



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Friday, May 07, 2010

The Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senate
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Reid and Durbin,

The Wildlife Society is writing to urge you to prevent any proposal to build more border walls, including SA 3852 submitted by Senators DeMint and Vitter, from being offered to S. 3217, the Restoring American Financial Stability Act of 2010.

The Wildlife Society was founded in 1937 and is a non-profit scientific and educational association of over 9,100 professional wildlife biologists and managers, dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. Our mission is to represent and serve wildlife professionals—the scientists, technicians, and practitioners actively working to study, manage, and conserve native and desired non-native wildlife and their habitats worldwide.

Senate amendment 3852 is the latest attempt to extend the failed policy of building more border walls along our southwest border. The amendment has nothing to do with the issue of financial reform and threatens to play politics with the important goals of the underlying legislation. More than \$2.6 billion of taxpayer money has already been used to construct nearly 650 miles of border walls and barriers. While the efficacy of building walls has never even been studied, its impacts have been widely felt.

Of particular concern to TWS is the impact border walls have on wildlife and wildlife habitats. Existing border walls are known to cause damaging floods and erosion and they fracture habitat and migration corridors that are vital to wildlife, many of which are threatened or endangered. The US-Mexico border forms a boundary for at least eleven US and three Mexican designated conservation areas including wildlife refuges, national parks, and biosphere reserves. A wall that is impermeable to wildlife along the US-Mexico border could prohibit cross-border movement of a wide range of species including jaguar, ocelot, jaguarundi, Mexican gray wolf, Sonoran pronghorn, bighorn sheep, black bear, desert tortoise, kit fox, badger, North American porcupine, and black-tailed prairie dog. A wall could also harm local wildlife populations by limiting access to rare food and water resources.

TWS' believes that all border security measures should be carefully planned and scientifically evaluated for environmental impacts before being instituted. The potential costs of environmental degradation must be weighed against the benefits of increased border security, and thus far it appears that existing border walls have done little to solve immigration issues, but have resulted in significant environmental degradation along our borders. We urge you to not rush headlong into building further border walls until the proper regulatory processes can be put into place and mitigation policy can be evaluated. As such, we urge you to withhold support for an inappropriately planned proposal such as SA 3852.

We have attached our position statement on The Impact of Border Security Measures on Wildlife, and we thank you for your considering the views of wildlife professionals. Please feel free to contact Jenna Jadin, Assistant Director of Government Affairs, at jenna@wildlife.org or at (301) 897-9770 x 309 if you need further information or have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Hutchins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michael Hutchins, Ph.D.
Executive Director/CEO