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TESTIMONY FOR A HEARING OF
THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS
ON
INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BILLS:
H.R. 1464, "*GREAT CAT AND RARE CANIDS ACT OF 2007*"
H.R. 1913, "*GREAT CATS CONSERVATION ACT OF 2007*"
H.R. 1771, "*CRANE CONSERVATION ACT OF 2007*"

September 6, 2007

I would like to start by thanking Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans Chairwoman Madeleine Bordallo and Ranking Member Henry Brown, as well as Natural Resources Chairman Nick Rahall and Ranking Member Don Young, for their personal leadership and their dedication to American leadership globally in conservation. These four leaders, all Members of the U.S. House International Conservation Caucus (ICC), are working in a vigorous bipartisan fashion to forge policies and design programs to address some of the most critical natural resources management issues of our time. I applaud their noble work and encourage them to actively join with the co-chairs of the ICC, Representatives Hal Rogers, John Tanner, Ed Royce, and Tom Udall, to see that the United States of America fulfills its destiny to lead the world as its good stewards.

I was invited to speak today, not as a scientist, but as a conservationist – and I am here to advocate a bipartisan compromise. The two bills to discuss dealing with "great cats" and "rare canids" are close replicas of each other, with two exceptions: (1), H.R. 1913 leaves out wild dogs, that is, wild canids; and (2), H.R. 1913 restricts funding only to the species listed – there is no allowance for up to 25% for spending on other rare species.

I'm passionate about conservation. I have spent much of my life in Africa, and I've traveled a good bit in Latin America and in Asia too. I've witnessed shrinking habitats for predator species, and know how difficult it is for local

people when a big cat takes a cow or a goat because its natural prey like antelope have been killed off for the illegal bushmeat trade or disappeared with the increasing pressures of advancing development. I'm furious when I hear another magnificent and rare great cat has been mutilated to steal body parts to be sold for witch doctor potions. And like the big cats, wild dogs also face real and growing threats. They are killed out of spite or suspicion when a family animal is missing. They also die from diseases common to neighboring domestic animals to which they previously have been unexposed. They haven't the needed immunity, and in the wild there are no vaccines.

I would like to thank my colleagues at the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), represented at this hearing, for taking the initial lead in collecting and deciphering the science that supports new legislation to address these threats to rare canid species as well as great cats. These magnificent animals are a global resource for which we all share responsibility. We must see that these species survive for our descendants, even if all of us aren't familiar with, much less fond of, the less colorful or lesser known dog species. But I don't think Americans should shoulder the burden of subsidizing wolves in the European Union or leading the way in protecting lynx in Spain, Portugal or France when our European friends can and should afford such work. We should actively encourage them to accept the responsibility for these species, and to collaborate and cooperate where possible.

Our focus should be on maximizing support in developing countries that do not possess the infrastructure for protection, where new democracies and emerging economies are struggling with very limited resources -- places faced with the greatest onslaught of commercial poachers and ruthless middlemen for black markets that tempt and cajole local people into selling off resources that hold the most promise for their biodiversity and that underlie long-term sustainability. Future generations deserve the advantages of charismatic species that draw tourism, create employment, and generate great revenue.

Moreover, protecting these "umbrella" or "keystone" species of cats and dogs helps protect the biodiversity at the center of an ecosystem. Large wild cats and dogs survive on prey they must find and catch. Sometimes a meal may be days away. So they travel far and wide, and can be very territorial. Because their ranges extend so widely, conservation efforts to protect these species mean that entire ecosystems full of many lesser-known but also important species benefit as well. Furthermore, many of the cats and even dogs listed in the proposed H.R. 1464 are considered charismatic -- and bring attention to the plight of all species imperiled when lands rich in biodiversity are developed unsustainably.

We have a moral obligation to help preempt the devastation of critical biodiversity in countries that lack financial resources and professional expertise

to successfully undertake needed conservation measures to protect rare cats and dogs that in many places are rapidly decreasing in numbers.

The Multinational Species Conservation Fund (MSCF) is a powerful mechanism for getting “the best bang for the buck” – channeling support directly to the rangers on the ground who are truly our front lines of defense for predator species. MSCF grants also pay for research to develop protection strategies that allow projects to utilize funds most efficiently – targeting the most needed interventions. And the MSCF pays for community outreach – for raising awareness of natural predator behaviors and the benefits to their ecosystems – dispelling myths that sometimes underlie the killing of predators, and mitigating conflict with humans over livestock takings. Without local community understanding and involvement, our wild cats and dogs cannot be sustainably protected.

What we need now is a consistent approach that concentrates the limited available funding where it is most needed, to protect those species that have few or no alternative sources of support. Thus, I urge the Committee to consider a compromise that will utilize the proven MSCF mechanism to protect wild cats as well as wild dogs in places with the least resources. I suggest you eliminate the Iberian lynx from H.R. 1464 at this time, and consider support for the European wolf only in their range that extends into Asia and then only within the 25% of funds set aside to provide assistance for projects that are not specifically listed by name in paragraphs (5)(B) or (6)(B) of H.R. 1464. The other species listed by name have been well researched as the best to start with. As more are identified and put forth by our NGO and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service scientists as essential to protect, we can consider adding them at some future date.

We need a strong bipartisan consensus to assure passage this Congressional term. It is far too urgent a need to delay over fine points when surely we all agree on the basics. The rare canids and great cats need our support now. Please let’s not get caught up in a battle of wills.

The International Conservation Caucus Foundation (ICCF) is committed to advancing the conservation of natural resources globally. Our vision at ICCF is that through strong U.S. leadership and public-private international partnerships, countries around the world will have the capacity and motivation to responsibly manage their natural resources for habitat and biodiversity protection, poverty alleviation, good governance, economic development, conflict avoidance, and regional security.

We have on our board of directors and advisory board many prominent retired Congressmen, Democrats and Republicans, and on our advisory council, the four most important U.S.-based international conservation NGOs, WCS and WWF here today, and Conservation International and The Nature Conservancy.

Actively represented on our Conservation Council are more than two dozen leading NGOS and corporations as diverse as Birdlife International, the Cheetah Conservation Fund, Rainforest Alliance, and the WILD Foundation, along with International Paper, Anheuser-Busch, Tudor Investment Corporation, JPMorgan Chase, ExxonMobile, BP, Schering-Plough, Johnson & Johnson, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, and Wal-Mart.

Our common mission is to develop and champion policies and programs that integrate natural resource stewardship into all foreign policy and foreign assistance programs. We seek to encourage, guide, and support policymakers and opinion leaders in formulation and implementation of innovative policies that increase the scale and effectiveness of U.S. public and private support for international conservation. We do this by uniting the public and private sectors as a cooperative and proactive force in the program development arena. We educate policymakers with a dependable flow of balanced information and good science, using our Advisory Council and Conservation Council as our "brain-trust."

So what we're vested in here today is precedence. We must envision all the reasons why endangered species are important to America. Yes, there is an aesthetic reason – we want them to live on in their natural homes, not only in zoos. But by protecting endangered species, we foster healthy societies and economies. Human conflict is not just over oil, but often stems from increased competition over other shrinking natural resources. Conflict – and in its worst form, terrorism – finds a ripe audience when people are desperate. They become desperate when ecosystems collapse, water sources dry up, and people starve. All of this greatly impacts our own national security.

What better way to win friends than to export good natural resource management along with democracy and good old capitalism, while helping to raise the standard of living of poor people whose well-being is most directly connected to the local services provided by nature – clean water, good soil for food production, wood for cooking, medicinal plants, and a variety of other things that a sound ecosystem with healthy biodiversity offers.

Therefore, I would like to suggest that my dear friends and true allies in the international conservation cause, Mr. Udall of New Mexico and Mr. Brown of South Carolina, consider sharing ownership of a new bill – one that includes both great cats and rare canids, but not species in habitats that could and should be protected by wealthy host nations in the European Union. I recommend that we maximize the use of American resources for those species identified by the U.S. international conservation NGOs with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service scientific advisors as most at risk and most important for biodiversity. These great but vulnerable animal species need our help now. By working together to find

common ground, we can ensure that they will receive the support of the American people that is so crucial to their survival.

Thank you.

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