November 14, 2016

To: Honorable Members of Congress

Re: Opposition to riders overturning wildlife protection rules on federally-funded National Wildlife Refuges and National Preserves in Alaska

Dear Members of Congress:

We, the 83 undersigned wildlife and environmental protection organizations, ask you to oppose wasteful and damaging riders to overturn or defund newly-enacted rules protecting native carnivores from egregious killing methods on 96 million acres of land on National Wildlife Refuges and National Preserve lands in Alaska. These methods include baiting brown bears, trapping bears with cruel leghold traps and snares, using airplanes to scout, land, and shoot brown bears, and killing mother black bears, wolves and coyotes and their dependent young at their den sites.

As organizations dedicated to the protection and preservation of wildlife and ecosystem balance, we are encouraged that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Park Service (NPS) now prohibit the aforementioned practices on their Alaska lands. Without question, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game’s unsustainable and unscientific practices are affecting native carnivores in and around those areas. Trappers and hunters have lured Denali’s highly valued and much-treasured wolves outside the safety of the Park’s borders to be killed, resulting in a rapid decline—from 45 percent to 6 percent—in wolf sightings by visitors to Denali National Park and Preserve over just a few years. The state’s predator control practices have also wiped out Denali’s entire East Fork Pack, ending decades of groundbreaking research. And the NPS is also now ending a decades-long research project on wolf packs in Alaska’s Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve, because state officials have killed so many of the Preserve’s wolves when they wandered outside of its boundaries.

The NPS and the FWS have made it clear: predator control on their lands within the state of Alaska is simply not unacceptable. The practice is also not backed by sound science; numerous studies have demonstrated that killing large numbers of native carnivores such as brown bears, black bears, and wolves will not make ungulate herds more abundant for human hunters.

Nor are these practices supported by the majority of Alaskans, who indicated in a recent statewide poll their support for banning cruel methods of killing on federal lands in their state. What they do support, however, is the influx of tourism revenue brought into their state by the throngs of people from around the world who travel there each year for the unique opportunity to see bears, wolves, coyotes, river otters, wolverines, and lynx in America’s national preserves and refuges—alive and well, not stuffed or posed in a trophy room. In its 2016 economic report, the NPS found: “In 2015, park visitors spent an estimated $1.2 billion in local gateway regions while visiting NPS lands in Alaska. These expenditures supported a total of 17.6 thousand jobs, $595.5 million in labor income, $1 billion in value added, and $1.7 billion in economic output in the Alaska economy.” Additionally, U.S. government records show that wildlife watchers outnumber hunters in Alaska by a factor of five, and that wildlife watchers also spend much more money — in excess of $2 billion annually, vs. $4.3 million by hunters.

It is important to keep in mind that the rules passed by the National Park Service (NPS) and the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) do not restrict subsistence hunting pursuant to Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), nor do they restrict the taking of wildlife for public safety purposes or defense of property. The FWS and the NPS would continue to maintain their jurisdiction over National Wildlife Refuges and National Preserves in Alaska, which are federal public lands held in trust for all Americans, not just a few trophy hunters and trappers.
Therefore, we ask that you oppose any rider or amendment to defund or repeal the NPS and FWS rules, which are so vital to protecting wildlife on those federal lands—supported by American taxpayers—from inhumane and unsustainable killing methods.

Sincerely,

Nicole Paquette  
Vice President, Wildlife Protection  
The Humane Society of the United States  
Washington, D.C.

Sophia DiPietro  
Director  
All Species Kinship  
Battle Creek, Michigan

Mike Garrity  
Executive Director  
Alliance for the Wild Rockies  
Helena, Montana

Richard Patch  
Vice President, Federal Affairs  
The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals  
Washington, DC

Stephen Wells  
Executive Director  
Animal Legal Defense Fund  
Cotati, California

Jessica Johnson  
Chief Legislative Officer  
Animal Protection Voters and Animal Protection of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, NM

Joanna Grossman, PhD  
Federal Policy Advisor  
Animal Welfare Institute  
Washington, DC

Lisa Avery, JD, MBA  
Executive Director  
Animals and Society Institute  
Los Angeles, California

Sarah Stewart  
President  
Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc.  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Chris Palmer  
Professor  
Center for Environmental Filmmaking  
Washington, DC

Becky Peters  
President  
Bitterroot Audubon  
Hamilton, Montana

Adam M. Roberts  
Chief Executive Officer  
Born Free USA  
Washington, DC

Deborah Robbins Millman  
Director  
Cape Wildlife Center  
Barnstable, Massachusetts

Louise Shimmel  
Executive Director  
Cascades Raptor Center  
Eugene, Oregon

Nick Cady  
Legal Director  
Cascadia Wildlands  
Eugene, Oregon

Brendan Cummings  
Senior Counsel  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Tucson, Arizona

John Buckley  
Executive Director  
Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center  
Twain Harte, California
Noelle Almrud
Director
Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch
Murchison, Texas

Maureen Finnerty
Chair
Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks
Washington, DC

Denise Boggs
Executive Director
Conservation Congress
Livingston, Montana

John Fitzpatrick
Director
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology
Ithaca, New York

Penelope Maldonado
Executive Director
The Cougar Fund
Jackson, Wyoming

Janet Kessler
Co-Director
CoyoteCoexistence.com
San Francisco, California

Dan Silver
Executive Director
Endangered Habitats League
Los Angeles, California

Leda Huta
Executive Director
Endangered Species Coalition
Washington, DC

Natalynne DeLapp
Executive Director
EPIC—Environmental Protection Information Center
Arcata, California

Ruth Brooks
President
Freedom Center for Wildlife
Cinnaminson, New Jersey

Judith Rodd
Director
Friends of Blackwater
Charleston, West Virginia

Larry Campbell
Conservation Director
Friends of the Bitterroot
Hamilton, Montana

Melissa Smith
Executive Director
Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf and Wildlife
Madison, Wisconsin

Debra Parsons-Drake
Senior Director, Animal Response, Care, and Sanctuary
The Fund for Animals
New York, New York

Ali Crumpacker
Director
The Fund for Animals Wildlife Center
Ramona, California

David Karopkin
Founder and Director
GooseWatch NYC
Brooklyn, New York

John Chronowski
President
Grand Rapids Audubon Club
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Melissa Smith
Executive Director
Great Lakes Wildlife Alliance
Madison, Wisconsin
Shelley Silbert
Executive Director
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Durango, Colorado

Maureen Hackett, M.D.
President and Founder
Howling for Wolves
Hopkins, Minnesota

Barbara Hodges, DVM, MBA
HSVMA Veterinary Advisor
The Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association
Gaithersburg, Maryland

Ben Callison
President
The Humane Society Wildlife Land Trust
Washington, DC

George Wuerthner
Hunters for Predators
Bend, Oregon

Marilyn Kroplick, M.D.
President
In Defense of Animals
San Rafael, California

Carson Barylack
Campaigns Officer
International Fund for Animal Welfare
Washington, DC

Elena Rizzo
President
Into the Wild, Inc.
Saratoga Springs, New York

Laura Jackson
President
Juniata Valley Audubon Society
Tyrone, Pennsylvania

Timothy Coleman
Executive Director
Kettle Range Conservation Group
Republic, Washington

Kimberly Baker
Executive Director
Klamath Forest Alliance
Orleans, California

Mike Peterson
Executive Director
The Lands Council
Spokane, Washington

Marilyn Weaver
Executive Director
League of Humane Voters, Florida
Tarpon Springs, Florida

John Eberhart
Director
League of Humane Voters, Georgia
Atlanta, Georgia

Mark Larson
President
Maricopa Audubon Society
Phoenix, Scottsdale, and Tempe, Arizona

Kurt Schwartz
Conservation Chair
Maryland Ornithological Society
Ellicott City, Maryland

Brett Garling
Director of Communications
Mission Blue
Napa, California

Vanessa Handy Armstrong
Co-Chair
MOMS Advocating Sustainability
Mill Valley, California
Nancy Warren  
Executive Director  
**National Wolfwatcher Coalition**  
Duluth, Minnesota

Zack Strong  
Staff Attorney, Wildlife Conservation Project  
**Natural Resources Defense Council**  
Bozeman, Montana

Don Molde  
Co-Founder  
**Nevada Wildlife Alliance**  
Reno, Nevada

Susan Harvey  
President  
**North Country Watch**  
Templeton, California

Wally Sykes  
Co-Founder  
**Northeast Oregon Ecosystems**  
Joseph, Oregon

Donna Osseward  
President  
**Olympic Park Associates**  
Seattle, Washington

Larry Boersma  
Chief Executive Officer  
**Preserve Our Wildlife**  
Sarasota, Florida

Camilla Fox  
Founder and Chief Executive Officer  
**Project Coyote**  
Larkspur, California

Tim Keating  
President  
**Rainforest Relief**  
Jersey City, New Jersey

Lisa Owens Viani  
Director  
**Raptors are the Solution**  
Berkeley, California

Michael Kellett  
Executive Director  
**RESTORE: The North Woods**  
Hallowell, Maine

Lori Andresen  
President  
**Save Our Sky Blue Waters**  
Duluth, Minnesota

Kerry Kriger, PhD  
Executive Director  
**SAVE THE FROGS!**  
Los Angeles, California

Ara Marderosian  
Executive Director  
**Sequoia ForestKeeper®**  
Kernville, California

Dr. Brian L. Horejsi  
Wildlife Scientist  
**Speak Up for Wildlife Foundation**  
Penticton, British Columbia

Donna Olsen  
Founder  
**Tri-City Ecology Center**  
Fremont, California

Mike Splain  
Executive Director  
**Ventana Wilderness Alliance**  
Santa Cruz, California

Bettina Bowers Schwan  
Animal Care Director  
**Walden’s Puddle Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center**  
Joelton, Tennessee
On October 23, 2015, the National Park Service (NPS) finalized a rule amending its regulations for sport hunting and trapping in National Preserves in Alaska. A similar rule by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) was finalized on August 3, 2016 amending their regulations on National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska to prohibit cruel killing methods and end so-called “predator control.”

Alaska voters oppose cruel methods of killing wildlife on Alaska’s federal public lands. They oppose baiting and trapping; and oppose denning by more than 2-to-1 margin.

Emphasis added. NPS’s economics for Alaskan economy: https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm