



January 9, 2019

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

We respectfully ask that you agree to fully fund the government and reopen agencies currently closed. Otherwise, we strongly urge that you close units of the National Wildlife Refuge System, the National Parks, and other public lands, until sufficient funding is available to ensure appropriate staffing levels to prevent irreparable harm to our nation's conservation heritage.

Despite herculean efforts by career staff, concessionaires, state and local governments, and conservation partners to keep sites operational, the risks to visitor safety and to wildlife habitat protected by our national wildlife refuges, parks and other public lands, grow by the day, as the shutdown persists.

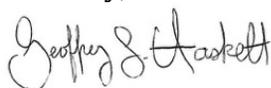
With only a small number of "excepted" staff—primarily public lands managers and law enforcement personnel—currently working (without pay), it is simply impossible to steward these shared American treasures properly, leaving thousands of lands and waters accessible to the public with no staff on site, even for an emergency. We fear it is only a matter of time before more visitors are severely injured — or worse. These concerns are not merely hypothetical. We have already witnessed the tragic news of visitors to national parks injured or killed.

America is blessed with the best professional land management staff and conservation law enforcement in the world. These women and men are critical to secure and maintain the health of our public lands. Without professional staff on site to manage these properties, we have witnessed a rash of destructive acts and habitat degradation, including illegal dumping, off-roading, vandalism of buildings, cut locks, rammed gates, and human waste left beside closed bathrooms, or along trails and in habitat. The adverse impacts upon our nation's cherished lands and waters could take years to recover. Further, law enforcement staffing levels are already precariously low for America's large network of public lands and waters, and now we are asking these officers to work without pay, in dangerous circumstances and with little or no backup. This is not right.

Finally, we have concerns about proposals from multiple bureaus within Interior to bring back paid staff to work on programs that are not essential to life, health, or protecting the natural resource, while "excepted" personnel, including law enforcement, who are fulfilling essential functions, receive no pay. We cannot endorse an approach of only paying some personnel to selectively keep certain lands open and programs operational, through extraordinary budget maneuvers at the expense of critical near-term safety functions and broader long-term operations.

We urge the Administration to end this shutdown expeditiously and properly fund the government to protect our shared natural heritage. If not, we urge the closure of national wildlife refuges, parks and other public lands until funding is restored to prevent lasting damage. The health of our public lands and wildlife habitat, held in trust for current and future generations of Americans, demands it.

Sincerely,



Geoffrey Haskett  
President  
National Wildlife Refuge Association



Philip Francis  
Chair  
Coalition to Protect America's National Parks



Robert Streeter  
President  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Retirees Association



Collin O'Mara  
President and CEO  
National Wildlife Federation



Diane Regas  
President and CEO  
The Trust for Public Land

cc: Acting Interior Secretary David Bernhardt  
Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue  
Acting National Park Service Director Daniel Smith  
Principal Deputy Fish and Wildlife Service Director Margaret Everson  
Bureau of Land Management Deputy Director Brian Steed  
Forest Service Chief Vicki Christiansen