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March 23, 2015

Re: Oppose the House and Senate FY16 Budget Resolutions

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters across the country, we urge you to oppose the damaging House and Senate budget resolutions. The drastic spending cuts proposed in these budgets are irresponsible and threaten the health of our nation's environment and communities. Dirty water, polluted air, threatened wildlife, degraded lands and crumbling infrastructure won't create jobs or strengthen the economy, but it will put our children's economic and environmental security at risk. We also ask that you oppose any amendments that would do further harm to our air, land, water and wildlife when the resolutions come to the House and Senate floors.

These budgets propose drastic cuts in non-defense spending that would further cripple the ability of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of the Interior, the Department of Energy, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and other agencies to carry out their missions to steward our natural resources, develop a sustainable clean energy future and protect our health. They ignore various studies which have shown the damaging impacts sequestration has already had across the country, and instead they propose more of the same in FY16 and unrealistic, deeply damaging cuts in FY17 and beyond.

The agencies charged with stewarding our environment have already seen years of underfunding and budget cuts. For example, the EPA's budget has been slashed by 25 percent since 2010 and may now see even deeper cuts on top of that. Basic infrastructure is crumbling across our public lands, including visitor centers and essential roads. Vital staff positions like law enforcement, managers and rangers are left vacant, undermining science, public health, recreation, and safety.

In short, budgets are about choices. The House and Senate budgets ignore the harm sequestration has already caused and instead pile on additional draconian funding cuts that would likely damage the agencies that steward our environment, imperiling our economy and the American public.

Numerous bipartisan budget experts agree that Congress must take a balanced approach to deficit reduction. Yet deficit reduction efforts since FY 10 have disproportionately relied on nondefense discretionary cuts. In FY16, the sequestered spending cap for nondefense discretionary is already 17 percent below FY10 levels. As a percentage of GDP, these programs are on track to hit their lowest level on record in 1962.

Once again, we urge you to oppose these budget resolutions. We further ask that you oppose any amendments that would do further harm to our air, land, water and wildlife when the resolutions come to the House and Senate floors. American families instead need a budget that is balanced and builds on the successes of proven environmental programs and recognizes the value of these investments.

Sincerely,

Alaska Wilderness League
American Bird Conservancy
American Forests
American Rivers
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Effective Government
Clean Water Action
Conservation Colorado
Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice
Endangered Species Coalition
Environmental Defense Fund
Environment America
EPIC-Environmental Protection Information Center
Friends of the Earth
Kentucky Environmental Foundation
Klamath Forest Alliance
League of Conservation Voters
Los Padres ForestWatch
Montana Environmental Information Center
National Audubon Society
National Parks Conservation Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
Oceana
Ocean Conservancy
Rachel Carson Council
Safe Climate Campaign
Sierra Club
Southern Environmental Law Center
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
SustainUS
The Wilderness Society