

16 January 2022

The Honorable Betty McCollum
2256 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20003

Dear Representative McCollum,

The Minnesota Chapter of The Wildlife Society is writing to **request your cosponsorship of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H.R. 2773)**, introduced in April by Representatives Debbie Dingell (D-MI) and Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE). 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.

Founded in 1937, The Wildlife Society and its 15,000 professional and associated members work to inspire, empower, and enable wildlife biologists and managers to sustain wildlife populations and habitat through science-based management and conservation. The Minnesota Chapter of The Wildlife Society is the oldest state chapter/subunit in the world, being established in 1944. The Minnesota Chapter represents nearly 200 wildlife professionals from local, county, state, and federal resource agencies, as well as academia and the private sector. The chapter's objective is to ensure the management of wildlife resources on a sound biological basis that benefits ecosystems and people, and to encourage the highest possible professional standards in those working with wildlife resources.

Minnesota has more than 300 at-risk species as identified by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in their congressionally-mandated conservation action blueprints, known as the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan. This includes such iconic Northwoods species like the Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) whose future in Minnesota is threatened by both changes in land use by humans and climate change. Minnesota is also home to federally listed species including the Great Lakes breeding population of Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*) who must compete with humans for use of the sandy beaches where they nest and raise their young. Rusty patched bumble bee (*Bombus affinis*) populations have declined by more than 80% over just the past 20 years and Minnesota is an important part of the estimated 0.1% of the remaining suitable habitat. As I expect you well know, Minnesota prides itself on being home to a wide range of unique natural habitats and species that rely on the health of those places. As a result, Minnesota also has a long tradition in leading the nation in conservation. Hubert Humphrey was one of the primary authors of the 1964 Wilderness Act. Walter Mondale was an advocate for the creation of Voyageurs National Park and Bruce Vento authored the 1978 Boundary Waters Wilderness legislation. Minnesota's current lawmakers have an opportunity to continue that conservation legacy by supporting and leading in the passage of RAWA.

Nationally, conservation efforts for these at-risk species are historically critically underfunded, only receiving about \$70 million annually through the existing [State and Tribal Wildlife Grants](#) program. This is not nearly enough for states and tribes to plan for multi-year conservation and recovery projects or prevent 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.

Thank you for considering this important legislation. If you have any questions regarding the Recovering America's Wildlife Act and the Minnesota Chapter of The Wildlife Society's support for this legislation, please feel free to reach out to me at bhiller@bemidjistate.edu or 218-755-2212.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Hiller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brian" being more legible than the last name "Hiller".

Brian J. Hiller, Ph.D. (he, him, his)
President, Minnesota Chapter of The Wildlife Society
