



Scientists Call on Congress to Help Wildlife Survive Global Warming

WASHINGTON, DC (January 29) – More than 600 prominent scientists from across the United States are calling on Congress to pass legislation that will curb America’s global warming pollution and help protect wildlife and other natural resources threatened by global warming. Spearheaded by some of America’s greatest scientific minds, including Harvard Professor E.O. Wilson, Thomas Lovejoy, Paul Ehrlich and Camille Parmesan, the scientists have sent a letter to Congress urging action.

“The science is irrefutable not only about the reality of climate change, but also that plant and animal species are already being harmed by it,” said **Dr. Thomas Lovejoy, renowned conservation biologist and president of the H. John Heinz III Center for Science, Economics, and the Environment.** “Alarming effects are already being observed in nature from mountaintops to the oceans, and from the equator to the polar regions. We can choose to allow these effects to intensify or to move to avoid the more disastrous consequences for life on earth.”

“The precarious status of polar bears and their melting sea ice habitat in the Arctic is only the tip of the iceberg,” said **Dr. Dan Svedarsky, president of The Wildlife Society, on behalf of its over 8,000 professional wildlife biologists.** “It’s not just polar bears – wildlife across America are being impacted by global warming, including birds, butterflies, fish and mammals.”

“The science is clear that without major action to both reduce global warming pollution and to help wildlife survive global warming, species will suffer rapidly increasing extinction rates,” said **Jeff Price, one of the authors of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (2007).** “It is not too late, but we must take action now.”

The U.S. Senate is currently considering legislation that would begin to take the urgent actions these scientists say are necessary. The Climate Security Act, introduced in 2007 by Senators Joe Lieberman (I-CT) and John Warner (R-VA), creates a market-based system that cuts global warming pollution and helps communities address the impacts of climate change.

“Global warming is an unprecedented challenge for wildlife, adding a host of new threats such as thawing permafrost, disappearing mountain snow pack, and the warming of rivers, lakes and estuaries,” said **John Kostyack, executive director of wildlife and global warming at the National Wildlife Federation.** “Senators Lieberman and Warner recognize the gravity of the threat and the necessity of timely and effective action. The Climate Security Act provides the best hope for saving wildlife at risk of extinction and for conserving ecosystems that are essential for both wildlife and people.”

Under the bill's carbon cap-and-trade system, global warming pollution would be capped at levels that enable the U.S. to achieve 2 percent annual reductions through the middle of the century. Permits to release global warming pollution would be auctioned annually. Revenues from these auctions would be dedicated to various public purposes, including conservation of wildlife and other natural resources at risk from global warming.

During the first 19 years of the program the bill would raise an estimated \$175 billion in revenue for wildlife and natural resource conservation. With this critically needed funding, managers of wildlife, land and water would be able to effectively utilize a number of tools at their disposal to protect and restore wildlife and ecosystems harmed by global warming. The bill would provide substantial investments to state and federal agencies to reduce non-climate stressors on ecosystems, prevent and control invasive species, and protect coastal wetlands and address the impacts of sea level rise, all of which will help wildlife survive the pressures of global warming.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change points to droughts, wildfires, flooding and intensified storms as consequences of unchecked global warming. Both people and wildlife are at risk from these impacts. Investing in the conservation of wildlife and natural resources will directly benefit Americans whose jobs, health and quality of life depend on maintaining natural ecosystems. The letter emphasizes that "global warming represents, by far, the greatest threat ever posed to the planet's living resources, which provide the foundation of our economy and quality of life."

"Salmon and trout are among our most vulnerable species and their protection in the face of a rapidly changing climate demands strong actions," **said Helen Neville, research scientist with Trout Unlimited.** "Trout Unlimited urges Congress to enact legislation reducing global warming pollution and funding conservation of fish and wildlife threatened by global warming."

The signers hope to convey to Congress "our sense of urgency. Global warming is already causing serious damage and disruptions to wildlife and ecosystems, and reliable projections call for significant additional damage and disruptions. To fulfill the nation's longstanding commitment to conserving abundant wildlife and healthy ecosystems for future generations, Congress must craft legislation that greatly reduces global warming pollution and generates substantial dedicated funding to protect and restore wildlife and ecosystems harmed by global warming."

The Lieberman-Warner bill is expected to come to a full Senate vote within the next several months.

Broken down by region, the number of signatories is as follows: New England (67), Mid-Atlantic (87), Southeast (125), Great Lakes (48), South/Midwest (44), Southwest (44), Great Lakes (22), Northwest (46), and Pacific Northwest (118). To see the full list by state, visit <http://www.nwf.org/scientistsletter>

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