

February 5, 2024

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, we are writing to urge you to cosponsor S. Res. 494, 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 have been systematically and deliberately targeted for environmentally degrading activities and excluded from conservation efforts.

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 due to woeful underfunding and inconsistent administration of key laws and programs at times over the past decade. We need to reverse the damage and make substantial forward progress.

As detailed in S. Res. 494, 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 and build on the forthcoming National Nature 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 S. Res. 494, 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,

Alta Peak Chapter, California Native Plant Society
American Bird Conservancy
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Animal Welfare Institute
Bat Conservation International
Black Hills Audubon Society (Olympia, WA)
Buffalo Field Campaign
Christian Council of Delmarva
Conservation Connection Foundation
Conservation Law Foundation
Conservation Northwest
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice
Endangered Species Coalition
Environment America
Environmental Protection Information Center – EPIC
Four Paws USA
Friends of Bell Meadow
Friends of Blackwater, Inc.
Friends of Merrymeeting Bay
Friends of Plumas Wilderness
Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf and Wildlife

Gallatin Wildlife Association
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
GreenLatinos
Heartwood
Hoosier Environmental Council
Howling for Wolves
Humane Society Legislative Fund
Idaho Conservation League
International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
Kalmiopsis Audubon Society
Klamath Forest Alliance
Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center
Lassen Forest Preservation Group
Los Angeles Audubon Society
Los Padres ForestWatch
Mass Audubon
National Audubon Society
National Ocean Protection Coalition
National Wolfwatcher Coalition
Natural Resources Defense Council
New Hampshire Audubon
North Cascades Conservation Council
North Central Washington Audubon Society
Nuestra Tierra Conservation Project
NY4WHALES
Oceanic Preservation Society
Ohio Animal Advocates
OneNature
Oregon Wild
People & Pollinators Action Network
Protect Our Wildlife
Resource Renewal Institute
RESTORE: The North Woods
Rocky Mountain Wild
Sierra Club
Sierra Foothills Audubon Society
Southern Environmental Law Center
The #RelistWolves Campaign
The Humane Society of the United States
The Urban Wildlands Group

United Plant Savers
Western Watersheds Project
Wild Farm Alliance
Wilderness Workshop
Wildlands Network
Wildlife Conservation Society
Wildlife for All
World Wildlife Fund
Wyoming Untrapped
Wyoming Wildlife Advocates
Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation
Zoo New England – Franklin Park Zoo & Stone Zoo