

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 18, 2019

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 FY20 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, we are writing to ask you to include \$15 million for the Multinational Species Conservation Fund (MSCF) and \$18 million for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) International Affairs (IA) program to maintain and expand the funding levels included in both the House and Senate FY19 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. The John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (S.47), signed by the President on March 12, 2019, reauthorized the individual conservation acts that constitute the MSCF funds until 2023. Since 1989, these programs have awarded more than 4,300 grants disbursing \$290 million and leveraging over \$442 million in matching funds from partner donors to fulfill the mandates under the African Elephant Conservation Act, the Asian Elephant Conservation Act of 1997, the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act of 1994, the Great Ape Conservation Act of 2000, and the Marine Turtle Conservation Act. A testament to the success of the MSCF, the Marine Turtle Conservation Act was expanded under S.47 to include tortoises and freshwater turtles.

While the MSCF funds support specific species, the USFWS IA program supports broader 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 Wildlife Without Borders (WWB) programs that tackle grassroots wildlife conservation problems from a broad, landscape perspective—building regional expertise and capacity while strengthening local institutions.

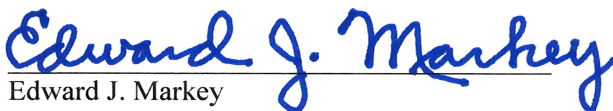
Together, the MSCF and IA programs serve as a primary funding source for on-the-ground projects designed to combat poaching and wildlife trafficking overseas. International trafficking in wildlife is a multi-billion dollar criminal enterprise, and mounting evidence shows that it is being used as a source of funding for transnational organized crime syndicates, extremist groups, and corrupt foreign government officials. 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 and as much as \$23 billion annually, making it one of the most lucrative criminal activities in the world. If implemented transparently and in consultation with local communities, the selection and funding of these projects also has the potential to ensure the rights, health, and safety of local and indigenous peoples in areas affected by poaching and wildlife trafficking.

It is imperative that conservation efforts do not impinge on the human rights of local communities. Prioritizing human rights, promoting responsible development, and reducing poverty are key hallmarks of these funds. These programs should continue to 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 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 MSCF and IA 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, especially in concert with the promotion of human rights. The John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act not only reaffirmed both Congress' and the President's commitment to these programs but also expanded them by adding new species. For these reasons, we believe that the MSCF fully merits a funding level of \$15 million for FY 2020 and the IA deserves an appropriation of \$18 million. 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,



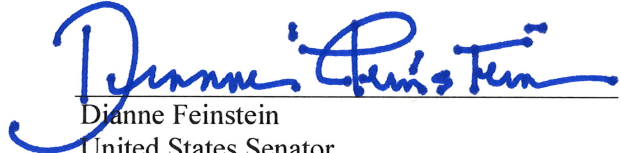
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



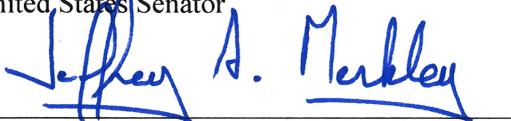
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



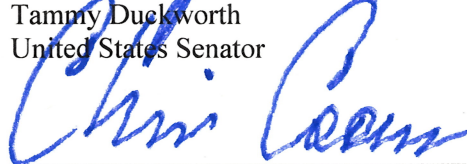
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



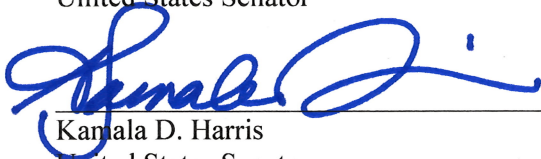
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



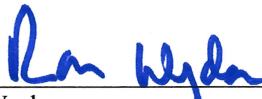
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



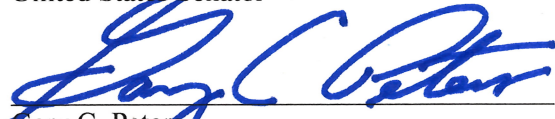
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



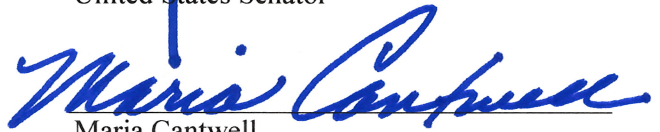
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



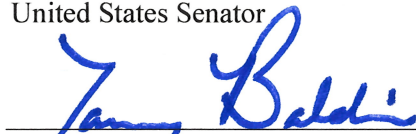
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



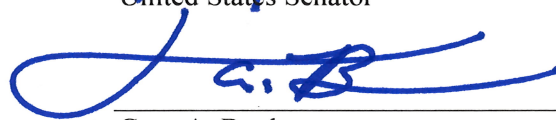
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



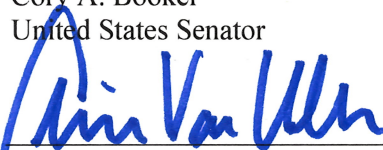
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator