



November 4, 2019

Dear Congressman Steve Chabot,

The Ohio Chapter of The Wildlife Society is writing to **request your co-sponsorship of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H.R. 3742)**, introduced in July 2019 by Representatives Debbie Dingell (D-MI), Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE), and 60 of their congressional colleagues. This legislation would provide state and tribal wildlife agencies with a vital source of funding needed to proactively and cost-effectively conserve America's at-risk wildlife populations. As of the time of this letter, 145 of your fellow congressmen and congresswomen have shown bipartisan support by sponsoring this bill.

Founded in 1937, The Wildlife Society and its 15,000 professional and associated members serve to inspire, empower, and enable wildlife biologists and managers to sustain wildlife populations and habitat through science-based management and conservation. The Ohio Chapter of The Wildlife Society is an organization of wildlife professionals throughout the Buckeye State who actively work to study, manage, and conserve wildlife and their habitats.

Rare wildlife numbers and their habitats continue to decline. In Ohio alone, there are now over 94 wildlife species in Ohio identified as being at risk of extinction globally or nationally. These species, and an additional 300+ "species of conservation need" identified in Ohio's State Wildlife Action Plan, include birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, mussels, insects, and snails. Ohio's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) is a congressionally mandated conservation action blueprint, and the species – both game and non-game alike – the document is intended to preserve are important to Ohioans, our environment, and our ecosystems. Participation in outdoor recreation in Ohio generates substantial financial returns to the state. Take birdwatching for instance, and then consider only the Biggest Week in American Birding that centers on Lake Erie's Ohio coastline – that short time period alone generates an estimated \$42 million in regional economy (Black Swamp Bird Observatory estimate).

Unfortunately, Ohio's capacity to adequately deliver on the SWAP is in jeopardy and without active management, protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) may be needed for some species. It is in the best interests of Ohioans environmentally and economically to invest in these species prior to any potential need for ESA protections. This is not just an Ohio issue. Nationally, conservation efforts for these at-risk species are critically underfunded, only receiving about \$60 million annually through the existing State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program. That is nationally – just \$60 million. This is not nearly enough for states and tribes to plan for multi-year conservation and recovery projects and keep costlier measures, such as Endangered Species Act listings, from occurring.

Passage of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act would match an appropriate solution to the scale of this crisis. By dedicating \$1.3 billion annually for the adequate implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans, and \$97.5 million annually for tribal agencies to plan long-term conservation projects, wildlife professionals will have the resources needed to hold the nation's wildlife in the

public trust for generations to come. Ohio's share would be nearly \$30 million a huge and desperately needed increase beyond the currently allocated \$1.4 million.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gabriel R. Karns". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Gabriel R. Karns
OCTWS Secretary, on behalf of the Ohio Chapter of The Wildlife Society Board
614-292-3865

x Geoffrey Westerfield
xi Renee Buck
xii Thomas Butler
xiii Grace Dietsch

copy: Keith Norris, Director of Government Affairs & Partnerships, The Wildlife Society