

April 9, 2019

The Honorable David Bernhardt
Acting Secretary, Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Acting Secretary:

As hunting, fishing, wildlife conservation, and outdoor-recreation-based organizations and professional societies, we thank you for the \$509.5 million request for National Wildlife Refuge System Operations and Maintenance included in the President's FY 2020 Budget Request. This increase of \$21.5 million over current enacted levels would be the highest funding level ever for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

By far, the greatest challenge facing the Refuge System today is the completely inadequate budgets that fail to cover the cost of maintaining the incredibly rich and diverse wildlife habitats that make up the Refuge System. This FY 2020 request is a welcome reprieve from the anemic growth of O&M budgets over the past seven years.

We greatly appreciate your efforts to expand access to hunting and fishing on wildlife refuges across the country. These refuges that are newly opened to hunting and fishing, or have seen expansions of open acres or additions of hunted species, will provide increased access to sportsmen and women across the country. This expanded access, however, will require increased numbers of federal wildlife officers, biologists, and maintenance staff, and we appreciate your acknowledgment of these increased costs.

Thank you again, and please let any of our groups know if there is anything we can do to assist the Department or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to make sure this increase is included in the final FY 2020 enacted bill.

Sincerely,

American Woodcock Society
Archery Trade Association
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Camp Fire Club of America
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Conservation Force
Council to Advance Hunting and the
Shooting Sports
Dallas Safari Club
Delta Waterfowl
Ducks Unlimited
Houston Safari Club
Izaak Walton League of America

Mule Deer Foundation
National Association of Forest Service Retirees
National Rifle Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Wild Turkey Federation
National Wildlife Federation
National Wildlife Refuge Association
Ruffed Grouse Society
Sportsmen's Alliance
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Wild Sheep Foundation
Wildlife Management Institute
The Wildlife Society