funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). LWCF supports local rural communities by providing funds to conserve quality fish and wildlife habitat. Thank you for this subcommittee's ongoing support for this program as well as its recreational and sportsmen's access components.

Wildfire suppression. We support the subcommittee's continued efforts to address the growing wildfire suppression funding issue and seek a comprehensive solution to fix this issue. The subcommittee needs to solve the borrowing issue and the erosion of the Forest Service's budget due to increasing wildfire suppression costs. TRCP is a member of the Partner Caucus on Fire Suppression Funding Solution and supports the FY2018 recommendations of this caucus.

USFS Roads and Trails. According to the US Government Accountability Office, "the Forest Service estimated the value of its trail maintenance backlog to be \$314 million in FY2012, with an additional \$210

million for annual maintenance, capital improvement, and operations.” The Forest Service road maintenance backlog measures in the billions. Millions of American sportsmen and women depend on roads and trails to gain access to hunting and fishing on public lands. When they fall into disrepair, public access can become blocked or difficult. Addressing the U.S. Forest Service’s maintenance backlog account is an important issue the TRCP would like to address. We ask the subcommittee to provide stable funding for the maintenance of trails and roads on National Forest System lands.

EPA Geographic Programs. TRCP strongly supports restoration of funding for the EPA Geographic Programs in FY2018 including for the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay programs, both of which were zeroed out in the President’s FY2018 Budget proposal. The EPA Geographic Programs provide necessary federal investments, leveraged several-fold by state and local dollars, to improve the quality of water and wetlands habitat for fish and wildlife, such as menhaden, Canadian geese, and other game species, of great import to the sportsmen’s community, among other purposes.

Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF). TRCP supports increasing funding from the FY2017 enacted amount for the CWSRF. The program provides an important partnership between the federal government and states that allows states to address their highest priority needs. We support the program’s efforts to fund green infrastructure and water quality improvement projects as well as its work to protect estuaries. CWSRF projects are key to ensuring fish and wildlife habitats are maintained.

Wetlands Program Development Grants. TRCP supports appropriating level funding from the FY2017 enacted amount for the Wetlands Program Development Grants. These grants allow state, tribal, and local government agencies to protect, manage, and restore wetlands, and they are an important component of any infrastructure investment. This voluntary program is crucial for restoration of a former or degraded wetland’s restoration to their former states. In Colorado alone, these funds have helped to restore hundreds of thousands of acres of wildlife habitat and over 200 miles of streams.

Nonpoint Source (Section 319) Grants. We support appropriating level funding from the FY2017 enacted budget for the Section 319 Grant program. Today, more streams are impaired due to nonpoint sources of pollution than by point sources, which makes the Nonpoint Source Grant program more important than ever. These funds are important for helping states to take watershed-based approaches to the restoration of waters harmed by nonpoint source pollution. Nonpoint Source Program Grants have been used partially or fully to restore 674 waterbodies, including the Corsica River Tributaries, which significantly decreased nutrient discharges into the Chesapeake Bay, and the Lower Rio Blanco, which provided year-long trout habitat.

National Estuary Program and Coastal Waterways. The National Estuary Program works to protect 28 key estuaries around the United States, including the Puget Sound, an important area to anglers that is home to cutthroat trout and salmon. This program works with state and local agencies as well as local nonprofits to create Comprehensive Conservation Management Plans that protect and improve the water quality and ecological integrity of each estuary. TRCP supports robust funding for this program. Without these funds, the progress made to rehabilitate these estuaries will be lost.

Water Quality Research and Support Grants. As water supplies become more stressed due to increased demand on a limited supply, it is key to have the science and tools available to develop sustainable solutions to water management issues. The EPA’s Water Quality Research and Support Grants help ensure water quality and availability for people and fish and wildlife habitat. The Chesapeake Bay, in particular, has

benefited greatly from this program since two ongoing studies are working to decrease pollution that comes into the Bay. Ending this grant program would have long-term negative consequences for fish and wildlife that depend on the Chesapeake Bay. TRCP asks the committee to fully fund this program.

Across the country, federal funding for conservation has continued to dwindle. While we understand the need to be responsible with taxpayer dollars, we believe that conservation programs are key economic drivers, providing large returns on investment. Their economic benefits are especially valuable to rural communities in America. Therefore, we ask you to support strong annual funding for our nation's public lands and waters to support healthy communities and the vitality of our fish and wildlife. Thank you for your consideration to the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership's recommendations for the FY2018 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

Whit Fosburgh
President & CEO
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Organization: Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Subcommittee: Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

Targeted Agencies: Department of the Interior, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency

May 10, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chairman
Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall, Ranking Member
Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
125 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

On behalf of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, an organization that unites and amplifies the voices of American sportsmen and women through federal policy and funding solutions, I am writing in support of stable funding levels for several key programs within the fiscal year 2018 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. Thank you for your work to ensure strong funding levels for these programs in the FY2017 Omnibus Appropriations Act. Programs within your subcommittee directly support our nation's recreational fishing and hunting and outdoor recreation economies with millions of Americans annually generating \$887 billion in economic revenue through these activities.

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