



Steve Moyer
Vice President of Government Affairs

July 11, 2017

The Honorable Ken Calvert, Chair
The Honorable Betty McCollum, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Interior, Environment, and Related: Proposed FY18 Budget Cuts.

Dear Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, and members of the Subcommittee:

I am writing on behalf of Trout Unlimited (TU), regarding Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations for programs within your jurisdiction. These programs are of great interest to TU, and critical to the success of our mission to conserve, protect, and restore trout and salmon habitat.

Trout Unlimited represents 300,000 members and supporters nationwide. Across the country, TU staff and volunteers work in partnership with willing landowners, federal agencies and state, local and tribal governments to conserve coldwater habitats. Our members invest thousands of volunteer hours to restore streams and habitats across the country. Much of this work is catalyzed by funding from the federal resource agencies, which TU is then able to leverage multiple times.

Maintain FY17 funding levels for natural resource agencies. As you head to mark up tomorrow, as detailed below, we want you to know how strongly we are opposed to the many deep and ill-conceived cuts outlined in the President's FY18 Budget. The Subcommittee did a good job avoiding cuts in its FY17 bill. We urge the Subcommittee to use its FY17 bill as a model and reject the Trump administration cuts AND avoid destructive policy riders.

Reject damaging legislative riders. We strongly urge the Subcommittee to reject the wrong-headed Clean Water Rule adopted by the Energy and Water Subcommittee. Sec. 108(a) of the Energy and Water appropriations bill would allow the Trump Administration to disregard the rule of law as it carries out its plan to undermine clean water safeguards. The provision would authorize EPA and the Army Corps to repeal the Clean Water Rule without following fundamental processes aimed at giving sportsmen and women a voice on this key element of the Clean Water Act. Without the Clean Water Rule, the streams that sustain the sport fishing economy worth \$50 Billion supplies public drinking water for one in three Americans, will remain at risk. There should be no place in either appropriations bill for such a disenfranchising rider.

Reject the eviscerating cuts proposed for EPA programs. TU urges you to reject the terrible cuts proposed for EPA programs. EPA simply cannot carry out the Clean Water and Clean Air Acts, nor its very useful regional programs, if the Trump Administration's proposed cuts are enacted. We strongly urge you to maintain FY17 funding levels for EPA programs.

A mission to conserve, protect, & restore North America's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds.

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The EPA regional programs also are especially important. The President's budget proposes to eliminate or vastly reduce funding for the EPA's **Chesapeake Bay, Puget Sound, and Great Lakes Programs**, and would eliminate funding for the **non-point control Section 319 programs**. The elimination and reductions of these programs is entirely unjustified, potentially ruining a vast array of water quality improving partnerships across the Nation.

Maintain funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) habitat and fisheries management programs.

The FWS is an essential TU partner for protecting, reconnecting, and restoring trout and salmon habitat. We strongly support a variety of habitat restoration programs within FWS, and urge the Subcommittee to restore the cuts proposed by the Trump Administration for the following programs:

- **The Partners for Fish and Wildlife** supports collaborative conservation partnerships between willing landowners and partners like Trout Unlimited to protect and restore fish habitat on private lands.
- **The National Fish Habitat Program** supports on-the-ground partnerships that coordinate conservation actions for a variety of fish species, bring together state and federal agencies as well as conservation organizations to better coordinate watershed restoration activities.
- **The Fish Passage Program** funds removal of barriers to fish passage such as culverts and other obstructions.
- **The Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement** provides a collaborative solution to long-standing water challenges in California and Oregon, involving multiple stakeholders ranging from irrigators, tribes, energy utilities, and sportsmen.
- **The Aquatic Invasive Species** reduces the spread of invasive species in watersheds throughout the country.
- **The Mitigation Hatchery system** is operated by the FWS to provide fish for the Tennessee Valley Authority, Army Corps of Engineers, and Bureau of Reclamation to provide recreational opportunities at dam sites across the country.
- **Recovery Land Acquisition Grants** of the **Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund** monies are matched by States and non-federal entities to promote species recovery through acquisition of lands - from willing sellers - that are critical to the health and sustainability of sensitive and threatened species.
- **The Delaware River Basin Restoration program**, newly authorized, is a voluntary grant and technical assistance program, that directs the Secretary to produce a basin-wide strategy, draws on existing conservation efforts, involves partners, and provides for the implementation of a shared set of science-based restoration and protection activities.

Maintain funding for vital U.S. Forest Service (USFS) programs.

The USFS is another critical partner to TU, especially important because it contains a large amount of the best remaining trout and salmon habitat in the Nation. We strongly support the habitat conservation programs within USFS, and urge the Subcommittee to restore the cuts proposed by the Trump Administration for the following programs:

- **The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), especially the Forest Legacy program.** The FY18 Budget proposal would dramatically reduce land and easement acquisition funds from the

nation's premier conservation law, the LWCF. TU has long supported LWCF which has been used to enhance angler access and protect high quality trout and salmon habitat.

- **The Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management program.** The FY18 Budget proposes an 11% decrease in the Wildlife and Fisheries program. The funding cut will substantially reduce the number of watersheds targeted for improvement, and will substantially reduce the targeted number of acres treated to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience.

TU is especially concerned about adequate funding for restoration of salmon and trout habitat in Southeast Alaska's Tongass National Forest, due to the significant economic and conservation values of wild salmon in the region. Due to past logging and road building, the Forest Service estimates that at current rates will take more than 50 years to address the backlog of restoration needs on the Tongass.

- **Legacy Roads and Trails** program funding is used to shore up forest roads and trails, decommission unneeded routes, replace culverts that block fish passage, and reduce sedimentation that harms fish habitat. Some 380,000 miles of roads run through National Forest lands, leaving a maintenance backlog estimated between \$5 billion and \$10 billion and an acute need to address the road network in ways that improve access and fish habitat. This is vital work, both due to its importance in protecting public lands and its incredible usefulness for rural communities that rely on National Forest infrastructure.

Maintain funding for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) fisheries habitat programs.

The BLM continues to be a great partner for TU in restoring some of the nation's most valuable and underappreciated trout and salmon habitat. We urge the Subcommittee to restore funding for the following programs:

- **The Wildlife and Fisheries Management Program** is essential for providing on-the-ground resource management of the 119,000 stream miles contained within BLM lands. Partnering with TU and other conservation groups, BLM works to restore native trout species across the West through this account.
- **The Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Program** works to eliminate or minimize the environmental impacts and the physical safety hazards associated with hardrock mining activity across roughly 53,000 sites on America's public lands. TU has worked throughout the West on abandoned mine cleanup projects, including a partnership with the BLM to restore water quality in the Upper Arkansas River watershed of Colorado.

Ensure that the integrity of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement's (OSMRE) Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund is maintained.

One of the most valuable programs for restoring brook trout and watersheds in coal country is the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund. We urge the Subcommittee to fully support funding to our state reclamation partners from this fund. Further, we urge the Subcommittee to provide funding to the Watershed Cooperative Agreement Program.

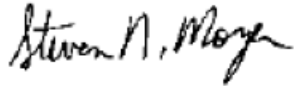
- The **Watershed Cooperative Agreement Program (WCAP)** provides funds to not-for-profit organizations, through partnership agreements, to undertake local projects to clean streams affected by acid mine drainage (AMD). In Pennsylvania, TU leveraged one of these grants to secure \$1 million in funding to design and install a passive treatment system for an abandoned mine in Kettle Creek, cleaning up acidic waste in a native brook trout stream. Through WCAP funding, TU's Eastern Abandoned Mine Restoration program is working to bring life back to these rivers and streams and to make them once again places where brook trout.

Conclusion

As the Subcommittee develops its FY18 appropriations bill, we urge you to maintain funding for these agencies and programs, and to reject cuts to conservation programs. We also urge you to pass a clean spending bill with no harmful natural resource riders – particularly related to conservation or management of our water resources and public lands.

Thank you for considering our views on the Interior and Environment appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven A. Moyer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "S" and "M".

Steve Moyer