

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 1, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
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:

We are writing to express our concerns about the proposed cuts in the President's FY18 budget for the Multinational Species Conservation Fund (MSCF) and we are seeking your support in the FY18 Interior, the Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for maintaining funding at the FY17 enacted level for this program.

The MSCF, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), is made up of a group of five Congressionally-established funds that provide the species-focused component of the Wildlife Without Borders program. This popular and effective program has provided seed money and critical funding 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. In FY16 alone, the MSCF distributed \$10.9 million of its appropriation to 192 projects in more than 50 countries. These investments leveraged \$22.5 million from partner governments, local NGOs, international conservation organizations, and private businesses, a better than 2-to-1 match of federal dollars. Given the low administrative costs for the programs, more than 98% of appropriated funds went directly to grants.


By conserving keystone species, the MSCF helps 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.

This program also serves 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 becoming 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 and tiger pelts, is worth at least \$8 billion to \$10 billion annually, making it one of the most lucrative criminal activities in the world.


The MSCF program has 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 proven success and high impact in relation to their modest cost. Given the intense pressures that the global poaching crisis is placing on the wildlife species they help protect, support for these funds is more important than ever. For these reasons, we believe that the MSCF fully merits a funding level of \$11.1 for FY 18. Thank you for your consideration of these important programs that help protect our world's rich biological diversity.


Sincerely,


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator


Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator


Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

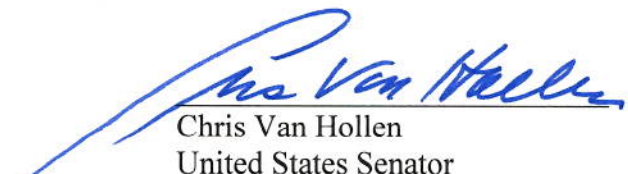

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United States Senator


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United States Senator


Sherrod Brown
United States Senator


Tammy Baldwin
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Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
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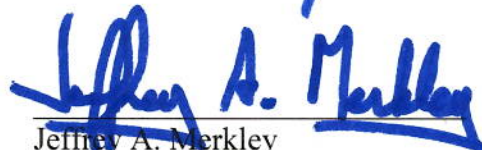
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