

**Testimony of
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Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1464, H.R. 1771 and H.R. 1913

**before the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife And Oceans
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives**

September 6, 2007

1. Introduction

Madam Chair and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Eric Dinerstein and I am the Chief Scientist and Vice President for Conservation Science at the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). For more than 45 years, WWF has been protecting the future of nature. Today we are the largest multinational conservation organization in the world. WWF's unique way of working combines global reach with a foundation in science, involves action at every level from local to global, and ensures the delivery of innovative solutions that meet the needs of both people and nature. We currently sponsor conservation programs in more than 100 countries, thanks to the support of 1.2 million members in the United States and more than 5 million members worldwide.

I am pleased to be here today to discuss the bills being considered by the Subcommittee that would establish conservation programs for great cats, rare canids, and international cranes. These programs are modeled on the highly successful programs for African and Asian elephants, rhinos and tigers, sea turtles, great apes, and neotropical migratory birds. The United States, primarily through programs administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), has played a critical role in the protection and conservation of these highly endangered species, and the legislation being considered here today furthers U.S. leadership on these issues. Of the three bills being considered, WWF favors H.R. 1464, the Great Cats and Rare Canids Conservation Act over the more limited coverage of the Great Cats Conservation Act. We recognize the need to protect great cats, but Congress should not lose this opportunity to include endangered canids as well. We also support enactment of H.R. 1771.

Let me thank you Madam Chair, and Ranking Member Brown, for your longstanding leadership on conservation. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Udall, Mr. Tanner, Mr. Royce and Mr. Rogers for sponsoring H.R. 1464 and also for their continued leadership as co-chairs of the International Conservation Caucus. And I would like to thank Mr. Brown and Ms. Baldwin for their leadership on H.R. 1913 and H.R. 1771, respectively. Conservation of the world's endangered species is an issue that receives far too little attention among world leaders, and the fact that this Subcommittee is considering three bills at once is a cause for celebration.

My testimony as follows will discuss: (1) the importance of the programs on which these three bills are modeled; (2) the importance of protecting the species at issue in the three new programs under consideration today; (3) WWF's work in conserving these species; and (4) WWF's position on these bills.

2. The Importance of the Multinational Species Programs

All three bills under consideration today are modeled after the existing highly successful multinational species conservation programs. Those programs provide critical funding for species in crisis that has helped stabilize their populations around the globe. There are several features that make those programs unique and effective, and ultimately are the reason for those programs' success on the ground.

Unique Features of the Programs

- *Leveraging significant conservation funding and support.* The FWS has succeeded in achieving approximately a 3:1 ratio in leveraging federal funds with matching funds. FWS reports that since 1990, about 1425 grants, totaling some \$74 million, have been awarded for multinational species projects. These together have leveraged almost \$220 million in matching funds and in-kind contributions. Partners have included conservation groups, corporations, range states and other governments. Few international conservation programs are able to generate this level of matching support.
- *Flexibility and size of awards.* The grants awarded by FWS are relatively small – on average less than \$50,000 for mammals and turtles, and less than \$100,000 for neotropical migratory birds. Yet grantees can perform profoundly important work in the field with these small amounts. In addition – and in part because of the small grant size – there is great flexibility in the programs. FWS can direct small amounts of funds to priority places based on immediate needs and emergencies in a relatively fast timeframe. For example, FWS responded to the recent killings of Mountain gorillas in Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by extending and enhancing its grant to the Frankfurt Zoological Society for support of anti-poaching programs in the Park.
- *Program administration with minimal bureaucracy and cost.* To date, the multinational species conservation programs have been administered at minimal cost— approximately 5 percent of the monies appropriated for the grant programs from 1990 to 2006. In fact, this amount has proven inadequate to cover the costs of full program administration, and subsidies have been needed from other FWS programs. Although these grant programs are relatively small, their administration requires important activities, such as developing and reviewing proposals and reports, issuing and tracking project contracts and payments, communicating with grantees and host governments and tracking and monitoring projects.
- *Increased public awareness.* Over the past decade, we have seen a marked growth in the American public's interest in, and concern for, the future of these endangered species.

This is clearly the result of the combined efforts of NGOs, FWS and Congress. All of us receive a regular stream of letters of concern about, and in support of, these species. There is little question that the American public cares deeply about the future of elephants, tigers, rhinos, great apes and other species supported by these programs, as well as other great cats and canids and avian species. Donations and other contributions to our organizations are a strong sign of public support towards efforts to protect these species.

- *Strengthened collaboration among NGOs and governments.* As both a partner donor and implementing organization for various FWS-supported projects, WWF is acutely aware of the important role the multinational species conservation programs have played in fostering collaboration among NGOs and governments. Many of the projects supported by these conservation funds involve multiple partners, and grants provided to NGOs receive approval from range country governments before they are awarded. The FWS programs have thus acted as a catalyst, not only for leveraging funding, but also for bringing important conservation players together in ways that enhance collaboration and conservation impact.
- *International leadership.* By passing the multinational species conservation laws, the U.S. Congress and FWS have together staked out important leadership roles in international conservation. U.S. leadership was on display in the most recent CITES Conference of the Parties, and this leadership is bolstered by the multinational species conservation laws. Such leadership has helped bring the plight of these endangered species to the attention of governments worldwide, including both range and donor countries, which have increased their support for conservation programs accordingly. It has helped make these species a higher priority on policy and philanthropy agendas in the private sector, leading to an increased public support for conservation programs. U.S. leadership has also served to encourage and support local leaders throughout the world.

Effectiveness of the Programs

The features of the programs described above are the reasons that these programs are so successful on the ground. Consider just a few of the achievements in species conservation throughout the world that could not have been achieved without these programs. The first program, establishing the African Elephant Conservation Fund, has provided more than 280 grants in 31 countries since 1990, strengthening enforcement and trade control measures, protecting critical habitat, aiding training programs for park guards and wildlife managers and assisting important elephant research, monitoring and survey efforts. The African elephant is better off today, in part because of more than 15 years of U.S. government support.

The success of the African Elephant Conservation Act led Congress to pass the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act in 1994. With the establishment of the Rhino and Tiger Conservation Fund, a steady stream of well-targeted grants has helped avert further losses of these species as well. In recent years, we have seen signs of improvement in the status of tiger populations in Russia, thanks in part to projects funded by this program. Africa's black rhino has experienced a substantial increase in number since its low point in 1993; the Rhino and Tiger Fund has

contributed significantly to black rhino conservation efforts in Zimbabwe in a time of serious crisis when many of the gains made in the mid- to late- 1990s could easily have been wiped out. Asian rhinos, representing some of the most endangered large mammals on Earth, have received invaluable assistance from the Rhino and Tiger Conservation Fund. Rhino Protection Units (RPU) supported by the FWS have been critical to the survival of the last 60 Javan rhinos in Indonesia and Vietnam, and the last 300 Sumatran rhinos in Sumatra. FWS funding has been essential to the survival of Mountain gorillas in war-torn Congo and Rwanda. Marine turtle grants have helped protect Leatherback turtles from capture on nesting beaches in Angola and Gabon.

The legislation being considered today would establish similar conservation programs for great cats, rare canids and cranes, and WWF would expect that such programs would yield equal benefits for those species. There is no question that those species deserve the same level of effort, as discussed below.

3. The Need for Protecting the Species at Issue

Apex predators, like lions, wolves, snow leopards and other large canids and felids often exert what ecologists term “top-down” effects on the ecosystems of which they form an integral part. Their predation on other species, especially herbivores, but also smaller predators and omnivores (known as meso-predators), has a dramatic effect on the habitat, numbers, distributions, behavior, and ecological interactions of these species.

Some well-publicized examples of these effects occur in places very familiar to us. The re-introduction of wolves in Yellowstone National Park has changed the feeding behavior of deer and elk, restored heavily overbrowsed habitats, and provided more balance to the ecosystem. In contrast, the absence of large canids and felids in the eastern U.S. has led to an overabundance of deer that has dramatically changed the ecology of the eastern deciduous forest, help spread disease, and become a serious hazard to motorists.

A less publicized example of the role of wild canids and felids in keeping ecological order comes from a series of natural experiments conducted by Dr. John Terborgh and his colleagues from Duke University. On a series of man-made islands in a lake in Venezuela, created by flooding after dam construction, Terborgh showed that islands too small to maintain some of their predators, especially jaguars and pumas, ultimately saw plant-eating insects reach epidemic proportions and essentially defoliate the forest because of cascading disruption of normal control mechanisms that are dependant on the presence of top predators.

There are even more subtle effects of predator loss that we can only detect after long-term studies. For example, the loss of mountain lions and wolves in much of the eastern U.S. has seen a proliferation of what biologists call “meso-predators,” such as foxes, skunks, and raccoons. These species have become so abundant that they have depressed levels of native songbirds whose nests they raid for eggs and nestlings. Predation by these meso-predators adds to the other threats facing our migratory songbirds. Finally, some of these mid-level predators are carriers of diseases like rabies into suburban areas.

Clearly, maintaining healthy populations of large mammalian predators, including the 13 species covered in HR 1464, is an imperative. But to do so requires reversing trends in habitat loss. The December issue of the *Journal of Mammalogy* will feature a paper I co-authored that examines range collapses in the 200+ mammals that weigh more than 40 pounds. Leopards, lions and tigers have experienced the greatest range collapses among felids, and wild dogs have experienced the greatest range collapses among canids. These 13 species are also what we term area-sensitive; simply put, they need big areas to maintain genetically viable populations. Maintaining healthy populations of these large mammals will help to guarantee healthier ecosystems worldwide, benefiting not only biodiversity, but the people who live in these areas as well.

Cranes, including those specifically identified in H.R. 1771, represent some of the most elegant species on the planet and pose some of the biggest challenges for conservation. Cranes migrate long distances between their winter and summer ranges, and along the way face grave dangers from poachers, habitat loss resulting from the expansion of agriculture, and the spread of human infrastructure. The high number of cranes that are considered globally endangered is testament to the need for extensive help for this group of birds. Cranes play an important ecological role in the systems in which they live and in many ways serve as a good indicator of the health of these systems. Crane populations recover in habitats with good protection and reduced illegal hunting and poaching, and these management interventions benefit many other species. Many cranes favor wetlands, and conservation of these habitats provide ecosystem services that benefit humans, such as water filtration and purification, improved fisheries, and recreation. Water is predicted to be a major issue in the near future. Preventing large habitat areas from further degradation and restoring degraded wetlands for species such as cranes, and for the apex species described above, will also provide a conservation umbrella for watershed integrity, thus safeguarding sources of water.

4. WWF's Work in Protecting Species at Issue

Some of WWF's most promising examples of conservation of predator species across Africa, Asia, and Latin America offer both innovations in management as well as promoting basic research on lesser known species. Much of WWF's work across the globe involves species that would be beneficiaries of the legislation being considered today, and that work would receive a tremendous boost from U.S.-supported programs created to protect those species. This section provides a snapshot of our work in select regions as it relates to great cats, wild canids, and cranes.

Namibia

WWF's work in Namibia focuses on community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), in which WWF works with local communities to improve economic livelihoods at the same time as conserving natural resources. This work, in part carried out through the "Living in a Finite Environment" (LIFE) program, provides assistance towards comprehensive community-based natural resource management in a part of the world that is biologically rich but economically poor. LIFE interventions have contributed towards the establishment of 50 community-managed conservancies, placing almost 14% of Namibia's land under new conservation management and

engaging 230,000 community members in natural resource management activities. Our work there relates specifically to wild dogs, cheetahs, and lions.

- *Wild dogs*

At the turn of the last century explorers, farmers and naturalists recorded reports of wild dogs from all regions of Namibia, even into the Namib desert during periods of good rains when herds of game freely roamed into these areas in search of seasonal food. Wild dogs were seen in Karas and Hardap regions as late as the mid 1960s, the Khomas and Erongo regions in the late 1960s, Kunene in the 1970s and throughout the north central region into the 1980s. Currently wild dogs can only be found at very low densities in the isolated Northeast of Namibia. It is estimated that 300-600 individuals remain with only 5% of their range within protected areas. Wild dogs are considered to be Namibia's most endangered mammal species and continue to be widely persecuted in all but the most unpopulated areas. The Namibian Wild Dog Project (WDP) aims to better understand the interactions between wild dogs and humans and to find ways of mitigating the conflict while researching other threats to wild dog conservation in Namibia. The WDP looks to link social and ecological approaches to conservation, working closely with people - ultimately trying to find ways of optimizing benefits from African wild dogs through tourism, while understanding their ecology and conservation threats within the actual and potential conflict zone. Objectives of the project include: research on human-wild dog conflict in farming communities; collection of baseline data on other factors affecting wild dog conservation; development & implementation of education and awareness projects that reduce human-wild conflict; and the development of a National Management Plan for Namibia's wild dog population.

- *Cheetahs*

Namibia has the world's largest population of free-ranging cheetah, estimated at about 2,500 animals, or 20 percent of the world's population. Ninety percent of Namibia's cheetah live outside of protected reserve areas. Working on communal lands, WWF's CBNRM program benefits cheetahs ranging on conservancies by supporting the sustainable use of wildlife resources, including game species that are also a critical resource for cheetahs. The CBNRM program is also actively involved in supporting compensation schemes that are arising from increased livestock losses from increasing cheetah populations on communal lands.

- *Lions*

Namibia also supports a unique population of desert-adapted lions that survive in the harsh Namib Desert. The desert lion is a prominent feature in Namibia and is highly valued, both aesthetically and financially, by the growing tourism industry. Namibia has received international recognition (e.g. CITES) for successful conservation efforts, such as the CBNRM communal conservancy program, that has led to significant increases in wildlife numbers, especially in the arid areas. With the growing wildlife populations, the conflict between lions and the local people has intensified as lions are killing livestock more regularly. In defense of their livestock, farmers often shoot, trap, or poison lions. These local communities bear the costs of living with lions, but often do not share equally in the benefits from tourism, and they receive little assistance in managing conflicts.

Namibia's CBNRM program supports communities in their right to be compensated for livestock losses due to "problem" animals such as lions, while recognizing that lions are also a significant draw for eco-tourists, thereby bolstering the argument that predators such as lions can be more valuable for locals when they are alive, rather than dead, if the appropriate agreements can be made between local communities and tour operators.

Asia

Felids and canids are highly diverse in Asia. WWF's projects have targeted the larger cats which are among the most area-sensitive of the species under consideration.

- *Snow Leopard*

The snow leopard is an endangered big cat that inhabits the rugged and mountainous terrain of Central Asia and the Himalayan region. Because snow leopards live in habitat with little prey, they occur at very low densities; from about 1/30 sq km to 1/100 sq km. The estimated global population is about 4,510-7,350. The total potential snow leopard habitat is about 1,835,000 sq km in 12 range countries -- Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakstan, Kyrgystan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. WWF is working towards conserving snow leopards in half of these; namely Nepal Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Mongolia, and Russia.

A 2003 study by TRAFFIC, WWF and the International Snow Leopard Trust found a dramatic decline of the big cats in many countries over the previous decade. These threats are reducing the snow leopard population to numbers approaching those of the endangered tiger. Throughout most of its range the conflict with people is one of the main threats to its survival. Snow leopards sometimes kill livestock (sheep, goats, horses, and yak calves). Therefore, they are killed in retaliation by angry herders. Poaching is also common, with the demand for pelts and bones from neighboring Tibet and China driving the killing.

Degradation of snow leopard habitat continues due to year-round grazing pressure because the livestock densities have increased in recent years. Climate change could also decrease the extent of habitat available for snow leopards.

WWF supports research and habitat conservation projects for the snow leopard in many parts of its range. WWF is also working to stop the illegal trafficking in endangered cat skins, and to create and maintain reserves to protect them and other endangered species. WWF is also involved in implementing the Snow Leopard Survival Strategy, which will guide snow leopard conservation for years to come and relies upon integrating the needs of local people with those of snow leopards.

In Nepal, WWF is working with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Department of Forests, the International Snow Leopard Trust, UNDP/GEF, USAID to support training programs for snow leopard survey methods and field techniques; especially for community-led conservation and monitoring committees comprising of herders, women and village leaders and elders. These groups also engage

in anti-poaching activities, and help to destroy and remove traps and snares, confiscate weapons, and deter poachers by their presence in the field.

In Bhutan, WWF has begun to conduct surveys along the northern regions, where Snow leopards live. WWF Bhutan has also worked with the government to identify and dedicate a system of protected areas and corridors, which include extensive snow leopard habitat. Radio-tracking projects using satellite-GPS collars are proposed in both Nepal and Bhutan in the next few years to glean more information of these animals.

In Pakistan, WWF works with NGOs such as the International Snow Leopard Trust (ISLT) to identify critical habitats of the Snow leopard and reduce the killings by herders through awareness-raising programs and improving livestock protection, by training and developing the skills of herder communities and better corralling systems. WWF Pakistan has already begun a radio-tracking project, using satellite GPS collars.

In Mongolia, which has a snow leopard population of about 1,000–1,500 animals, WWF has funded anti-poaching patrols in the Altai Mountains where poaching has become intense.

- *Common Leopard*

The leopard has a wide range distribution, which extends from Africa into Asia. Common leopards also occupy a wide range of habitats. As a result of its diverse ecology and biogeography, there are several ecotypes and subspecies.

The Amur Leopard (*Panthera pardus orientalis* or *Panthera pardus amurensis*) is possibly the rarest of these. This leopard, adapted to the harsh winters of the Sikhote-Alin mountains in the Russian Far East, is classified as Critically Endangered in the IUCN's 2000 Red List of Threatened Species. In 1998, the Russian government adopted a strategy for the conservation of the Amur leopard. Recently WWF along with the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Pacific Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Science, conducted a census of leopard numbers and estimated the population at only 25 to 34 individuals. Encroaching civilization, new roads, poaching, exploitation of forests, and climate change had contributed to the leopards' plight. WWF is working with other NGOs to create underpasses that will allow leopards safe crossings along the Khasan highway, now under reconstruction, which will cut through critical Amur Leopard habitat. WWF and other local authorities have met several state and independent organizations and have created a working group to find solutions to environmental problems created by the highway reconstruction. WWF also supports anti-poaching activities in the Russian Far East, and is implementing programs to stop the trafficking of Amur leopard parts. WWF is also helping with conservation efforts to increase the population of prey ungulate (hoofed) species in the leopard's habitat, and thus increase the leopard population. WWF staff also monitors the leopard population and its habitat.

Another endangered leopard subspecies is the Indochinese leopard, *Panthera pardus delacouri*. This subspecies, from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, is being hunted for the

trade in pelts and other body parts such as bones and hair in the lucrative, but illegal medicinal trade. WWF's Greater Mekong Program is working with relevant Government authorities and partner NGOs to arrest the trade and poaching, provide adequate habitat and restore prey populations in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

Elsewhere in Asia, WWF provides a conservation umbrella for other subspecies of leopards through landscape conservation programs. These programs strive to conserve large landscapes that include protected areas linked by wildlife corridors, embedded in a matrix of other land uses for people. Examples of WWF's landscape conservation efforts in Asia that help to conserve leopards include the Terai Arc Landscape, North Bank Landscape, Bhutan Biological Conservation Complex in the eastern Himalayas, the Satpuda-Maikal and Western Ghats landscapes in India, the Western Forest Complex in western Thailand, and the Central Forest Spine in Peninsular Malaysia.

- *Clouded leopards*

The clouded leopard is found from central Nepal across the Himalayas through southern China and into Southeast Asia, including Sumatra and Borneo. They are usually nocturnal and inhabit intact subtropical and tropical moist forests; therefore are rarely seen. The major threats are deforestation and forest degradation. Clouded leopards are also hunted for their pelts, teeth and bones, which are prized in the traditional Asian medicinal trade.

The clouded leopard in Borneo was recently (in 2007) described as a new species. Scientists believe that the Bornean population probably diverged from the mainland population about 1.4 million years ago. WWF is helping to conserve a 220,000km² area of forests in central Borneo, named the Heart of Borneo, for conservation of the rich biodiversity of Borneo, including the Bornean Clouded leopard. The current estimate of clouded leopards in this forest is 5,000 to 11,000 animals. However, these are crude estimates, since very little is known of this animal's ecology, behavior, and demographics. WWF is now engaged in camera trap surveys to collect additional information on this new species. WWF has facilitated a convention of the ministers of the three Bornean governments — Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Malaysia — to sign a historic declaration to conserve and sustainably manage the Heart of Borneo. This has put the area on the global stage of conservation priorities.

Elsewhere across its range, conservation landscapes such as the Terai Arc Landscape, North Bank Landscape, Bhutan Biological Conservation Complex in the eastern Himalayas, the Western Forest Complex in western Thailand, and the Central Forest Spine in Peninsular Malaysia help to create a conservation umbrella for other clouded leopards.

- *Gir Lions*

In Asia, where it is endangered, the lion lives in India's Gir Forest Reserve. WWF research and timely action by the Gujarat government helped build the population from 177 in 1968 to 300. Recently poaching has increased as lions begin to be hunted for the Traditional Chinese Medicine trade.

Latin America

Many of the canid and felid species – including all of those described below – are so poorly known, it is virtually impossible to assess their status. Basic research on their ecology and use of habitat is urgently needed so informed decisions can be made regarding their conservation. WWF has recognized the importance of these species as indicators both to determine the intactness of tropical habitats, but also as species that can be used to set area and habitat targets or goals in conservation plans. We have initiated a study that is designed to collect basic ecological data for jaguars and pumas in the Amazon basin. We are applying new technologies that will allow us to quantify habitat requirements for the first time in the Amazon.

- *Jaguar (Panthera onca)*
Jaguars were historically found from the southwestern United States to southern Argentina. That range is now reduced. The results from a workshop, held in Mexico in 1999 by WCS, indicated that jaguars have been lost from over 50% of their range since 1900. Most of the loss has occurred in Mexico and the United States in the north, and in Brazil and Argentina in the south. The largest contiguous area of jaguar range is centered in the Amazon Basin and includes adjoining areas in the Cerrado, Pantanal, and Chaco to the south and extending to the Caribbean coast in Venezuela and the Guianas. Jaguar range has decreased due to deforestation, conversion of land to other uses, and killing of jaguars and their prey.
- *Puma (Puma concolor)*
Pumas range from western Canada through Central and South America reaching through much of Argentina and Chile. Little is known about the status of populations in tropical America, but the species is heavily persecuted where it coexists with humans.
- *Bush Dog (Speothos venaticus)*
The bush dog is a canid found in Central and South America, including Panama, Venezuela, Bolivia, Peru (West of the Andes), Ecuador, the Guianas, Paraguay, northeast Argentina (Misiones province), and Brazil (from the Amazonia and the Cerrado). In spite of its extensive range, it is very rare; it was originally discovered as fossils Brazilian caves and thought to be extinct. It is a carnivore and hunts during the day, preferably in wet savannahs and tropical and equatorial forests. Its typical prey is the Paca (*Agouti paca*), a large rodent. Although it can hunt alone on occasion, the bush dog is usually found in small packs of up to 10–12 individuals, which can bring down much larger prey. It may be the most gregarious among South American canid species. It is a good swimmer (thanks to its webbed feet). It uses hollow logs and cavities (e.g. armadillo burrows) for shelter.
- *Short-eared Dog (Atelocynus microtis)*
The short-eared dog is found in northern South America east of the Andes in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, as well as south of the Amazon in Brazil. Berta (1986). It is among the least known of the carnivores and it is yet to be studied in the wild. When encountered, it is typically solitary, though occasionally single adults are observed with a young. Short-eared dogs appear to frequent streams, possibly feeding on crustaceans but are also known to feed on fruit. Their status is unknown.

5. WWF Views on the Various Bills

WWF strongly supports H.R. 1464, the Great Cats and Rare Canids Act of 2007. With previous versions introduced in the 109th and 108th Congresses, this bill has a long history and widespread support among a broad coalition of stakeholders totaling more than 80 organizations. As the Subcommittee considers this legislation, it is important to provide the flexibility for FWS necessary to ensure that funds are being spent on the species that are most in need, in the places that are most critical, and on projects that are most likely to effectively contribute to the bill's conservation goals.

WWF notes that, while H.R. 1913, the Great Cats Conservation Act, offers much needed funding for conservation projects benefiting felid species, there is no reason to exclude canids given the urgent need for conservation projects benefiting those species as well. As I mentioned previously, opportunities to enact legislation that authorizes desperately needed and highly successful funding programs for conservation of the world's endangered species do not come along often, and for this reason, WWF supports the broader of the two bills.

Lastly, WWF supports in broad principle H.R. 1771, the Crane Conservation Act of 2007. WWF would caution, however, that funding be prioritized towards developing countries – countries that most need financial assistance for species conservation. There are numerous programs that protect, and provide funding for, cranes here in the U.S. WWF would also encourage that this bill be consistent with other multinational species programs in terms of conservation activities allowed, and funding levels so as to ensure maximum efficiency in implementation by FWS.

With regard to any of the multinational species conservation programs – existing and proposed – their success hinges on adequate funding. While this is not technically the jurisdiction of your Subcommittee, I would only underscore the importance of full funding for these programs at their authorized levels. And again I have an opportunity to thank the four co-chairs of the International Conservation Caucus – the cosponsors of H.R. 1464 – who have worked hard to see an increased level of funding in this year's House-passed Interior appropriations bill.

Conclusion

Madam Chair, I cannot emphasize how important these programs are to some of the world's most endangered and iconic species, which find themselves on the brink of extinction. Let me close by thanking you for the opportunity to testify and support the legislation before you, and for your consideration of these bills.