

**Alaska Wilderness League * Center for Biological Diversity
Epic-Environmental Protection Information Center, CA
Defenders of Wildlife * Klamath Forest Alliance, CA * League of Conservation Voters
Los Padres Forest Watch * Marine Conservation Institute * National Audubon Society
National Wildlife Refuge Association * Sierra Club * The Wilderness Society
The Wildlife Society * Wildlife Forever**

Oppose the Anti-National Wildlife Refuge Rider

July 14, 2014

Dear Appropriations Committee Member:

On behalf of our millions of members and activists, we are writing to urge you to oppose the Anti-National Wildlife Refuge Rider in the FY 2015 appropriations bill for Interior, Environment, and Related agencies at the full committee markup on Tuesday.

Across the country, wildlife needs more protected habitat and sportsmen and other wildlife enthusiasts are looking for more places to recreate. In these times, Congress should be facilitating the growth of the National Wildlife Refuge System, not undermining it. Unfortunately, this extreme rider completely blocks the National Wildlife Refuge System from expanding or creating new refuges without subsequent congressional approval. It is nothing less than an ill-advised and badly timed assault on the growth of the Refuge System.

This rider is also completely unnecessary. Congress already holds the purse strings when it comes to any acquisition of refuge lands or management dollars and there is an extensive public process in place to ensure public involvement. In addition, this rider goes directly against the intent of Congress in the Refuge System Improvement Act and would completely nullify the 80 year old authority of the **bi-partisan** Migratory Bird Commission to review and authorize the acquisition of new refuge lands. The commission, including the following members of Congress, reviews the all refuge land acquisitions authorized by the Migratory Bird Conservation Act and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act

- Sen. Thad Cochran, (R-MS)
- Sen. Mark Pryor, (D-AR)
- Rep. John D. Dingell, (D-MI)
- Rep. Robert J. Wittman, (R-VA)

The current system for refuge expansion is inclusive, transparent, responsive to the needs of waterfowl and other wildlife, and already involves considerable congressional oversight. This proposal would move the refuge creation and expansion process to Washington, D.C, and thus introduce national politics into what has been a locally-led, science and community based process for over 100 years. This provision does not solve a problem; it just adds an unnecessary obstacle to needed refuge growth.

It is often extremely difficult to find good habitat, a willing seller and the funds to complete an important land purchase for wildlife. Under this rider, all that hard work could be completely undone by gridlock in Congress.

This rider is burdensome, unnecessary and harmful to the Refuge System and to the wildlife, sportsmen and other enthusiasts that use them. Our organizations strongly urge you to oppose this damaging Anti-National Wildlife Refuge Rider in the FY15 Interior Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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