



**NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION®**

National Advocacy Center  
1990 K Street NW, Suite 430  
Washington, DC 20004  
202-797-6800  
[www.nwf.org](http://www.nwf.org)

January 29, 2016

The Honorable Sally Jewell  
United States Secretary of the Interior  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Loretta Lynch  
Attorney General of the United States  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Secretary Jewell and Attorney General Lynch:

On behalf of the National Wildlife Federation and our state and territorial affiliates, we write to express our appreciation for the actions and bravery of law enforcement personnel in addressing the unlawful occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge and our sorrow at the loss of life that resulted from that occupation. While we hope the arrest of the leaders of the occupation will lead to the end of the unlawful takeover, we remain gravely concerned that the illegal occupation continues. We urge you to redouble your efforts to reach a peaceful resolution to this criminal takeover and to bring the perpetrators to justice. The longer the occupation continues, the more it emboldens this criminal element at the expense of the overwhelming majority of Americans who support keeping public lands accessible for all, especially the thousands of Oregonians who have been unable to visit the Refuge for weeks.

What started as a relatively peaceful protest has now turned into a destructive binge with the occupiers ripping down fences, digging holes, bulldozing roads, desecrating artifacts, threatening staff, commandeering federal vehicles, and building fortifications. These criminal acts are undermining the public trust doctrine that our federal refuges embody and years of work to restore critical habitat for the enjoyment of all Americans—efforts that could be lost if its order is not restored.

As organizations and individuals that care deeply about America's public lands, our fish and wildlife, and the value these resources bring to communities across the country and the globe, we believe that it is imperative that we end the brazenly illegal occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge as soon as possible. The National Wildlife Federation and its affiliates represent more than six million members and supporters who hunt, fish, hike, camp, and watch wildlife. We—and the hundreds of millions of Americans who enjoy our public lands—stand in solidarity with you and are unified in our opposition to the illegal actions currently taking place on the Malheur Refuge.

We respect the First Amendment Rights of all Americans to be able to freely express opinions, including discontent with how national public lands are managed—our Federation itself often

raises concerns when fish and wildlife are put at risk—but this is no longer a civil protest or a free speech issue. The acts of destruction, combined with the prevention of other Americans to access public lands that are their birthright, are a clear violation of law and must be treated as such. The investment in conservation by all Americans, starting with this Refuge’s establishment by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908 through the Duck Stamps purchased by Americans this year, represent the very best of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation and the public trust doctrine in which these phenomenal resources are accessible to all Americans regardless of income or background. We cannot allow these values to be undercut and pillaged by these outliers who want to impose their unpopular views on the rest of the public.

As is often said, democracy cannot function without the rule of law. We implore you to take every reasonable action in response to these lawbreakers. Community leaders and government officials in Oregon and beyond say they fear there could be permanent damage at the Refuge as well as elevated safety risks for employees and local residents if the remaining occupiers are permitted to stay—and worse yet, copycat occupations and similar efforts elsewhere. It simply has to stop and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

We stand ready to assist in any way that we can.

Sincerely,

Collin O’Mara, President & Chief Executive Officer, National Wildlife Federation  
Ellen McNulty, President, Arkansas Wildlife Federation  
Brad Powell, President, Arizona Wildlife Federation  
Bob Rees, Executive Director, Association of Northwest Steelheaders  
Suzanne O’Neill, Executive Director, Colorado Wildlife Federation  
Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association  
Marjorie Ziegler, Executive Director, Conservation Council for Hawai’i  
Brandon Butler, Executive Director, Conservation Federation of Missouri  
Mitch Friedman, Executive Director, Conservation Northwest  
Brian Winslow, Executive Director, Delaware Nature Society  
Peter Iwanowicz, Executive Director, Environmental Advocates of New York  
Ken Pruitt, Executive Director, Environmental League of Massachusetts  
Manley Fuller, President, Florida Wildlife Federation  
Mike Worley, President & CEO, Georgia Wildlife Federation  
Rich Leopold, President, Iowa Wildlife Federation  
Rob Fraser, President, Idaho Wildlife Federation  
Erin Baird, Executive Director, Indiana Wildlife Federation  
Angela Anderson, Board President, Kansas Wildlife Federation  
Judy Petersen, Executive Director, Kentucky Waterways Alliance  
Dan Eichinger, Executive Director, Michigan United Conservation Clubs  
Gary Botzek, Executive Director, Minnesota Conservation Federation  
Brad Young, Executive Director, Mississippi Wildlife Federation  
Dave Chadwick, Executive Director, Montana Wildlife Federation  
Lisa Pohlmann, Executive Director, Natural Resources Council of Maine  
Tim Gestwicki, CEO, North Carolina Wildlife Federation

Mike McEnroe, Board President, North Dakota Wildlife Federation  
Carol L. Foss, PhD, New Hampshire Audubon Society  
Eric Stiles, President & CEO, New Jersey Audubon  
Garrett VeneKlasen, Executive Director, New Mexico Wildlife Federation  
Howard Penn, Executive Director, Planning and Conservation League  
Carol Hays, Executive Director, Prairie Rivers Network  
Anders Gustafson, Executive Director, Renewable Resources Coalition and Foundation  
Ben Gregg, Executive Director, South Carolina Wildlife Federation  
Chris Hesla, Executive Director, South Dakota Wildlife Federation  
Brian Shupe, Executive Director, Vermont Natural Resources Council  
George Meyer, Executive Director, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation  
Angie Rosser, Executive Director, West Virginia Rivers Coalition  
Chamois Andersen, Executive Director, Wyoming Wildlife Federation