

June 3, 2009

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Fund the 21st Century Youth Conservation Corps

Dear Chairwoman Feinstein and Ranking Member Alexander:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide we urge you to fully fund the 21st Century Youth Conservation Corps, a new initiative that is included in the Department of Interior's FY 2010 budget at \$70 million, an increase of \$50 million over FY 2009.

We are pleased that the FY 2010 budget proposal from the Department of Interior contains historic new investments to connect children and families to the great outdoors. The budget targets \$30 million for educating young hunters and anglers, as well as \$20 million in new funding for Youth Careers in Nature. This initiative, dubbed the 21st Century Youth Conservation Corps, will bolster environmental education, recreation, and service programs throughout the Department, and engage thousands of youth in the outdoors.

We are encouraged that this budget explicitly seeks new and innovative ways to connect children with nature at the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Geological Survey. The Administration states: "The [youth] initiative will do more than simply build upon existing youth education programs... Interior bureaus will implement new, creative ways to energize youth and instill a life-long commitment to protect, preserve and enjoy our natural environment and cultural treasures."

This investment is critical at a time when research tells us that children today spend half as much time outside as they did just twenty years ago. In fact, our nation's young people spend an average of six and a half hours every day plugged into electronic media. We need to reverse this troubling trend to ensure the future of American conservation and to protect our children's mental and physical health by creating opportunities for active, healthy outdoor experiences.

Therefore, we urge you to fund the 21st Century Youth Conservation Corps at \$70 million in FY 2010. If you need additional information, please have your staff contact Patrick

Fitzgerald, Sr. Leg. Rep. at the National Wildlife Federation, at (202) 797-6821 or fitzgeraldp@nwf.org.

Sincerely,

National, International and Regional Organizations:

National Wildlife Federation
American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation
American Community Gardening Association
The American Fisheries Society
American Forest Foundation
American Recreation Coalition
American Sportfishing Association
Arbor Day Foundation
Archery Trade Association
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Association of Nature Center Administrators
Bass Anglers Sportsmen's Society
Bear Trust International
Berkley Conservation Institute of Pure Fishing
Boone and Crockett Club
The Bowhunting Preservation Alliance
Boy Scouts of America
Camp Fire USA
Campfire Club of America
Catch a Dream Foundation
Center for Environment, Commerce & Energy
Center for SCREEN-TIME Awareness
Challenger Center for Space Science Education
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Conservation Force
The Corps Network
Council for Environmental Education
Cumberland River Compact
Dallas Safari Club
Dimensions Educational Research Foundation
Ducks Unlimited
Earth Day Network
Earth Force
EDEN
The Federation of Fly Fishers
Heath Professionals for Clean Air
The International Game Fish Association
The International Hunter Education Association
The International Mountain Bicycling Association

The Izaak Walton League of America
Leopold Education Project
Mule Deer Foundation
National AfterSchool Association
National Association for Interpretation
The National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds
National Audubon Society
National Park Hospitality Association
National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education
National Rifle Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Trappers Association
The National Wild Turkey Federation
North American Bear Foundation
North American Grouse Partnership
Orion The Hunters's Institute
The Outdoor Foundation
Outdoor Industry Association
Pheasants Forever
The Pope and Young Club
Project WILD
Quail Forever
Quality Deer Management Association
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Ruffed Grouse Society
Second Nature
Shakir Safari Club International
Sierra Club
Student Conservation Association
The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Trout Unlimited
U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance
Wild Sheep Foundation
The Wilderness Society
Wildlife Conservation Society
Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Management Institute, Inc.
The Wildlife Society
Winter Wildlands Alliance

State and Local Organizations:

Alabama Wildlife Federation (AL)
Alaska Geographic (AK)
The Arizona Wildlife Education Foundation (AZ)
Arizona Zoological Society (AZ)

Association of Northwest Steelheaders (OR)
Audubon Society of Rhode Island (RI)
Bayou State Bowhunters Association (LA)
Be Outdoors Arizona (AZ)
Big Thicket Association (TX)
Binder Park Zoo (MI)
Caddo Lake Institute, Inc. (TX)
Chicago Zoological Society/Brookfield Zoo (IL)
Collins Academy and Education Center (TX)
Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education (CO)
Conservation Council for Hawai'i (HI)
Conservation Federation of Missouri (MO)
East Ascension Sportsman's League (LA)
Environmental Learning for Kids (CO)
Florida Wildlife Federation (FL)
Friends of Black Bayou (LA)
Friends of the Brazos River (TX)
Friends of the Red River National Wildlife Refuge (LA)
Friends United for a Safe Environment (TX)
Georgia No Child Left Inside Coalition (GA)
Georgia Wildlife Federation (GA)
Iberia Rod & Gun Club (LA)
Idaho Environmental Education Association (ID)
The Illinois Science Teachers Association (IL)
Indiana Wildlife Federation (IN)
Interfaith Environmental Alliance (TX)
The Iowa Conservation Education Coalition (IA)
Iowa Wildlife Federation (IA)
Johnson County Chapter of Izaak Walton League (IA)
The Kalamazoo Nature Center (MI)
Kansas Wildlife Federation (KS)
League of Kentucky Sportsmen (KY)
Louisiana Association of Professional Biologists (LA)
Louisiana Chapter, Safari Club International (LA)
Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LA)
Minnesota Association for Environmental Education (MN)
Minnesota Conservation Federation (MN)
Mississippi Wildlife Federation (MS)
The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NC)
North Dakota Wildlife Federation (ND)
The Ocean State Environmental Education Collaborative (RI)
The Odyssey School (CO)
The Olathe Community Sportsmans Club (KS)
Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute (ID)
Park Pride (GA)
Rhode Island Environmental Education Association (RI)

Richland Conservation District (SC)
Roger Williams Park Zoo (RI)
Sierra Nevada Journeys (NV)
Somerset County Park Commission (NJ)
South Carolina Wildlife Federation (SC)
South Dakota Wildlife Federation (SD)
Sulphur River Oversight Society (TX)
Tennessee Environmental Education Association (TN)
Tennessee Wildlife Federation (TN)
Texas Conservation Alliance (TX)
The Texas Teaming with Wildlife Coalition (TX)
Treetops in the Forest (TX)
Wagner Conservation Coalition (IA)
Washington Wildlife Federation (WA)
Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education (WI)
Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WI)
Wisconsin Environmental Education Foundation (WI)
Woodlands Trail & Park, New Orleans (LA)

CC:

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
The Honorable John Boehner
The Honorable David Obey
The Honorable Jerry Lewis