

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 25, 2018

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and  
Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and  
Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

As you draft the FY19 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, we are writing to ask you to include \$11.1 million for the Multinational Species Conservation Fund (MSCF) and \$15.8 million for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) International Affairs (IA) program to maintain the funding levels included in both the House and Senate FY18 appropriations bills.

The MSCF is made up of a group of five Congressionally-established funds that provide seed money for public-private partnerships that conserve several of the world's most iconic species—wild tigers, African and Asian elephants, rhinos, great apes and marine turtles—in their native habitats. Since 1989, these programs have awarded more than 3,500 grants, focusing on key species and priority regions to ensure the protection of some of the world's most endangered and treasured animals. The MSCF also have low administrative costs, with more than 95% of the FY16 appropriation going directly to competitive grants.

The USFWS IA program supports efforts to conserve our planet's rich wildlife diversity by protecting habitat and species, combating illegal wildlife trade, and building capacity for landscape-level wildlife conservation. The program provides oversight of domestic laws and international treaties that promote the long-term conservation of plant and animal species by ensuring that international trade and other activities do not threaten their survival in the wild. Within IA are the WWB programs that tackle grassroots wildlife conservation problems from a broad, landscape perspective—building regional expertise and capacity while strengthening local institutions.


Together, the MSCF and IA programs serve as a primary funding source for on-the-ground projects designed to combat poaching and wildlife trafficking overseas. International trafficking in wildlife is a multi-billion dollar criminal enterprise, and mounting evidence shows that it is being used as a source of funding for transnational organized crime syndicates and extremist groups. According to the best estimates, illegal trade in endangered wildlife products, including elephant ivory, rhino horns, tiger pelts, and many other products, is worth at least \$8 billion to \$10 billion annually, making it one of the most lucrative criminal activities in the world.

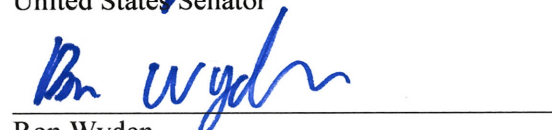
These programs address critical conservation and development concerns in countries around the globe. By conserving keystone species, these programs help sustain large areas of wilderness, home to a rich diversity of flora and fauna. By promoting responsible development and reducing poverty, they benefit local communities and promote political stability in some of the world's most troubled regions, thus enhancing the reputation and national security interests of the United States. They are also an excellent investment for the Federal government, consistently leveraging two to four times as much in matching funds from corporations, conservation groups and foreign governments and serving as public examples of U.S. leadership and support in many nations with which we are seeking improved relationships.

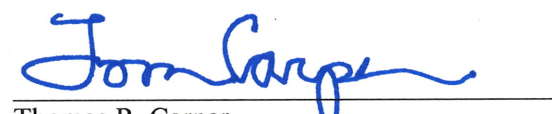
The IA and MSCF programs have enjoyed longstanding, bipartisan support in Congress and enthusiastic interest among our constituents, many of whom place a high value on the protection of these iconic wildlife species. They have also demonstrated success and high impact in relation to their modest cost. Their support is needed now more than ever, given the intense pressures that the global poaching crisis is placing on the wildlife species they are designed to protect. For these reasons, we believe that IA deserves an appropriation of \$15.8 million and the MSCF fully merits a funding level of \$11.1 million for FY 2019. Thank you for taking the time to consider our views and recognizing the importance of these programs in protecting our world's rich biological diversity.

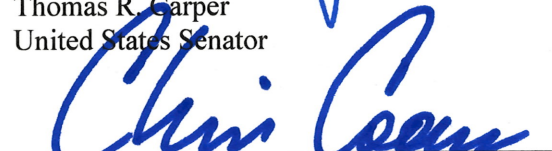
Sincerely,


  
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

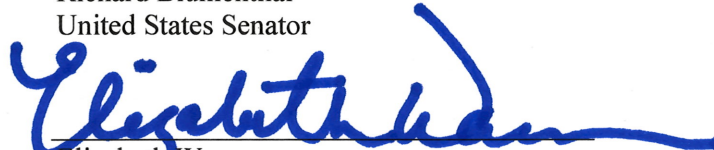
  
Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

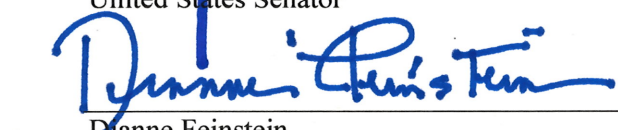
  
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

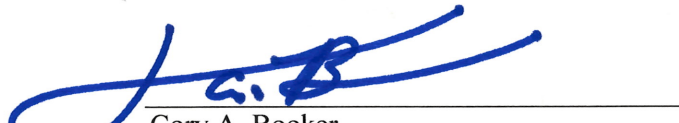
  
Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator

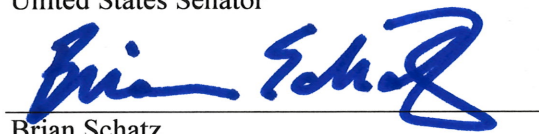
  
Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator

  
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

  
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

  
Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

  
Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

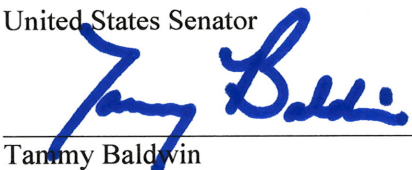
  
Brian Schatz  
United States Senator



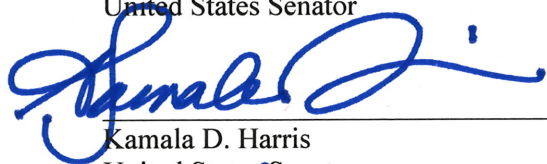
Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



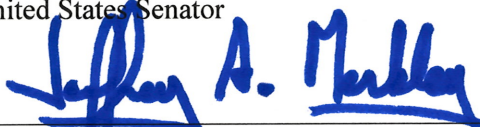
Mazie Hirono  
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator



Jeffery A. Merkley  
United States Senator



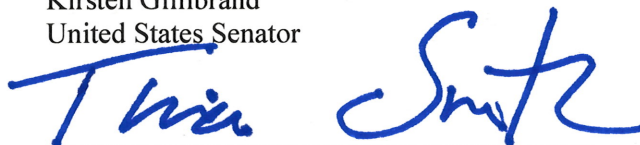
Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



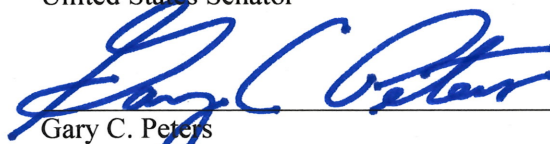
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Tina Smith  
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator