

WWF Lobby Day 2021
TALKING POINTS FOR LOBBY DAY

THE ASK

- **Please support significantly increased funding for US international conservation programs**
- **Please sign on to the “Dear Colleague” letters in support of these programs**

TOPLINE MESSAGES

- We need redouble our investments to protect nature around the globe. Nature loss is at the heart of some of our biggest challenges and investing in conservation is one of the most cost-effective solutions we have to all of these.
- **Nature is in crisis.**
 - Recent reports show nature declining globally at unprecedented and increasing rates.
 - Up to a million species are now threatened with extinction.
 - Most biodiversity loss is being driven by the degradation and loss of natural habitats, primarily for agriculture, as well as the overexploitation of plants and animals (including over-fishing and logging), the impacts climate change, and pollution.
 - Many conservation areas in Africa and elsewhere that are funded by travel and tourism revenues have seen those revenues stop due to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving wildlife and forests unprotected and unmanaged and putting at risk decades of conservation gains that the US has helped to support.
- **People need nature.**
 - Natural systems are the foundations of economies, livelihoods, food security, health, and quality of life worldwide.
 - Developing economies are highly dependent on their natural resources.
 - Developing communities and Indigenous Peoples rely on nature for their survival, their economic opportunities, and their traditional way of life.
- **Protecting nature helps prevent pandemics.**
 - Among the main factors driving the spillover of zoonotic diseases, such as COVID-19, from animals to humans is high-risk trade in wildlife and the destruction and degradation of forests and other natural habitats that brings humans and wildlife (and wildlife diseases) into closer contact.
 - By investing to halt tropical forest loss and stop high-risk wildlife trade, we can help prevent zoonotic disease spillover and stop future pandemics before they start – potentially saving millions of lives and trillions of dollars.
- **Conserving and restoring nature is key to solving the climate crisis.**
 - The loss of forests and other carbon-rich ecosystems plays a major role in driving up atmospheric carbon emissions and worsening climate change. Protecting and restoring these ecosystems is key to reducing the amount of carbon entering the atmosphere.

- By protecting nature – including forests, wetlands, and mangroves – we can help build resilience to a changing climate and blunt the impacts of increasingly frequent extreme weather events, including hurricanes, droughts, and floods.
- For a **small fraction of the federal budget (around 0.01%)**, these programs generate a **huge return on investment**:
 - They **protect natural resources** that we all depend on.
 - They **protect human health** and prevent the spillover of new diseases.
 - They help to **slow climate change** and **build resilience** to extreme weather.
 - They **help developing countries and communities** conserve nature and manage their natural resources legally and sustainably, providing livelihoods, jobs, and income.
 - They **contribute to US national security** by preventing scarcities of water, food, fish, and other resources, which can contribute to instability and spark regional conflicts.
 - They help **prevent illegal trade** in timber and fish—practices which are estimated to cost American foresters and fishers billions of dollars in lost revenue annually through unfair competition that depresses global prices.
 - They help to **prevent wildlife trafficking**, which is driving many species towards extinction while helping to finance transnational organized crime.
 - The global trade in illegal fish has also been closely tied to human trafficking and forced labor.
- By helping to strengthen our partners in the developing world and working with communities to help them both protect and profit from their natural resources, we are **creating a brighter and more secure future for them and for ourselves**.

Investing in International Conservation is Good for the US

International Conservation & US Security:

- A recently released [report](#) by national security experts at the Council on Strategic Risks calls global nature loss a major and underappreciated security threat.
- Strains on critical Earth systems -- water, food, forests, fisheries -- are increasingly contributing to conflict, political instability and economic harm and heightening risks of future pandemics.
- When natural resources are depleted and become scarce, conflict and instability can result:
 - In the next decade, nearly 3 billion people in 48 countries will face water shortages, which could pose a major threat to global security.
 - The rise of ISIS and the Taliban is linked to long-standing grievances over water access and the viability of rural livelihoods; and terrorist groups are increasingly leveraging scarce water resources as a means of coercion.
 - The failure of coffee crops and subsistence crops in Central America due to environmental stresses resulted in rising rural poverty and contributed to recent surges in migration northward by Central American refugees.
- The illegal trade in natural resources is one of the top five most lucrative transnational organized crimes worldwide, ranked alongside trafficking in narcotics, humans, and weapons.
- This illegal trade accounts for tens of *billions* of dollars annually and is helping to finance organized crime, corruption, and even violent extremist groups in Africa and elsewhere.

International Conservation & the US Economy:

- Preventing illegal trade in commodities, such as timber and seafood, and ensuring US companies have legal and sustainable supply chains for their imported products, protects American jobs.
- The global illegal timber trade alone is estimated to cost the US forestry sector roughly \$1 billion annually in lost revenues.
- US fishers could be losing \$1 billion a year in revenue because the importation of illegal seafood products into the US creates unfair competition for law-abiding fishers and lowers the prices that they can ask for their products.
- As much of a third of the wild-caught seafood imported into the U.S. comes from illegal, unreported, or unregulated (IUU) fishing.
- If the federal government successfully stopped illegal seafood from getting through our borders, US fishers could see the equivalent of a 20% pay raise.

Investing in International Conservation is Popular, and It Works

- These programs have enjoyed strong bipartisan support for decades.
- These programs have strong support from the American public.
- These programs have been effective:
 - Support from US conservation programs has contributed to a global increase in tiger populations over the past decade, including in India, Nepal, and Russia.
 - Support to community conservation in Namibia has brought back populations of rhinos, elephants & lions while creating community benefits from tourism and other activities.
 - Support for community forestry programs in parts of Guatemala has helped local communities to create small businesses in sustainable forest products, leading these areas to have some of the highest family incomes in the country, near-zero rates of both deforestation and out-migration, and growing wildlife populations.
 - Investments in forest communities in the Central African Republic have helped bring employment and improved health care, supported rights and opportunities for Indigenous Peoples, and helped conserve some of Central Africa's last remaining populations of elephants and great apes.