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The Honorable Norm Dicks
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
B-308 RHOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Norm:

On behalf of our more than one million members and activists, I am writing to express my deepest appreciation to you for crafting a superlative FY 2010 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, H.R. 2996. This marks the third year in which you have shown exemplary leadership in providing direction and resources to address the impacts of climate change on fish, wildlife and ecosystems, and in rebuilding our natural resource management agencies after years of starvation budgets by prior congresses and the Bush administration.

You worked with Appropriations Committee Chair David Obey to ensure a substantial increase in the 302(b) allocation, \$4.7 billion or 17 percent over the FY 2009 level, nearly the full amount of President Obama's request. H.R. 2996 fully funds the request for an unprecedented level of funding for critically needed work to monitor wildlife and their habitats and to take conservation actions on the ground in response to climate change, including \$80 million that will be divided between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and State fish and wildlife agencies, and another \$15 million for the Bureau of Land Management. The bill also provides funding to ensure that the climate change response is grounded in sound science, continuing the ground-breaking effort begun two years ago when the Subcommittee established the new USGS National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center, providing \$15 million for the coming year and also increasing the funding for U.S. Forest Service global climate change research to nearly \$32 million, \$5 million over the request. In addition, H.R. 2996 doubles the requested increase for the National Wildlife Refuge System, and provides essential increases for endangered species, migratory birds, national forests and the National System of Public Lands.

Just as important, the report accompanying H.R. 2996 gives critically needed direction in several areas key to conservation of wildlife and habitat to a new administration juggling numerous priorities. Language is included that:

- highlights as a top priority the need to develop a national strategy to assist fish, wildlife, and ecosystems in adapting to global warming, to coordinate across departments and agencies, and to implement regional landscape level approaches;

- directs the four land management agencies to define national strategies and goals for land acquisition consistent with agency missions and the developing climate change response;
- directs the Bureau of Land Management to take steps to ensure that fish, wildlife and plant populations are sustained over the long term even as renewable energy development is expanded;
- directs the Fish and Wildlife Service to deal with the backlog of candidate species awaiting listing under the Endangered Species Act, and to ensure the orderly and timely listing of species;
- encourages the U.S. Forest Service to review the National Forest Management Act planning process and to develop policy that ensures strong protections for fish and wildlife, sound science, and public involvement – direction that is even more important in light of last week's court decision overturning the Bush administration planning rules; and
- encourages the Department of the Interior to work with the Department of Homeland Security to protect sensitive resources devastated by the effects of illegal immigration and related enforcement along the Southwest border.

I also wish to express Defenders' sincere thanks to your exceptional staff, in particular Pete Modaff, Greg Knadle, Chris Topik, and Delia Scott, who did an excellent job guiding the bill in her first year as subcommittee clerk. Their professionalism, expertise and hard work over many months are evident in the substance of the bill and the report.

Again, thank you. We look forward to continuing our work with you and your staff to support the agencies and programs that are so important to the protection of our wildlife and wild lands.

Sincerely,



Rodger Schlickeisen

Great job, Norm!
The whole community
is grateful.