



Southwest Section
of
The Wildlife Society

P.O. Box 714
Aztec, NM 87410

March 15, 2016

The Honorable Trent Franks
United States House of Representatives
2435 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-0308

Dear Representative Franks:

I am writing on behalf of the Southwest Section of The Wildlife Society to respectfully urge you to support the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Resource Protection Act (H.R. 4558), which was introduced with bipartisan support to Congress in early February 2016. The Wildlife Society (TWS) is a non-profit scientific and educational association of more than 9,000 professional wildlife biologists and managers focused on the application of science based management and conservation to sustain wildlife populations for the American public. The Southwest Section represents TWS members in the states of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

This important act would grant the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service authority to collect monetary compensation from the guilty party for any deliberate damages they have caused to resources within the National Wildlife Refuge System. Currently, the cost of restitution for actions like bulldozing, unauthorized tree removal, and vandalism are left to the American taxpayer - these funds would otherwise be directed to important wildlife conservation and management programs.

H.R. 4458 would give the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service authorities that have already been permitted to other agencies, like the National Park Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration through their own Resource Protection Acts. It is important that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has this same authority in order to efficiently restore any damages to the Refuge System's 150-million acres of land which includes the 9 National Wildlife Refuges located in the state of Arizona.

In light of the recent occupation of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, it has never been more relevant for the Service to be able to hold guilty parties responsible for their actions. American taxpayers should not have the burden of paying for deliberate damages to the Refuge System at the cost of wildlife management and conservation budgets. We hope that you will consider passing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Resource Protection Act.

Sincerely,

James M. Ramakka
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Chair SW Section TWS Conservation Affairs Committee

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Enclosure