

Dear (your representative):

I am angry and disgusted with the content of the proposed Appropriations Bill as it applies to the National Wildlife Refuge System. As (describe who you are or where you live), I stand with the National Wildlife Refuge Association and Friends of the Savannah Coastal Wildlife Refuges in expressing strong opposition to the draft appropriation bill proposed by House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies. If enacted this bill will be a severe blow to the National Wildlife Refuge System and the conservation of all America's wildlife and the local economies they benefit.

The National Wildlife Refuge System is the world's premier system of lands and waters dedicated to wildlife conservation and is currently operating at half of what it truly needs to fully function. This bill would cut overall funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the agency that manages the Refuge System, by 27%. This has the potential to reduce funding for the Refuge System to 2002 levels. In 2002 the Refuge System managed approximately 95 million acres. Since then nearly 50 million acres have been added. How will it be possible for the Service to adequately manage and protect these lands and waters for the American public with the proposed funding level?

This bill also proposes the eradication of the State Wildlife Grants Program, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs). The elimination of these programs and the drastic reduction in the Refuge System's budget will result in degraded habitat, a skyrocketing maintenance backlog, elimination of many recreational programs including hunting, fishing and bird watching and less effective and efficient conservation programming between shareholders with similar conservation objectives.

I also want to express my strong opposition to the provisions in this bill that would eliminate Land and Water Conservation funding and prevent the creation or expansion of a national wildlife refuge. The Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was established in 1965, is a promise by Congress to the American people to use a small portion of royalties from off-shore drilling to support conservation of other resources. We encourage you to keep that promise. Furthermore, by an overwhelming majority with only one dissenting vote, Congress in the 1997 Refuge Improvement Act mandated that the Refuge System should be strategically grown. The current budget proposal goes directly against the intent of Congress in the Improvement Act.

Please oppose the FY14 House Interior Appropriations bill, which is expected to be voted on by the subcommittee on July 23 and the full committee on July 25.

Regards,