



July 8, 2024

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Chair
Subcomm. on Interior, Environment, *et al.*
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairs Cole and Simpson,

I write on behalf of the Natural Resources Defense Council (“NRDC”), a national, non-profit environmental organization with more than three million members and activists, along with an array of lawyers, scientists, and other environmental specialists who have worked since 1970 to protect the world’s natural resources, public health, and environment. We vehemently reject the House’s bill making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, environment, and related agencies (“Interior appropriations bill”) for fiscal year 2025 (“FY25”),¹ the full committee markup for which is slated to be held tomorrow.

The principal purpose of the annual Interior appropriations bills should be *to protect*—and to protect not just our cherished public lands and waters, our shared natural resources, and the magnificent flora and fauna for which our country is renowned. Ideally, these bills should protect *us all*, by safeguarding our heath from polluted air, shielding us from unclean water, and defending our most vulnerable from callous exploitation. For FY25, however, the Appropriations Committee majority has produced an Interior appropriations bill that takes this ideal and casts it ruefully aside.

First, this untethered assault on the environment contains a **\$72 million reduction in topline funding** from FY24, a woeful number that masks even more outrageous cuts to such urgent items as:

- (i) the **Environmental Protection Agency** (“EPA”), which sees its budget **slashed by an astounding 20%** from FY24;²
- (ii) the vitally important **Clean Water State Revolving Fund (-26%** from FY24)³ and **Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (-22%)**;⁴ and even

¹ H. COMM. ON APPROPRIATIONS, 118TH CONG., MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2025, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES (Comm. Print, as reported by H. Subcomm. on Interior, Environment, *et al.*, June 28, 2024) (hereinafter “House Interior Bill”).

² *See id.* tit. II.

³ *See id.* at 91:23–92:1.

⁴ *See id.* at 92:1–92:4. *See generally* Becky Hammer & Erik D. Olson, *Will Funds for Water Infrastructure Flow Fairly?*, NRDC REPORT (Apr. 29, 2024), <https://www.nrdc.org/resources/will-funds-water-infrastructure-flow-fairly> (setting out the importance of the State Revolving Funds (“SRFs”), and assessing the success of each state at equitably distributing much-needed monies from the SRFs).

- (iii) our land and resource management agencies, like the **National Park Service**,⁵ the **Bureau of Land Management** (“BLM”),⁶ and the **Fish and Wildlife Service**,⁷ which see aggregate **reductions in funding in the millions**.

Second, it features the most extensive and astonishing list of anti-environmental **riders** of any appropriations bill, ever. Its rogues’ gallery of unhinged, anti-science offenders includes (but is certainly not limited to) provisions that would:

- (i) **mandate** calamitous and unneeded **oil and gas development** on our public lands and waters, while **inhibiting** the expeditious buildout of cleaner, more secure, **renewable energy** projects;⁸
- (ii) **prohibit** the implementation of key initiatives geared toward **protecting our shared lands**,⁹ **air**,¹⁰ and **waters**;¹¹ and
- (iii) **undermine efforts to rescue** an array of iconic American **species from extinction**.¹²

Third, and finally, the bill harms our most vulnerable, by wresting away money from projects that would advance sorely needed **diversity, equity, and inclusion** efforts at the Federal level.¹³ To have a measure with this degree of legislative virulence emerge from a committee that once was a model of comity and bipartisanship is truly disheartening.

In short, this House Interior bill cannot stand. As Americans suffer in record-breaking heat, as the disadvantaged among us struggle to secure potable water, and as majestic species are poised to vanish from the Earth, the House Appropriations Subcommittee majority charged with protecting our planet conjures us up a feckless nightmare. Our country deserves better.

Sincerely,

Kyle T. Jones
Director, Federal Affairs

cc: The Hon. Rosa DeLauro, Committee on Appropriations, Ranking Member;
The Hon. Chellie Pingree, Subcomm. on Interior, Environment, *et al.*, Ranking Member

⁵ See House Interior Bill, *supra* note 1, at 13:14–18:24.

⁶ See *id.* at 2:10–7:23.

⁷ See *id.* at 8:1–13:13.

⁸ Compare, *e.g.*, *id.* §§ 146 (mandating offshore oil and gas lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska) and 150 (requiring quarterly onshore oil and gas lease sales, while opening all available public lands for leasing), with § 480 (barring implementation of revised National Environmental Policy Act standards that would facilitate expeditious renewable energy development).

⁹ See, *e.g.*, *id.* § 138 (defunding BLM’s Public Lands Rule). See generally Bobby McEnaney & Amy McNamara, *New Rule Charts Conservation Path for Public Lands*, NRDC EXPERT BLOG (Apr. 18, 2024), <https://www.nrdc.org/bio/amy-mcnamara/new-rule-charts-conservation-path-public-lands> (detailing the Public Lands Rule’s many benefits).

¹⁰ See, *e.g.*, House Interior Bill, *supra* note 1, § 483 (halting EPA’s revised greenhouse gas emission standards).

¹¹ See, *e.g.*, *id.* § 453 (mandating the issuance of permits for mining in Minnesota’s Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness).

¹² See, *e.g.*, *id.* §§ 116–17, 127–33 (barring Endangered Species Act (“ESA”) listing for grizzly bears, wolves, and an array of other threatened species), 136 (nixing ESA implementing regulations), 140 (mandating issuance of harmful, outdated ESA rule), 149 (stripping protections for the critically endangered North Atlantic Right Whale and Rice’s whale).

¹³ See, *e.g.*, *id.* §§ 443 (defunding Federal diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives), 445 (prohibiting the promotion or advancement of Critical Race Theory), 446–47 (halting the display at Federal agencies of pride flags, and condoning discrimination of the LGBTQ+ community).