

April 26, 2023

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs Murray and Granger, Vice Chair Collins, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of our tens of millions of members and supporters across the country, we respectfully request that you significantly increase environmental funding in Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) and that any anti-environmental policy provisions are excluded from the annual appropriations bills.

Environmental agencies and programs still suffer from a decade of draconian spending caps imposed by the Budget Control Act, which demonstrated that inadequate top-line funding levels harm communities and ecosystems alike. In FY24, we ask that you support a 302(a) allocation that meets or exceeds the \$688.1 billion in non-defense discretionary spending (excluding Veterans Affairs Medical Care) included in the president's budget request. We also ask that you support a 302(b) allocation for the Interior-Environment Subcommittee that meets or exceeds the president's budget, which would require a minimum estimated level of \$51.3 billion (pending official score from the Congressional Budget Office). Finally, we urge you to oppose anti-environmental policy riders—including those carried forward from prior funding bills—which have no place in the appropriations process.

We are extremely concerned by efforts to extract spending cuts as a condition of addressing the impending debt limit, and even more alarmed by suggestions that domestic appropriations should bear the disproportionate brunt of any such cuts. Under the proposal to return overall discretionary spending to FY22 funding levels, non-defense programs would collectively face cuts of 22% if defense spending is not similarly reduced. This would have a disastrous impact on critical environmental work. For example, these cuts would bring renewable energy deployment efforts to a standstill despite recent progress at the Bureau of Land Management, which has approved over 126 projects to generate 14,500 megawatts, and at the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, whose offshore wind energy program has successfully conducted 27 commercial

wind leases covering 2.1 million acres on the outer continental shelf.¹ The cuts would hinder the Environmental Protection Agency's capacity to assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse contaminated properties through the Brownfields program by 308 properties assessed, 132 sites made ready for anticipated use, and 29 properties cleaned up within the next year.² The Department of the Interior estimates the proposal would effectively reduce funding to well below outdated FY16 levels—a wholly unacceptable situation that would result in devastating outcomes for public health and safety as well as for America's irreplaceable public lands, natural resources, and wildlife. These are just a few examples that agencies have highlighted, which illustrate a sliver of the even more expansive real-world impacts that people across the country would face if such cuts were enacted.

We are similarly concerned by efforts to leverage the debt limit to erode bedrock environmental law in the context of federal permitting. Robust funding and staffing remain the best way to expedite the permitting process, not weakening protections for communities. As Congress considers how to honor its debts in the coming months, any fix must not sacrifice necessary conservation spending or safeguards.

With your leadership, we can—and must—rebuild and equip the crucial agencies and programs that promote environmental justice and protect our health, lands, wildlife, air, water, and oceans. Not only is additional funding necessary to address the climate and biodiversity crises, but these investments can also create good-paying American jobs and revitalize our communities. We thank you for your consideration and stand ready to support you in meeting this request.

Sincerely,

¹ <https://democrats-appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats-appropriations.house.gov/files/Department%20of%20Interior%20Letter%20-%20Impact%20of%20Spending%20Cuts.pdf>

² <https://democrats-appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats-appropriations.house.gov/files/Environmental%20Protection%20Agency%20-%20Impact%20of%20Spending%20Cuts.pdf>

Alaska Wilderness League
American Rivers
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Clean Water Action
Climate Action Campaign
ClimateVoice, a project of Tides Center
Conservation Lands Foundation
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice
Earthworks
Endangered Species Coalition
Energy Allies
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Environmental Working Group
Friends of the Earth
GreenLatinos
GRID Alternatives
Humane Society Legislative Fund
League of Conservation Voters
Los Padres ForestWatch
National Audubon Society
National Ocean Protection Coalition
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Oceana
Pacific Whale Foundation
Sequoia Riverlands Trust
Sierra Club
Sierra Forest Legacy
Sierra Nevada Alliance
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Sugar Pine Foundation
The Fire Restoration Group
The Wilderness Society
Trust for Public Land
Union of Concerned Scientists
Western Watersheds Project
Winter Wildlands Alliance
World Wildlife Fund

Cc:

President Joseph R. Biden
Speaker Kevin McCarthy, U.S. House of Representatives
Democratic Leader Charles E. Schumer, U.S. Senate
Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, U.S. Senate
Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, U.S. House of Representatives
Chair Sheldon Whitehouse, U.S. Senate Committee on the Budget
Chair Jodey C. Arrington, U.S. House Committee on the Budget
Ranking Member Charles E. Grassley, U.S. Senate Committee on the Budget
Ranking Member Brendan F. Boyle, U.S. House Committee on the Budget
Chair Jeffrey A. Merkley, U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
Chair Mike Simpson, U.S. House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
Ranking Member Lisa Murkowski, U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Ranking Member Chellie Pingree, U.S. House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies