

Sept 13, 2017

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, we write in strong opposition to H.R. 3354, the Fiscal Year 2018 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill (“Make America Secure and Prosperous Act, 2018”). Due to funding cuts, environmentally damaging policy riders, and the bill’s failure to prevent sequestration, we urge you to:

- Oppose this package should it come to a vote on the House floor;
- Oppose any additional policy provisions or amendments that would undermine protections for our land, air, climate, water, oceans and wildlife;
- Support any amendments to strike these harmful riders or restore funding to critical programs, and
- Pursue a budget deal that prevents sequestration.

Yet again, when faced with the necessary task of passing funding legislation critical to carrying out the day-to-day functioning of our government, the proposal put forward prioritizes controversial political gamesmanship over sound policy and funding. As in years past, this package contains numerous policy provisions and drastic funding cuts that will only serve to undermine critical protections for public health, for our most treasured landscapes, for oceans, wildlife, scientific integrity and the clean air and water we all rely on.

Among the numerous anti-environmental riders in this legislation, are provisions that would undermine efforts to address climate change and protect our clean air and water, weaken land conservation, undermine public participation and input, undercut endangered species and public health protections. These riders are aimed directly at reducing the efficacy of bedrock conservation laws like the Endangered Species Act, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act and have no place in appropriations legislation. Critical funding legislation should not be held hostage by unrelated and damaging anti-environmental riders.

This funding package also makes drastic cuts to vital environmental, scientific and public health programs and agencies. When adjusted for inflation, the FY17 level for the Interior-EPA bill already represents a 10% cut from FY10 levels. This package sends us even further down the wrong path. Furthermore, with Congress not yet having acted to lift the sequestration caps imposed by the Budget Control Act, the funding package currently under consideration will automatically be subject to even deeper cuts. We therefore urge a budget deal that prevents this damaging funding cut.

Funding for the Environmental Protection Agency is slashed by more than \$500 million, which includes an eighteen percent cut to the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. With the agency seeing the attrition of more than 2,000 employees since 2010, and an administration set on driving out even more, cuts of this magnitude will undoubtedly have tangible impacts on the health of our air, water and people. The package cuts funding for the already underfunded National Park Service and other public lands management agencies. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is

cut more than 30% below the enacted level and is less than a third of the authorized level of \$900 million. In its over fifty year bi-partisan history, LWCF has provided economic, recreation, conservation and health benefits to nearly every county and state in the country in addition to many of our most iconic national landscapes. And funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service budget for listing new species under the Endangered Species act is cut by nearly 17 percent which will lead to delays in needed listing decisions, longer recovery times and possibly more extinctions of species.

This package also attacks climate research funding at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, as well as smart transportation and land use planning efforts in the Departments of Transportation and Interior. These funds are critical for our country to effectively plan for and prepare for the impacts of climate change, as opposed to spending exponentially more responding to climate disasters. Case in point is the use of the Advanced Technology Vehicle Manufacturing program (ATVM) in the Rules Committee print as an offset. This program creates jobs and leads to cleaner air and lower carbon emissions.

After yet another intense wildfire season, structural wildfire suppression funding issues remain unaddressed. The failure to identify an alternative funding mechanism for fire suppression has contributed to fire suppression costs swallowing a larger and larger portion of the US Forest Service's budget.

Lastly, we remain concerned that given the tact of this new administration, funds appropriated in this bill are not supported with additional or sufficient language ensuring the administration will use these limited funds as directed. There have already been examples of the administration engaging in "impoundment," like activities and we urge the committee and members to better address this constitutional concern more directly.

In addition to the above highlighted shortcomings, many of the undersigned organizations have further concerns with this legislation.

Again, we urge you to

- Oppose this package should it come to a vote on the House floor;
- Oppose any additional policy provisions or amendments that would undermine protections for our land, air, water and wildlife;
- Support any amendments to strike these harmful riders or restore funding to critical programs, and
- Pursue a budget deal that prevents sequestration.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

The Wilderness Society
Environmental Defense
Action Fund
National Parks
Conservation Association
League of Conservation
Voters
Defenders of Wildlife
Los Padres ForestWatch
Earthworks
Alaska Wilderness
League
American Rivers
Environmental
Investigation Agency
American Society of
Landscape Architects
East Bay Regional Park
District
Sierra Club
Coalition to Protect
America's National
Parks
Save EPA
Natural Resources
Defense Council
Center for Biological
Diversity
Clean Water Action
Scenic America
Green Latinos
Environment America

Californians for Western
Wilderness
Klamath-Siskiyou
Wildlands Center
Crow Canyon
Archeological Center
USOTA - United States
Tour Operators
Association
Great Old Broads for
Wilderness
Earthjustice
Center for Biological
Diversity
Wild Connections
WaterKeeper Alliance
Union of Concerned
Scientists
Wilderness Workshop
New Mexico Wilderness
Alliance
California Native Plant
Society
Wild Virginia
Soda Mountain
Wilderness Council
Sky Island Alliance
Atomic Heritage
Foundation
Klamath Forest Alliance
Environmental
Protection Information
Center (EPIC)

Winter Wildlands
Alliance
Center for Sierra Nevada
Conservation
WILDLANDS Network
WildEarth Guardians
Conservation Colorado
Grand Canyon Trust
White Mountain
Conservation League
Wild Virginia
Voyageurs National Park
Association
Friends of the Inyo
Southern Environmental
Law Center
Montana Wilderness
Association
Appalachian Trail
Conservancy
Hip Hop Caucus
Endangered Species
Coalition
Restore America's
Estuaries
Swan View Coalition
The Regeneration Project
San Luis Valley
Ecosystem Council