

The Honorable Tom McClintock  
Chair, Subcommittee on Federal Lands  
House Natural Resources Committee  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Colleen Hanabusa  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Public Lands  
House Natural Resources Committee  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

November 3, 2017

Dear Chairman McClintock and Ranking Member Hanabusa,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing to express our support for H.R. 3979, the “Keep America’s Refuges Operational Act,” and request that a hearing is scheduled on this bill as soon as possible.

Located in every U.S. state and territory, our National Wildlife Refuge System provides exceptional opportunities to enjoy outdoor recreation. This remarkable network of public lands and waters includes more than 850 million acres of habitat dedicated to the conservation of fish and wildlife. Over 40 million people visit refuges each year, which generates \$2.4 billion in revenue and 35,000 jobs for local economies.

But refuges could not continue to operate without the contribution of dedicated volunteers. Last year alone, roughly 40,000 volunteers donated 1.4 million hours to maintain refuges and preserve critical habitats. Volunteers work side-by-side with refuge staff to conduct fish and wildlife population surveys, fight invasive species, lead tours and educational activities, maintain trails, and operate visitor centers.

By reauthorizing the National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer, Community Partnership, and Education program, H.R. 3979 will mean that present and future generations of Americans can continue to visit wildlife refuges for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation. We therefore urge you to hold a hearing on and favorably consider this legislation before the Subcommittee on Federal Lands without further delay.

Sincerely,

American Fisheries Society  
American Sportfishing Association  
Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Ducks Unlimited  
Izaak Walton League of America  
Marine Conservation Institute  
National Audubon Society

National Wildlife Federation  
National Wildlife Refuge Association  
The Corps Network  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
The Nature Conservancy  
The Wilderness Society  
The Wildlife Society  
Trout Unlimited

cc: The Honorable Rob Bishop, Chairman, House Natural Resources Committee  
The Honorable Raul Grijalva, Ranking Member, House National Resources Committee