

December 2, 2020

The Honorable Joe Neguse  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1419 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Neguse:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, we are writing in support of your House resolution calling on the federal government to establish a National Biodiversity Strategy to protect biodiversity for current and future generations. The Strategy 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. Last year, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services released a groundbreaking assessment warning that about one million species are at risk of extinction.<sup>1</sup> In North America alone, nearly 3 billion birds have disappeared since 1970.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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 communities, tribal communities, and others that 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 and further behind in recent years due to damaging administration of key laws and programs and woeful underfunding. We not only need to reverse the ever-worsening federal response, we need to make substantial forward progress.

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<sup>1</sup> 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>.

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

<sup>3</sup> Diaz, S. et al. 2019.

The National Biodiversity Strategy resolution details policy recommendations to ensure the conservation of our nation's biodiversity, secure and restore critical ecosystem services, promote social equity and justice, and coordinate a strong national response to tackling the biodiversity crisis. The Strategy would direct federal agencies to work collaboratively to pursue actions within existing laws and policies like the Endangered Species Act and promote innovation for developing new ones that may be needed. It also would call on the federal government to elevate America's role in advancing biodiversity conservation globally, through enhanced U.S. leadership, diplomatic engagement, and investment. Among other actions to comprehensively reduce and reverse the threats to biodiversity, the Strategy would set a national goal of protecting at least 30% of U.S. lands and waters by 2030 and doing so in a way that equitably and justly expands access to nature and respects cultural resources and historic places.

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. We applaud you for sponsoring this visionary resolution calling for a National Biodiversity Strategy to help protect our nation's natural legacy for today and for generations to come.

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 Sustainable Communities  
Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition  
Chesapeake Conservancy  
Christian Council of Delmarva  
Conservation Lands Foundation  
Conservation Voters New Mexico  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Earth Action, Inc  
Earthjustice  
Endangered Habitats League  
Endangered Species Coalition  
Environment America  
Environmental Defense Fund  
Environmental Protection Information Center  
Friends of the Sonoran Desert  
Grand Junction Area Chapter, Great Old Broads for Wilderness

Great Old Broads for Wilderness  
Howling For Wolves  
Humane Society Legislative Fund  
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  
National Ocean Protection Coalition  
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  
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  
World Wildlife Fund  
Wyoming Untrapped