

Alaska Wilderness League * Alliance for the Wild Rockies * Animal Legal Defense Fund
Animal Welfare Institute * Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc. * Born Free USA
Cascades Raptor Center * Center for Biological Diversity * Conowingo Bald Eagles
Conservation Congress * Defenders of Wildlife * Earthjustice
Endangered Species Coalition * Environmental Investigation Agency
Environmental Protection Information Center
Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges * Friends of the Bitterroot
Friends of the Clearwater * Friends of the Wild Swan * Grand Canyon Trust
Grand Canyon Wildlands Council * Greenpeace
Holly Springs Nature Conservancy & Wildlife Sanctuary, Inc.
Humane Society International * Humane Society Legislative Fund
Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association * Humane Society Wildlife Land Trust
International Fund for Animal Welfare * John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute
Kentucky Heartwood * Klamath Forest Alliance * League of Conservation Voters
League of Humane Voters – Georgia * Los Padres ForestWatch
National Audubon Society * Natural Resources Defense Council * North County Watch
Northcoast Environmental Center * Northeast Oregon Ecosystems
Northern Alaska Environmental Center * Raptors Are The Solution
RESTORE: The North Woods * San Juan Citizens Alliance * Save Our Sky Blue Waters
Save The Rock Creek Park Deer * Sequoia ForestKeeper * Sierra Club
Southern Environmental Law Center * Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Speak Up For Wildlife Foundation * Tennessee Ornithological Society
The Humane Society of the United States * The Lands Council * The Wilderness Society
Turtle Island Restoration Network * Walden's Puddle WREC * Western Watersheds Project
WildEarth Guardians * Wilderness Watch * Wildlands Network
Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Northern Utah * WildWest Institute
Wyoming Untrapped * Yellowstone to Uintas Connection

OPPOSE H.R. 2406 (THE “SHARE ACT”)

February 23, 2016

Dear Representative:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, we strongly urge you to vote NO on H.R. 2406, the so-called “Sportsmen’s Heritage and Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Act of 2015.” This damaging legislation contains a broad range of destructive provisions that threaten wildlife and public lands, erode bedrock environmental laws and undermine key conservation policies. None of these harmful provisions are necessary to advance the bill’s purported intent. While not all the organizations who have signed onto this letter work on every issue covered, we all strongly oppose the underlying bill.

Entire sections of H.R. 2406 impair wildlife conservation, including a string of provisions that jeopardize the survival of African elephants already at great risk from poaching. Although an elephant is poached every 15 minutes for its ivory tusks, fueling black markets, funding organized criminal networks and pushing this iconic species to the brink of extinction, H.R. 2406 blocks efforts by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to crack down on ivory trafficking and the domestic

sale of illegal ivory. If passed, H.R. 2406 would effectively undercut the recent commitment between the United States and China to halt the illegal ivory trade in both countries, and would make the United States complicit in the African elephant poaching crisis.

Still other sections of H.R. 2406 roll back fundamental protections for public lands, including statutory protection for wilderness. The legislation opens pristine wilderness lands to temporary road construction, motorized vehicles and other activities that undermine the purpose of congressionally designated wilderness areas. Permitting these activities would contravene longstanding wilderness law and policy, weaken conservation of essential wildlife habitat and decrease high quality recreational opportunities across America that wilderness provides.

H.R. 2406 also upends management of the National Wildlife Refuge System, the backbone of our national wildlife conservation program. The legislation recklessly waives environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for all management activities on all 150 million acres of the Refuge System, jeopardizing wildlife management goals and threatening protection of crucial habitat. The bill further weakens refuge management by requiring the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to accommodate incompatible wildlife-dependent recreation on refuges, violating a core principle of the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act of 1997 to the detriment of fish, wildlife and resource conservation.

The elimination of public participation in federal planning processes is a continuing theme throughout H.R. 2406, affecting hundreds of millions of acres of public lands across our national forests, national parks, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, as well as wildlife refuges and wilderness areas. The legislation excludes various management decisions from NEPA, the cornerstone law guiding environmental protection and public involvement in federal management actions. For example, the bill includes a NEPA exemption that waives requirements for the three largest federal land management agencies to engage in a transparent, informed, public decision-making process when making determinations regarding hunting, fishing or establishment of shooting ranges on public lands.

Furthermore, H.R. 2406 includes an objectionable provision for the reauthorization of the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA) that would allow funds that were acquired through federal lands sales to be diverted to deferred maintenance projects. FLTFA was intended to supplement against the loss of federal lands that have been disposed of, while also advancing the conservation of “exceptional resources.” FLTFA should not be used to address an agency’s maintenance backlog, further relieving Congress from its responsibility to fully fund the operations of federal land management agencies. The diversion of funds away from this particular conservation mandate establishes a dangerous precedent.

The deleterious effects of H.R. 2406 extend even further by expanding the definition of “hunting” on Forest Service and BLM lands to include trapping, potentially opening millions of acres of public lands to trapping where it may currently be prohibited. Federal and state agencies have traditionally managed hunting and trapping as distinct activities with differing regulatory approaches. The indiscriminate nature of trapping can pose serious threats to imperiled or non-target wildlife, as well as to public safety. Consequently, defining trapping as a form of hunting could preclude the ability to regulate dangerous and unintended impacts from this largely commercial activity on public lands.

H.R. 2406 also prohibits regulation of toxic lead, harming fish, wildlife and human health. In the United States, an estimated 3,000 tons of lead are shot into the environment by hunting every year, another 80,000 tons are released at shooting ranges, and 4,000 tons are lost in ponds and streams as fishing lures and sinkers, leading to the death of millions of birds and other animals from lead poisoning. Despite the well-documented dangers of toxic lead poisoning, H.R. 2406 prevents the Environmental Protection Agency from regulating lead in nearly all forms of ammunition and fishing tackle under the Toxic Substances Control Act and prohibits the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture from controlling use of lead on BLM and Forest Service lands.

The legislation also affects conservation of marine resources by seeking to greatly restrict the ability of the National Park Service and the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries to protect sensitive marine ecosystems under their jurisdiction from either the direct impacts of overfishing; or impacts caused by fishing access, such as damage to sea turtle or migratory bird nesting beaches. Specifically, the bill attempts to prohibit any restriction of commercial or recreational fishing out to three nautical miles around states (nine miles for Florida Gulf Coast and Texas) and twelve nautical miles from U.S. territories by these agencies unless the state or territorial fish and wildlife management agency has approved the restrictions. Such a requirement could impact the ability to protect national marine treasures like the Biscayne and Channel Islands National Parks, Florida Keys Marine National Sanctuary and the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.

Finally, H.R. 2406 creates a loophole in the Marine Mammal Protection Act to allow a handful of hunters to import polar bear trophies into the United States in contravention of current law. These bears were taken in Canada after the species was proposed for listing as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and with full knowledge that U.S. law would prohibit their eventual importation. Enacting this provision would threaten imperiled species by encouraging hunters to race for trophies the moment a species is considered for listing, store them abroad and seek waivers from Congress to import their trophies later.

H.R. 2406 is laden with damaging, misguided provisions that undercut fundamental protections for public lands and resources, and jeopardize wildlife and human health and safety. We strongly urge you to stand up for wildlife, public lands and the integrity of our environmental laws by opposing H.R. 2406 when it goes to the floor. We also urge you to vote NO on any amendments that undermine protections for our air, lands, water and wildlife. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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