Investing in the U.S.’s domestic and international conservation efforts contributes to America’s long-term economic and foreign policy goals while enhancing economic and security interests around the globe.

Federal Priorities for the 118th Congress

The WCS Approach
The Bronx Zoo-based Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) has been saving wildlife and wild places for 125 years. Working in nearly 60 countries and across the world’s oceans, WCS develops conservation solutions based on science and local partnerships. Our conservation solutions draw on the expertise of our field biologists and veterinarians, curators, and animal care staff based at our zoos and aquarium. WCS’s zoos and aquarium also assist in the conservation of species in the wild and provide educational and recreational opportunities for millions of visitors each year.

U.S. National Security and Conservation
U.S. national security interests are being destabilized by ecological degradation around the world. Conflicts are arising surrounding irregular migration, natural resource scarcity, and food insecurity. Increased human/wildlife interactions due to encroachment of habitat is one major source of this conflict. The U.S. has a vital role to play in conservation to protect our national security interests and establish global leadership to face these challenges. U.S. government conservation programs provide resources to tackle biodiversity loss, pandemics, extreme weather events, and wildlife trade. These programs conserve vulnerable species in the wild, strengthen ecological integrity, support prevention of pandemics of zoonotic origins, halt land conversion contributing to climate change, and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Protect Iconic Species
Protect the Endangered Species Act (ESA): Reverse 2019 regulations issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA that weakened the ESA and undermined the role of science in ESA implementation and oppose ongoing legislative efforts to weaken this bedrock environmental law.

Support the WILD Act (S. 2395/H.R. 5009): The Wildlife Innovation and Longevity Driver Reauthorization (WILD) Act would renew two important programs managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: the Multinational Species Conservation Fund, which provides competitive grants to support the conservation and recovery in the wild of iconic species like elephants, rhinos, great apes, tigers, turtles, and tortoises; and the Partners in Fish and Wildlife program, which provides free technical and financial assistance to landowners, managers, tribes, corporations, schools, and nonprofits interested in improving wildlife habitat on their land. Sponsors: Sen. Carper (D-DE) and Rep. Joyce (R-OH).
Support the Wild Bird Conservation Reauthorization Act: Reauthorize the Wild Bird Conservation Act (WBCA) to provide an important source of funding for the conservation of scarlet macaws, African grey parrots, Asian songbirds, and hundreds of other species that are at risk of extinction. The WBCA ensures that any trade of wild bird species in which the U.S. is involved is both biologically sustainable and to the benefit of the species.

Conserve Important Places

Support Hudson Canyon’s Designation as a National Marine Sanctuary: Support the designation of the Hudson Canyon off the coast of New York as a National Marine Sanctuary to protect it from threats associated with oil and gas activities and provide research and education opportunities. NOAA initiated the stakeholder-driven designation process in June 2022. The Hudson Canyon is home to a remarkable abundance and diversity of marine wildlife, including whales, sea turtles, sharks, tunas, cold-water corals, and many species that support local fisheries.

Support the Arctic Refuge Protection Act (S. 282/H.R. 724): Repeal the law that opened the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, one of America’s last great wildernesses, to oil and gas leasing. Sponsors: Sen. Markey (D-MA) and Rep. Huffman (D-CA).

Stop Wildlife Trafficking, Illegal Timber, & IUU Fishing
Support the Wildlife Conservation and Anti-Trafficking Act: Toughen penalties against wildlife crimes by going after trafficking networks using the same U.S. laws we have to fight other organized criminal networks. Establish dedicated funding streams for a number of programs that conserve wildlife both here in the U.S. and abroad, including the Multinational Species Conservation Fund (MSCF), the Shark Conservation Act, and the Marine Mammal Conservation Act. Support whistleblowers that provide actionable intelligence to American embassies and consulates on global wildlife trafficking rings.

Nature-Based Climate Solutions
Support the AMAZON21 Act: Establish trust fund for results-based payments for activities in developing countries to reduce deforestation and forest degradation and conserve forests and other carbon-sequestering ecosystems, as well as authorize related technical assistance at USAID.
Support the FOREST Act (S.3371): Prevent the import into the U.S. of certain commodities produced on illegally deforested land and support countries in enforcing their laws to address and prevent illegal deforestation. Sponsors: Sen. Schatz (D-HI); Reps. Blumenauer (D-OR) and Fitzpatrick (R-PA).

Support the National Biodiversity Strategy Resolution (H. Res. 195/S. Res. 494): Support resolution calling for a U.S. national biodiversity strategy which would encourage coordination between the federal government, state and local governments, Tribes, private landowners, and nongovernmental stakeholders to maximize conservation efforts around the country. The well-being and security of people globally depend on thriving ecosystems supported by a diverse range of animals, plants, and microorganisms, playing essential roles in functions such as pollination, water filtration, soil replenishment, medicinal product production, and serving as a natural buffer against zoonotic diseases. Sponsors: Rep. Neguse (D-CO); Sen. Merkley (D-OR).

Support the Blue Carbon Protection Act: Establish a Blue Carbon Program within NOAA, authorize a grant program to fund local level blue carbon restoration and protection projects, and direct NOAA, NPS, and USFWS to conduct coastal and marine restoration and protection activities.

Support the Ocean-Based Climate Solutions Act: Support bill and sections separated into stand alone bills that harness nature-based ocean solutions to climate change, limits climate impacts on marine habitats, promotes carbon sinks in federal waters, advances Arctic conservation efforts with climate change in mind, promotes marine mammal conservation, modernizes fishing fleet fuel regulations, and takes other steps to align ocean policies with modern environmental and economic reality.