

ROB BISHOP, UT
CHAIRMAN
DON YOUNG, AK
LOUIE GOHMERT, TX
DOUG LAMBORN, CO
ROBERT J. WITTMAN, VA
JOHN FLEMING, LA
TOM McCLINTOCK, CA
GLENN THOMPSON, PA
CYNTHIA LUMMIS, WY
DAN BENISHEK, MI
JEFF DUNCAN, SC
PAUL A. GOSAR, AZ
RAUL R. LABRADOR, ID
DOUG LAMALFA, CA
BRADLEY BYRNE, AL
JEFF DENHAM, CA
PAUL COOK, CA
BRUCE WESTERMAN, AR
GARRET GRAVES, LA
DAN NEWHOUSE, WA
RYAN ZINKE, MT
JODY HICE, GA
AMATA COLEMAN RADEWAGEN, AS
TOM MacARTHUR, NJ
ALEX MOONEY, WV
CRESENT HARDY, NV

RAÚL M. GRIJALVA, AZ
RANKING MEMBER
GRACE F. NAPOLITANO, CA
MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO, GU
JIM COSTA, CA
GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLÁN, CNMI
NIKI TSONGAS, MA
PEDRO R. PIERLUISI, PR
JARED HUFFMAN, CA
RAUL RUIZ, CA
ALAN LOWENTHAL, CA
MATTHEW CARTWRIGHT, PA
DON BEYER, VA
NORMA J. TORRES, CA
DEBBIE DINGELL, MI
MARK TAKAI, HI
RUBEN GALLEG0, AZ
LOIS CAPPs, CA
JARED POLIS, CO

DAVID WATKINS
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

September 8, 2015

JASON KNOX
STAFF DIRECTOR

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC, 20240

The Honorable Dan Ashe
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C. St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell and Director Ashe,

I write today to request that you conduct an immediate and thorough review of your requirements and procedures for allowing the importation of animal hunting trophies into the United States. I understand that Walter Palmer, the American who in July baited and lured Zimbabwe's famed Cecil the lion out of a national park in order to kill him for a trophy, is still under investigation for potential violations of U.S. and Zimbabwean law. I hope that those cases come to swift and just resolution. In the meantime, though, the Interior Department must take a proactive approach to ensure that nothing like this ever happens again.

First, I urge you to move as quickly as possible to finalize the proposed rule to list the African lion as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). At the same time, it is imperative the Agency take additional steps to verify that trophy hunting does indeed serve a conservation purpose. For far too long, we have allowed the trophy hunting industry to claim that killing animals in foreign countries benefits conservation and local economic development. These claims are typically based on very limited data, and more often on anecdotes and the theory that the American system of wildlife management is somehow applicable abroad.

U.S. state and federal wildlife conservation laws are stronger and more enforceable than those of any other country on earth, and it is wrong to assume that the same model of hunter-supported conservation can succeed in countries with significant governance failures. Without verifiable evidence showing clearly that revenue from trophy hunting contributes significantly to wildlife conservation in the country of origin, the importation of ESA listed animal trophies should not be allowed. I was encouraged by the negative ESA enhancement finding last year for African elephant trophy imports from Zimbabwe and Tanzania, but documented population declines and the failure of those countries - despite repeated requests over several years - to provide evidence that hunting enhances conservation made the resulting import bans long overdue.

For these reasons, I am asking that the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) take several steps to help conserve iconic wildlife abroad:

- First, FWS should use its existing authority under Section 4(b)(7) of the ESA to issue an emergency rule listing African lions as threatened and prohibiting the importation of African lion trophies until a final listing decision is made, and a 4(d) rule with more rigorous enhancement finding criteria can be developed. Data released this summer by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature show that African lion populations have declined by 42 percent in the last 21 years. While a number of factors are in play, it is clear that there is an immediate need to better control all sources of lion mortality.
- Second, FWS should update its criteria for ESA enhancement findings to include biennial evaluations of countries from which trophies are imported. These evaluations should include specific requirements for the submission of verifiable information from the country in question, documenting the existence and enforcement of wildlife laws and regulations, population levels and trends of target species, and the impact of trophy hunting on these species. Enhancement findings should not be made in countries like Zimbabwe and Tanzania where verifiable information is not provided for years and sometimes decades.
- Third, FWS should revise ESA trophy import permit applications filed by hunters to require additional documentation regarding the details of the hunt, including location(s), hunting method(s), information on the payee and the amounts paid for guide services, permits, and fees, and whether or not the guide is licensed by the host country. Permit applicants should also be required to sign an affidavit pledging that they will not hunt in or near any protected areas that are off-limits to hunting. FWS should also make clear that it will not issue import permits to individuals who have previously violated U.S. federal or state wildlife laws.
- Finally, it is clear that we need international standards that would apply to all trophy hunters, not just Americans hunting for ESA listed species. For this reason I request that you seek an agreement among the parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to put in place a set of global requirements to ensure that trophy hunting of any CITES-listed species benefits conservation of the species. For our own part, FWS should instruct the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council to work with conservation and hunting interests to develop a set of best management practices for American trophy hunters traveling abroad.

We must set an example for the rest of the world. Hunting is a valuable part of American culture, but as the outrage over the death of Cecil the lion shows, it will only remain so if hunters verifiably contribute to conservation wherever they are on the globe. This letter outlines steps the United States can take immediately to ensure that Americans are hunting responsibly. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Member

Committee on Natural Resources