

May 7, 2021

Dear Representative:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, we are writing to urge you to cosponsor H.Res.69, a resolution calling on the federal government to establish a National Biodiversity Strategy to protect biodiversity for current and future generations. This approach would articulate the nation's commitment to a whole-of-government response to tackling species extinction and addressing the primary threats to biodiversity, ecosystem services and ultimately, humanity.

Our planet is facing an alarming and catastrophic biodiversity crisis, largely driven by human activities. Habitat destruction, overexploitation of wildlife, climate change, introduction of invasive species, and pollution are all threatening our planet's ecosystems. Recent scientific studies have documented this devastating loss worldwide, including the ground-breaking 2019 Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services assessment warning that about one million species are at risk of extinction.¹ In North America alone, nearly 3 billion birds have disappeared since 1970.² This decline is further exacerbated by the fact that humans have severely altered 75% of the world's lands and 66% of its marine environments.³

The loss of biodiversity presents a direct threat to the security, health, and well-being of people in the United States by reducing valuable ecosystem services like zoonotic disease buffering, water filtration, and pollination. This loss disproportionately impacts communities of color, low-income and tribal communities, and others that been systematically and deliberately targeted for environmentally degrading activities and excluded from conservation efforts. As our nation faces the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism, the widespread loss of species only compounds existing inequalities.

While multiple federal agencies are already tasked with protecting and conserving biodiversity in the U.S., there is no coordinating policy to maximize these efforts or facilitate collaboration among them. In fact, the national effort to address the biodiversity crisis has fallen further behind in recent years due to damaging administration of key laws and programs and woeful underfunding. We need to reverse the damage and make substantial forward progress.

As detailed in H.Res.69, a National Biodiversity Strategy would address the five drivers of biodiversity loss, secure and restore critical ecosystem services, and reestablish the nation as a global leader in biodiversity conservation. This approach would mobilize a stronger, more coordinated, national response and create a blueprint for effectively tackling the challenge.

¹ Diaz, S., J. Settele, E. S. Brondizio, et al. 2019. "Summary for Policymakers of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services." Available at: <https://www.ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment>.

² Rosenberg, L. V. et al. 2019. "Decline of the North American avifauna." *Science* 366 (6461): 120-124.

³ Diaz, S. et al. 2019.

The Strategy would direct federal agencies to pursue actions within existing laws and policies and promote innovation for developing new tools to protect biodiversity. Among other actions to comprehensively reduce and reverse biodiversity loss, the Strategy would advance, reaffirm, and clarify the wildlife value of key goals including responding to the climate crisis, preventing future pandemics, and addressing racial equity and justice. It would also call on the federal government to elevate the nation's role in advancing biodiversity conservation globally through enhanced U.S. leadership, diplomatic engagement, and investment. Lastly, the Strategy would promote accountability and progress in addressing the biodiversity crisis through a new quadrennial assessment.

The biodiversity crisis is not a far-away problem: it is unfolding here and now in the U.S. Our nation should play a leading role in tackling the challenge. As expressed in H.Res.69, a National Biodiversity Strategy to protect our natural legacy, for today and for generations to come, is a visionary and urgently needed response to the biodiversity crisis. It deserves your support.

Sincerely,

Alaska Wilderness League Action
Ancient Forest National Park Coalition
Animal Welfare Institute
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Association of Zoos and Aquariums
Audubon Rockies
Californians for Western Wilderness
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Large Landscape Conservation
Center for Sustainable Communities
Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition
Chesapeake Conservancy
Christian Council of Delmarva
Clark Communication Resources
Climate Law & Policy Project
Colorado Wild Public Lands
Conservation Lands Foundation
Conservation Northwest
Conservation Voters New Mexico
Defenders of Wildlife
Earth Action, Inc
Earth Ethics, Inc.
Earthjustice
Ecology Africa Foundation
Endangered Habitats League
Endangered Species Coalition

Environment America
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Protection Information Center
FOUR PAWS USA
Friends of the Earth
Friends of the Sonoran Desert
Grand Canyon Trust
Grand Junction Area Chapter, Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Howling For Wolves
Humane Society Legislative Fund
Impact Hub Salt Lake
Information Network for Responsible Mining
Inland Ocean Coalition
International Fund for Animal Welfare
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute
Klamath Forest Alliance
Last Tree Laws
Los Padres ForestWatch
Massachusetts Forest Watch
Middle Park Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Montana Wilderness Association
Mormon Environmental Stewardship Alliance
National Audubon Society
National Ocean Protection Coalition
National Parks Conservation Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
OVEC-Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition
Oceanic Preservation Society
Pacific Environment
Panthera
Project Eleven Hundred
Quiet Use Coalition
RESTORE: The North Woods
Rachel Carson Council
Rocky Mountain Wild
San Juan Citizens Alliance
San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council
Save Animals Facing Extinction
Shedd Aquarium
Sierra Club
Southern Environmental Law Center
The Enviro Show

The Humane Society of the United States
The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
The Trust for Public Land
The Wilderness Society
Turtle Island Restoration Network
WILD Foundation
WSL PURE
Western Watersheds Project
Wild Watershed Broads
WildEarth Guardians
Wilderness Workshop
Wildlife Conservation Society
World Wildlife Fund
Wyoming Untrapped