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April 18, 2007

The Honorable Howard L. Berman
Chairman, Subcommittee on Courts, the Internet, and Intellectual Property
House Judiciary Committee
2221 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Howard Coble
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Courts, the Internet, and Intellectual Property
House Judiciary Committee
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives:

On behalf of the Sierra Club, I am writing to support the efforts of your subcommittee to address the erosion of federal judicial salaries over the past several decades. The Sierra Club deeply respects the work of the federal judiciary on the multitude of complex environmental matters presented to the bench each year. We are keenly interested in supporting a diverse judiciary that receives fair pay commensurate with the broader legal profession.

The number and complexity of environmental laws and regulations have steadily increased over the past four decades, yet the salaries of federal judges have declined in real dollars by approximately twenty-five percent since 1969. This trend threatens to undermine the morale of the judiciary and, if it persists, could affect the makeup of the bench in negative ways. A federal judgeship should attract and retain a diverse cross-section of the brightest and most accomplished lawyers in this country. If the current salary trend persists, economic pressures and the extreme disparity between judicial pay and salaries in the private bar will threaten this ideal.

The Sierra Club applauds your subcommittee's effort to tackle this problem, and we look forward to corresponding with you further as legislation is introduced and moved through Congress.

Sincerely,

Patrick Gallagher
Director of Environmental Law

cc: Members, Subcommittee on Courts, the Internet, and Intellectual Property