

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

May 5, 2017

Dear Chairmen Cochran and Frelinghuysen, and Ranking Members Leahy and Lowey:

As stewards of programs funded through the Interior, Environmental and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we are united in strong opposition to the Administration's FY18 budget blueprint. We applaud the recent, bipartisan work on reaching agreement on FY17 funding. Rather than deep cuts called for in FY18, we write to ask for your support of **no less than continued current funding levels** of \$32.28 billion for key federal resources that protect our clean water and clean air, conserve our wildlife, water and public lands, ensure support for Indian health, address drought, and allow for the continued access to future generations to our national cultural heritage and our national parks. Even these amounts are insufficient to support important environmental and cultural resources programs, but would at least allow for the maintenance of these programs.

The agencies and programs funded through Interior and Environment bill support critical environmental and cultural resources that protect the American public and conserve our natural resources. Under the proposed FY18 budget, programs serving the American people would be deeply harmed. Critical funding for abandoned mine clean up, National Heritage Areas, and the National Wildlife Refuge Fund would be eliminated, various initiatives supporting Tribes across the country would be decimated, essential programs that support conservation and management of our public lands, imperiled species and other wildlife would face deep cuts, and DOI funding for the popular, bipartisan Land and Water Conservation Fund would be slashed by 75 percent.

In addition, the Trump plan to cut EPA's budget by nearly one-third - **the largest cut in history** - will have real consequences on the health and well-being of Americans. The proposal would slash funding provided to states and tribes to ensure that national clean air standards (and state clean air goals) are met, and that communities and families are protected from dangerous air pollution. Additionally, the deep budget cuts would jeopardize health and safety by weakening EPA enforcement, and reduce funds to address pollution from lead, clean up toxic sites, and ensure safe and clean waters.

Further, the proposed termination of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) would end federal support that for over 50 years has strengthened the creative capacity of our communities. The NEA remains the single largest national funder of nonprofit arts in America with grants that help leverage more than a 9 to 1 match in private charitable gifts and other state and local public funding. NEH's investments in museums, historic sites, research, and the preservation of historic artifacts have played a key role in developing local cultural heritage tourism economies, which attract 78% of all leisure travelers. The NEA and NEH also have exemplary

partnerships with the states, with 40 percent of program funds distributed through state arts agencies and humanities councils. Every congressional district, all 50 states, and every U.S. Territory benefit from this investment.

Already, without action to stop sequestration, in FY 2018 non-defense discretionary programs are projected to decline to 3.1 percent of GDP—equal to the lowest level in more than 50 years.

While we acknowledge the many constraints on the larger 302(a) allocation, as well as the many competing priorities across appropriations bills, **we respectfully request maintaining at least current funding levels for the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies subcommittee.**

We also request this preservation of funding because of the cumulative impact of years of constrained allocations on environmental and public health programs and agencies. **Just taking the FY10 enacted levels and adjusting for inflation, the FY17 level is already a 10% cut.** The impacts of both years of inadequate funding and the inability to keep up with inflation and fixed costs have led to delays in science and research projects, significant maintenance backlogs, insufficient staffing including law enforcement and visitor center staff, and other damaging impacts to environmental agencies and the public.

Thank you for considering our views. We look forward to working with you, and please do not hesitate to reach out to our groups for additional information on the importance of funding programs and agencies within the Interior and Environment bill.

Sincerely,

Alaska Wilderness League
Alliance for the Great Lakes
American Alliance of Museums
American Bird Conservancy
American Forests
American Rivers
American Society of Landscape Architects
American Sustainable Business Council
Americans for the Arts
Association of Art Museum Directors
Bad River Watershed Association
Bay Area Coalition for Headwaters, Ecology Center
Bedford Audubon Society
Buffalo Audubon Society
Californians for Western Wilderness
Center for Biological Diversity
Central Westchester Audubon Society
Chemung Valley Audubon Society
Church Women United in New York State
Clean Water Action
Coalition to Protect America's National Parks
Conservation Corps North Bay

Conservation Legacy
Dance/USA
Defenders of Wildlife
Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society
Delta Institute
Earthjustice
Earthworks
Elders Climate Action
Environmental Defense Action Fund
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Evergreen Audubon
Federation of State Humanities Councils
Friends of Organ Mountains Desert Peaks
Friends of the Earth - US
Friends of the St. Joe River Association
Future of Music Coalition
Gathering Waters, Wisconsin's alliance for Land Trusts
Genesee Valley Audubon Society
Grand Canyon Trust
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
GreenLatinos
Headwaters Chapter Izaak Walton League of America
Hispanic Access Foundation
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, USA-JPIC
Hoosier Environmental Council
Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon
Illinois Council of Trout Unlimited
Institute for Applied Ecology
International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)
Islanders for the San Juan Islands National Monument
Kentucky Heartwood
Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center
League of American Orchestras
League of Conservation Voters
Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education
Los Padres ForestWatch
Marine Conservation Institute
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
National Audubon Society
National Council for the Traditional Arts
National Humanities Alliance
National Parks Conservation Association
National Recreation and Park Association
National Trust for Historic Preservation
National Wildlife Refuge Association

Nature Abounds
New York City Audubon
North Shore Audubon Society
Northern Catskills Audubon Society, Inc.
Northwest Watershed Institute
Ocean Conservancy
Oceana
Ohio Wetlands Association
Onondaga Audubon
OPERA America
Orange County Audubon Society, Inc
Oregon Natural Desert Association
Partnership for the National Trails System
PEN America
Performing Arts Alliance
Public Lands Alliance
Religious Coalition for the Great Lakes
Restore America's Estuaries
Rockland Audubon Society
Save The River / Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper
Saw Mill River Audubon
Sierra Club
Sierra Club Niagara Group
Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester
Soda Mountain Wilderness Council
South Shore Audubon Society
Southern Adirondack Audubon Society
Students for a Just and Stable Future
The Conservation Fund
The Corps Network
The Literary Network - LitNet
The Recording Academy
The Trust for Public Land
The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay
The Wilderness Society
Theatre Communications Group
Union of Concerned Scientists
Wilderness Workshop
Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts

cc: Interior Subcommittee Chairmen Murkowski and Calvert, Ranking Members Udall and McCollum, and House and Senate Leadership