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The Honorable John Boehner
1011 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-3508

Dear Mr. Speaker:

On behalf of the one million members and supporters of The Nature Conservancy, I am writing to oppose passage of the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriation Bill, as currently drafted, when it comes before the full House later this month.

The Nature Conservancy is dedicated to finding constructive and cooperative strategies for the conservation of the natural resources and natural habitat so important to the welfare of people in the U.S. and around the world. We have long provided ideas and input to the Interior Appropriation Bill, but never before in our 60 year history have we opposed passage of this legislation during the appropriations process in Congress.

We understand the budget crisis facing this country. We believe that all Federal programs, including conservation programs, should share a fair proportion of the spending reductions needed to address the deficit. We understand, as well, that the leadership of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee faced daunting challenges in constructing a bill with very limited resources and we recognize some positive elements of the bill, such as support for forest restoration, but overall and with amendments made in the full committee, this bill undermines just the kinds of cooperative, results-oriented conservation programs we know to be both popular and effective. And it includes policy riders that damage the ability of government to continue protection of our nation's air, land and water.

All the conservation and environmental activities of the Federal government amount to only a little more than 1% of the Federal budget. In real dollars the total funding for the environment and conservation has been almost flat for 30 years. Conservation did not cause the budget deficit and cutting conservation cannot fix the deficit.

Yet the Interior Appropriation Bill going before the House would reduce funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund to the lowest level in the 45 year history of the program, \$66 million--a 78% reduction from the FY 2011. It would reduce the highly successful Forest Legacy Program by 94%, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act by 47%, the Cooperative Endangered Species Program by 95% and the State and Tribal Wildlife Grant Program by 65% from FY 2011. These are not proportional cuts. They threaten to put an end to longstanding conservation activities with a proven and tangible record of success—programs that also have a very positive impact on the American economy during a time of economic stress.

Moreover, the bill contains riders that prohibit EPA from reducing greenhouse gas emissions from power plants and refineries, prohibit EPA from protecting all of the waters of the United States from pollution, and prevent the Department of the Interior from protecting threatened and endangered species.

I believe, as American conservationists of both parties have believed for more than a hundred years, that it is the obligation of each generation of Americans to pass on to the next an America whose land and water are clean, healthy, productive, beautiful and accessible for recreation in the outdoors. Sadly, the Interior Appropriation Bill for FY 2012 undermines this goal. Thus we recommend a vote against this bill as drafted when it comes to the House floor.

The Nature Conservancy stands ready to contribute practical and cost effective ideas on how the bill can be improved while still helping to reduce the overall budget deficit.

Thank you for consideration and for your hard work and dedication in the difficult job of creating a sound and secure future for the American people.

Sincerely,

Mark R. Tercek