

WWF Lobby Day 2017 - Policy Brief (International Conservation)

Talking Points: Why Does International Conservation Matter for the US?

International Conservation Supports U.S. Security:

- The increasing scarcity of natural resources, including water, food, and energy, contributes to conflict, migration and instability in many parts of the world. By investing in conservation and the sustainable management of natural resources in developing countries, we can help prevent these kinds of disruptions from arising in the first place and avoid costlier US engagements later (including military ones).
- The illegal trade in natural resources, including wildlife, timber and fish, is worth tens of billions of dollars annually and is often linked to large-scale criminal activities. It is one of the top 5 transnational organized crimes worldwide, alongside trafficking in narcotics, humans and weapons. In addition to driving biodiversity loss in many parts of the globe, the large illegal profits from these activities are helping to fund major crime syndicates, violent armed groups and even terrorist activities in places such as Central/Eastern Africa.
- By helping developing countries to build sustainable economies, built in large part on good management of their local natural resources, US agencies are promoting the long-term development and stability of important partners in strategically important parts of the world – and building goodwill for America in the process.

International Conservation Supports the U.S. Economy:

- Our economy and the goods and commodities that it relies on are closely linked to the economies of our international trading partners, including in the developing world. Many developing economies are heavily dependent on their natural resources, and managing those resources sustainably is critical both to local economic growth and the integrity of global supply chains that supply many of the products we buy in the US.
- The illegal trade in natural resource commodities undercuts U.S. businesses by billions of dollars annually, depressing prices, undermining the integrity of global markets, and putting law-abiding U.S. companies at a competitive disadvantage.
- The global illegal timber trade alone is estimated to cost the US forestry sector roughly \$1 billion annually in lost revenues and employment opportunities.
- US fishermen could be losing \$1 billion dollars in revenue a year from the importation of illegal seafood products into the US, which create unfair competition for law-abiding fishermen and lower the prices that they can ask for their products. If the federal government successfully stopped illegal seafood from getting through our borders, U.S. fishermen could see the equivalent of a 20 percent pay raise.
- U.S. efforts to curtail illegal natural resource trade and build stronger environmental policy frameworks level the playing field for U.S. workers and businesses while conserving our shared resources. By working with countries to institute stronger natural resource governance, we ensure that US companies and their goods remain competitive on the global market.
- America's public lands are the backbone of its outdoor and recreation economy, generating \$646 billion annually and supporting 6.1 million American jobs. By working with other countries to value and conserve their wild areas and wildlife

populations, and by helping them build sustainable rural economies around these assets, through tourism and other uses, US agencies bring this American successful model of conservation to new places and open up opportunities for American businesses to support and profit from conservation around the world.

About US Government Support for International Conservation

- **The U.S. government has long been a leader in international conservation.**
- Several U.S. federal agencies provide support and funding for the conservation of species, habitats and natural resources in countries around the world
- **The US Agency for International Development (USAID)** funds international conservation through its biodiversity and forestry programs. These programs help protect some of the largest and most at-risk natural landscapes, as well as the livelihoods of millions of people who directly depend on natural resources for survival and economic growth. Along with the **State Department**, **USAID** also funds programs to combat illegal trafficking of wildlife, timber and fish.
- **The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)** supports international programs to conserve wildlife around the world by protecting habitat, combating the illegal wildlife trade, and helping countries manage and protect their wildlife populations.
- **The US Forest Service** supports programs to protect forests internationally
- **The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)** supports programs to combat illegal fishing and promote conservation of marine resources
- The US government also provides funding to two important **multilateral agencies** that support global conservation:
 - **The Global Environment Facility (GEF)** is an international financial agency that works to address the biggest global environmental issues, such as biodiversity loss, land degradation, and climate change.
 - **The Green Climate Fund (GCF)** is the main international source of financing for developing countries efforts to address climate change.

The Role of Congress

Congress has several essential roles to play in supporting international conservation:

- **Funding:** It is Congress' job to provide funding for the federal government. Each year, Congress must go through a process – called “appropriations” – where it sets the funding levels for government agencies and their programs for the coming year, including for international conservation. This process gets underway in February/March each year.
- **Legislation:** Congress can pass laws creating new programs or directing the federal agencies to take actions that benefit international conservation. For example, last October, Congress passed the END Wildlife Trafficking Act to help direct the efforts of U.S. agencies in responding to the global poaching crisis.
- **Oversight:** Congress can hold hearings or ask agencies to respond to inquiries related to international conservation issues in order to bring attention to an issue or to motivate federal agencies to take a specific action.

It is important for Members of Congress to hear from their constituents that international conservation matters. Members of Congress may hear more frequently from voters about local conservation or environmental issues – ones that directly impact the district's residents – but they may not realize that their voters also care about what the US is doing to protect the environment around the world. That makes it easier for a Member of Congress to cut funding for or vote to eliminate international programs. By letting your Members of Congress know you do care and are paying attention, you make it more likely that they will vote to continue US support for these efforts.

When meeting with your congressional representatives, it is important to have one or more clear and concise “asks”. These are specific actions that you want them to take. The point of the meeting should be to provide the information or arguments that will sway a specific Member of Congress to take the actions you want. Remember that one of the strongest arguments you can make is the simple fact that you are a voter in the Member's state or district and that you care about what they say and how they vote on the issue you are there to discuss.

The following are WWF's key “asks” of Congress, which we would like you to advocate for:

- **Maintain or increase funding for US international conservation programs.** This includes making requests and signing letters supporting strong funding for these programs and voting against any significant cuts to their budgets. *(You will be provided with a more detailed “leave behind” on these programs for your meetings.)*
- **Support continued action by the US government to combat the illegal trade in wildlife, timber and fish.** In addition to funding, this also means supporting the continuation of for existing programs and strategies, including the National Strategy on Combatting Wildlife Trafficking, the END Wildlife Trafficking Act, the Seafood Import Monitoring Program and enforcement of the Lacey Act.

- **Reauthorize two important wildlife conservation programs:** the **Multinational Species Conservation Funds** and the **Save Vanishing Species Semipostal Stamp**. Specifically, we want Members of Congress to sign on as cosponsors of bills that are being introduced to extend the life of these programs. *(Factsheets included.)*
- **Support US actions to address climate change.** Specifically, there are four sets of actions we want Members of Congress to voice their support: honor America's international climate commitments; support action to reduce US carbon emissions; promote renewable energy through policies and incentives; support climate science. *(A more detailed briefing document on WWF's climate asks is included.)*

Quick Facts About WWF

- **For 50 years, WWF has been protecting the future of nature.**
- WWF works on the ground in over 100 countries and is supported by over 1 million members in the U.S. and over 5 million supporters around the world.
- WWF's unique way of working combines global reach with a foundation in science, involves action at every level from local to global, and ensures the delivery of innovative solutions that meet the needs of both people and nature.
- WWF partners with governments, businesses, foundations, communities, individuals and our millions of members to conserve many of the world's most ecologically important regions.
- WWF is advancing its mission to conserve nature and reduce the most pressing threats to the diversity of life on Earth by:
 - Protecting and restoring species and their habitats around the globe
 - Strengthening communities' ability to conserve and manage their natural resources
 - Transforming markets to drive the sustainable production and consumption of food and clean energy around the world
 - Ensuring that nature's value is reflected in decisions made by individuals, communities, governments and businesses
 - Working with governments and institutions to improve policies and implement investments that support the conservation of nature