Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 3, 2009

The Honorable Norman D. Dicks
Subcommittee on Interior
Committee on Appropriations
B-308 Rayburn House Office Bldg
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Michael K. Simpson
Subcommittee on Interior
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dicks and Ranking Member Simpson,

Thank you for your leadership on habitat protection and land stewardship and for recognizing the distinct challenges facing each area of our country. We write to respectfully request that you increase funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund to $125 million for FY2010. This increase reflects the program's FY2001 funding level with the corresponding rate of inflation.

Because over eighty percent of threatened and endangered species habitat is found on non-federal lands, the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF) has been one of the most successful grant programs within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Authorized under Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, the CESCF represents a vital tool for the protection and conservation of threatened and endangered species. The program allows any state with a service cooperative agreement to apply for grants and participate in a wide array of voluntary projects for threatened, endangered, candidate, and at-risk species conservation.

Lending to its enormous success, the CESCF program has recognized the importance of providing grants to cities, counties, conservation organizations, and non-federal partners for the conservation and protection of threatened and endangered species. These partners bring their own resources to the table, which are combined with critical federal funds and result in the protection of critical natural resources and job creation.

Since FY2001, when the program reached its highest level of $104.7 million, funding for the program has decreased. However, there is tremendous demand in California and across the country for threatened and endangered species grant funding. With the increased utilization of Habitat Conservation Plans and enhanced activity in recent years to update and finalize Recovery Plans, the CESCF program is currently receiving requests at two to three times the amount available.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you to protect endangered species habitat.

Sincerely,

Ellen O. Tauscher
Member of Congress

Mary Bono Mack
Member of Congress

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