

May 22, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
S-128 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
S-146 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the 74 undersigned organizations dedicated to environmental protection, civil and human rights, and community uplift, we write again to urge you to oppose border wall funding and to provide funding and guidance in the FY 2025 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appropriations bill to remediate the immense harms that border wall construction and militarization have inflicted on communities and wildlife in the borderlands. Many of our groups have members who continue to witness first-hand the devastating impacts from construction of border wall and related infrastructure on border communities and the environment.

As we have previously written, the prior administration's insistence on unnecessary, wasteful, and harmful border wall construction wreaked destruction on the borderlands and the millions who call the border region home, including damaging lands sacred to the O'odham, Carrizo-Comecrudo, and Kumeyaay peoples; desecrating Native American burial sites; dynamiting pristine mountain wilderness; erecting walls in floodplains; separating imperiled wildlife populations; destroying fragile resources in national wildlife refuges, forests, monuments and other public lands; depleting ancient water sources in sensitive desert ecosystems; seizing ranches, farms, and backyards from families; risking lives by forcing migrants to cross into more remote regions; and fomenting dangerous racial hatred against migrants and Indigenous

peoples. A 2023 U.S. Government Accountability Office report documented many of these harms.¹

The Secretaries of Homeland Security under previous administrations have waived eighty-four cornerstone federal laws, along with countless unnamed state and local laws and regulations, created to protect the environment, wildlife, religious freedom, historic and cultural sites, and taxpayers' interest in responsible procurement. Unfortunately, the Biden administration also invoked the waiver authority in 2023. To date, those waivers of law have not yet been rescinded, thus continuing to deny equal protection under the law to the borderlands and the millions who call the border region home. The Biden Administration has taken some initial steps to address the damage, but much more must be done. Congress must rescind any remaining funding for construction of the border wall and related infrastructure, refrain from providing any new wall funding, and provide the resources necessary to restore and repair border communities and lands to mitigate the harms done.

To achieve these goals and address these concerns, we urge the House and Senate FY 2025 Homeland Security appropriations bills to take the following steps:

- Rescind any remaining and all previously appropriated funding for the construction of the border wall system, including for lights and enforcement zone development. The rescission of remaining funding for border wall construction and funding for mitigation is particularly important this year in light of a federal district court ruling that Customs and Border Protection cannot use remaining border wall funds for anything except construction of new wall where there is currently no barrier. As a result, even the very modest safety and remediation work that the agency was undertaking has been halted.
- Reject any proposals to provide additional funding for border wall and related infrastructure.
- Support, at a minimum, the president's FY 2025 budget request for statutory language authorizing the transfer of up to \$225 million in funding from DHS to the land management agencies for environmental and other mitigation activities, including land acquisition, related to border wall construction. We strongly support including no less than this amount in the FY 2025 Homeland Security bill.
- As recommended in the recent GAO report, direct DHS and the Department of the Interior to draft a comprehensive strategy for mitigating impacts to natural and cultural resources. The strategy must incorporate meaningful consultation from local governments, tribes, communities, scientists, environmental experts, and other expert stakeholders.

¹ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Southwest Border: Additional Actions Needed to Address Cultural and Natural Resource Impacts from Barrier Construction* (Sept. 5, 2023) (GAO- 23-105443).

There must be continued efforts to address the massive and needless damage to the border region and its people as swiftly as possible. We strongly urge you to include these requests in the FY 2025 appropriations bills.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Alliance San Diego
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
Animal Welfare Institute
Annunciation House, Inc.
Arizona Trail Association
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Border Justice Project—UU Fellowship of Silver City NM
Border Network for Human Rights
Borderlands Resource Initiative
Born Free USA
CalWild
Castaños Consulting
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
Clean Water Action
Coalición de Derechos Humanos
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Coaliton on Human Needs
Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP)
Cuenca los Ojos
Danilo Zak
Defenders of Wildlife
Detention Watch Network
Domestic Violence Outreach
Earthjustice
El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos
Endangered Habitats League
Environmental Protection Information Center -EPIC
Faith In Texas
FOUR PAWS USA
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Friends of Friendship Park
Friends of the Sonoran Desert
Grand Canyon Wolf Recovery Project
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Howling For Wolves
Immigrant Defenders Law Center
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
Immigration Hub
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
Kettle Range Conservation Group
Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center
Lawyers for Good Government
League of Conservation Voters
Los Angeles Audubon Society
Madrean Archipelago Wildlife Center
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
Millions for Prisoners NM
Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance
National Education Association
National Lawyers Guild, New York City Chapter
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR)
National Parks Conservation Association
National Partnership for New Americans
National Wildlife Refuge Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
Oceanic Preservation Society
ProgressNow New Mexico
RESTORE: The North Woods
Save Animals Facing Extinction
Sierra Club
Sky Island Alliance
Southern Border Communities Coalition (SBCC)
The Rewilding Institute
The Urban Wildlands Group
The Wilderness Society
Voices of Wildlife in NH
Washington Office on Latin America
Weaving for Justice

Western Watersheds Project
WildEarth Guardians
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center
Witness at the Border
World Animal Protection