

**African Wildlife Foundation · American Bird Conservancy ·
Conservation International · International Fund for Animal
Welfare · National Audubon Society · National Environmental
Trust · Natural Resources Defense Council · The Nature
Conservancy · Wildlife Conservation Society · World Wildlife
Fund**

March 9, 2007

The Honorable Dave Obey
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Room H-218, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairman
Foreign Operations Subcommittee
Room HB-26, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
1016 LOHB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Ranking Member
Foreign Operations Subcommittee
1016 LOHB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the millions of Americans our organizations represent, we write to request your support for important international conservation programs in the 2008 Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. These programs have an impressive track record of helping the U.S. achieve its foreign assistance goals by enabling governments and local stakeholders to better manage their natural resources and cultivate long-term economic benefits. We appreciate your past support for these critical programs that address threats to the global environment, and we ask that you favorably consider the funding levels below as you prepare the fiscal year 2008 budget.

Biodiversity Conservation Programs (USAID): We are extremely concerned that the Administration has reduced its request for combined biodiversity and natural resource management funding by over 40 percent this year. The overall environment budget has also been cut by over 15 percent, sending a signal that environment is not a priority in the new foreign assistance framework. We believe that programs in countries like Madagascar, Namibia, Ecuador, Brazil, and others that are slated for cuts, are critical to maintaining the world's biodiversity. In fact, the need for USAID-supported conservation programs in conflict and post-conflict regions like Afghanistan, Sudan,

Democratic Republic of Congo and others continue to grow, as does the evidence that strong biodiversity and intact ecosystems can help mitigate the effects of climate change.

For more than 20 years, USAID has made biodiversity conservation a key element of its broader strategy to promote development. Congress has consistently supported this approach through the Foreign Assistance Act. Achievements made possible by this USAID funding include more effective protection of parks and nature preserves, institutional strengthening of national and local civil society, as well as sustainable economic development. The U.S. should continue its leadership in protecting these important places. ***We believe that \$185 million is the minimum necessary to help conserve the developing world's natural resources and sustain the livelihoods and health of those who depend upon those resources. We ask that you seek to restore the cuts proposed in the Administration's request.***

The Global Environment Facility (GEF): The GEF is a unique multilateral institution through which the U.S. government supports projects that help developing nations manage their natural resources, combat land degradation, global warming and forest loss. Between 1991 and 2006, the GEF provided approximately \$2.2 billion in grants to support biodiversity conservation projects. This leveraged nearly \$5.17 billion in co-financing. The GEF is the largest international source of funding for protected areas and has been at the cutting edge of innovation by actively creating markets to pay for ecosystem services and incorporating biodiversity into production sectors like agriculture, tourism and fisheries.

In 2006, donor countries agreed to fund a \$3.13 billion replenishment, with the U.S. pledging a total of \$320 million. Unfortunately the U.S. is \$170 million in arrears on its past pledges to the GEF. U.S. payment of these arrears would generate more than \$1.2 billion for on the ground conservation projects. We welcome the administration's request of \$26.8 million in arrears, but feel more is necessary. ***We support the Administration's request for \$80 million in dues, and recommend paying half of our arrears in FY '08 for a total of \$165 million.***

Tropical Forest Conservation Act (TFCA): The Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 provides funding for tropical forest conservation while reducing developing country debts to the U.S. Treasury. Since its inception, TFCA-appropriated funds have generated more than \$135 million in long-term income commitments for tropical forest conservation in Colombia, the Philippines, Belize, El Salvador, Peru, Bangladesh, Panama, and Jamaica. U.S. government funds have leveraged millions from private donors, and the program has been so well received that there is currently a backlog of eligible countries that wish to participate. ***TFCA is slated for reauthorization this year, and we recommend at least level funding with FY'07 at \$20 million.***

International Conservation Programs within the International Organizations and Programs (IO&P) Account: The IO&P Account provides core financial support to international organizations and programs addressing global challenges through international cooperation. Within this account, the International Conservation Programs

support the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the International Tropical Timber Organization, and the Convention to Combat Desertification. ***We request that \$8.0 million be devoted to these agreements and organizations, which support efforts to curb illegal trade in rare and threatened wildlife, preserve globally significant wetlands, promote the conservation and sustainable management of the world's forests, and provide forums for international debate and discussion on key conservation topics.***

Thank you for your attention to these important programs. We look forward to working with you as the 2008 appropriations process continues.

Sincerely,

Dr. Patrick Bergin
Chief Executive Officer
African Wildlife Foundation

Karen Steuer,
Vice President, Government Affairs
National Environmental Trust

Perry Plumart,
Director of Conservation Advocacy
American Bird Conservancy

Karen Wayland
Legislative Director
Natural Resources Defense Council

Lisa Handy,
Senior Director, US Government Affairs
Conservation International

Jimmie Powell
Director of Government Relations
The Nature Conservancy

Monica Medina
Deputy Director of US Operations
International Fund for Animal Welfare

John F. Calvelli
Senior Vice President, Public Affairs
Wildlife Conservation Society

Betsy Loyless
Senior Vice President for Public Policy
National Audubon Society

Jason M. Patlis
Vice President & Managing Director
Government Relations
World Wildlife Fund