

Adirondack Council * Allegheny Defense Project * Alliance for Global Justice * Alliance for the Wild Rockies * American Rivers * Arizona Wilderness Coalition * Asian Americans Advancing Justice * Bark * Border Action Network * BorderLinks * Border Network for Human Rights * Center for Biological Diversity * Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Refugee and Immigration Ministries * Church Council of Greater Seattle * Clean Water Action * Coalicion de Derechos Humanos * Coalition of National Park Service Retirees * Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection * Cobb Immigrant Alliance * Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach * Conference of Major Superiors of Men * Conservation Congress * Conservation Northwest * Defenders of Wildlife * Earthjustice * Endangered Species Coalition * Epic-Environmental Protection Information Center * Environment America * Friends of the Clearwater * Friends of the Earth * Friends of Friendship Park * Friends of the Santa Cruz River * The Friends of the San Pedro River * Friends of the Sonoran Desert * Friends of the Wild Swan * Great Old Broads for Wilderness * GreenLatinos * Green Valley/Sahuarita Samaritans * Greenpeace * Heartwood * Humane Borders * Humanitarian Border Solutions Inc. * Idaho Conservation League * International League of Conservation Photographers * Klamath Forest Alliance * League of Conservation Voters * Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns * Maryknoll Sisters, Eastern USA * Missionary Oblates Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Office * Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity * Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office * Natural Resources Defense Council * Natural Resources Council of Maine * National Audubon Society * National Parks Conservation Association * NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby * North Cascades Conservation Council * Northern Jaguar Project * Office of Justice Peace and Integrity for Creation of the Comboni Missionaries, North American Province * Patagonia Area Resource Alliance * Pax Christi USA * RESTORE: The North Woods * Rights for All People * Rio Grande Valley Broadband of the Great Old Broads for Wilderness * Save America's Forests * Save the Colorado * Sequoia ForestKeeper * Sierra Club * Sisters of Mercy – Institute Justice Team * Sky Island Alliance * Southern Sierra Group * South Texas Human Rights Center * Southwest Environmental Center * Tucson Audubon Society * The National Korean American Service and Education Consortium * The Wilderness Society * Voces de la Frontera * The Xaverian Brothers * Western Lands Project * Western Nebraska Resources Council * Western Watersheds Project * WildEarth Guardians *
Wildlands Network * Wilderness Watch

January 27, 2015

PLEASE OPPOSE H.R. 399, THE “SECURE OUR BORDERS FIRST ACT OF 2015”

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the millions of Americans represented by our organizations, we write to strongly oppose H.R. 399, the “Secure Our Borders First Act of 2015,” in particular Section 3, “Operational Control of the Border,” and Section 13, “Prohibition on Actions that Impede Border Security on Certain Federal Land.” Under the guise of enhancing border security, Section 3 would further militarize natural areas and communities already glutted with border walls, roads and towers; Section

13 would undermine fundamental environmental and conservation laws and would allow further damage to the fragile border environment and the people and communities dependent upon it.

Section 3 calls for the completion of 700 miles of double-layered fencing along the Southwest border previously authorized by the Secure Fence Act even though reports by the Government Accountability Office and other organizations have found no evidence that the 650 miles of barriers already constructed have made a significant contribution to border security. Moreover, the existing fencing, built at a cost of millions of dollars per mile, has caused or exacerbated disastrous flood events in border communities, has fragmented wildlife habitat, and has caused harm to numerous imperiled species. Section 3 also requires additional construction and maintenance of roads in specific locations that would degrade wildlife habitat, air, and water in and adjacent to important natural areas such as Big Bend National Park in Texas.

Section 13 would give unilateral authority to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to build forward operating bases, construct roads, fences, patrol by vehicle and aircraft and more on Federal public and tribal lands within 100 miles of the U.S. borders with both Canada and Mexico. Section 13 also would waive sixteen environmental, historic preservation and conservation laws on Federal public and tribal lands within that 100 mile zone including the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Wilderness Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Antiquities Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the National Park Service Organic Act. This 100-mile exemption is an extreme overreach covering huge swaths of the American landscape encompassing millions of acres of national parks, monuments, wildlife refuges, wilderness areas, forests and Indian reservations including iconic places such as Joshua Tree National Park, North Cascades National Park, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, Glacier National Park, the Boundary Waters Wilderness, White Mountain National Forest, Glacier Bay National Park, and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

DHS and its agencies already have unprecedented authority to operate on public lands, including national parks, national monuments, national wildlife refuges and other public lands. In many cases, their actions fall under what the Congressional Research Service has characterized as the largest waiver of law in American history. There is simply no law that prevents, impedes or prohibits the Border Patrol from taking actions needed to fulfill its mission. That is why both DHS and Customs and Border Protection have repeatedly testified that waivers of this type are unnecessary. Indeed, the hasty construction of the existing border wall, without benefit of environmental review, as referenced above, has contributed to several incidents of the wall being knocked down by flood waters as well as other environmental problems.

Sections 3 and 13 would only harm special places, wildlife, and communities along the border while contributing nothing to increase border security. We urge you to oppose H.R. 399 in its current form. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Adirondack Council
Allegheny Defense Project
Alliance for Global Justice
Alliance for the Wild Rockies
American Rivers
Arizona Wilderness Coalition
Asian Americans Advancing Justice
Bark
Border Action Network
BorderLinks
Border Network for Human Rights
Center for Biological Diversity
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Refugee and Immigration Ministries
Church Council of Greater Seattle
Clean Water Action
Coalicion de Derechos Humanos
Coalition of National Park Service Retirees
Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection
Cobb Immigrant Alliance
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Conservation Congress
Conservation Northwest
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice
Endangered Species Coalition
Epic-Environmental Protection Information Center
Environment America
Friends of the Clearwater
Friends of the Earth
Friends of Friendship Park
Friends of the Santa Cruz River
The Friends of the San Pedro River
Friends of the Sonoran Desert
Friends of the Wild Swan
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
GreenLatinos
Green Valley/Sahuarita Samaritans
Greenpeace

Heartwood
Humane Borders
Humanitarian Border Solutions Inc.
Idaho Conservation League
International League of Conservation Photographers
Klamath Forest Alliance
League of Conservation Voters
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Maryknoll Sisters, Eastern USA
Missionary Oblates Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Office
Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
Natural Resources Defense Council
Natural Resources Council of Maine
National Audubon Society
National Parks Conservation Association
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
North Cascades Conservation Council
Northern Jaguar Project
Office of Justice Peace and Integrity for Creation of the Comboni Missionaries, North American Province
Patagonia Area Resource Alliance
Pax Christi USA
RESTORE: The North Woods
Rights for All People
Rio Grande Valley Broadband of the Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Save America's Forests
Save the Colorado
Sequoia ForestKeeper
Sierra Club
Sisters of Mercy – Institute Justice Team
Sky Island Alliance
Southern Sierra Group
South Texas Human Rights Center
Southwest Environmental Center
Tucson Audubon Society
The National Korean American Service and Education Consortium
The Wilderness Society
Voces de la Frontera
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