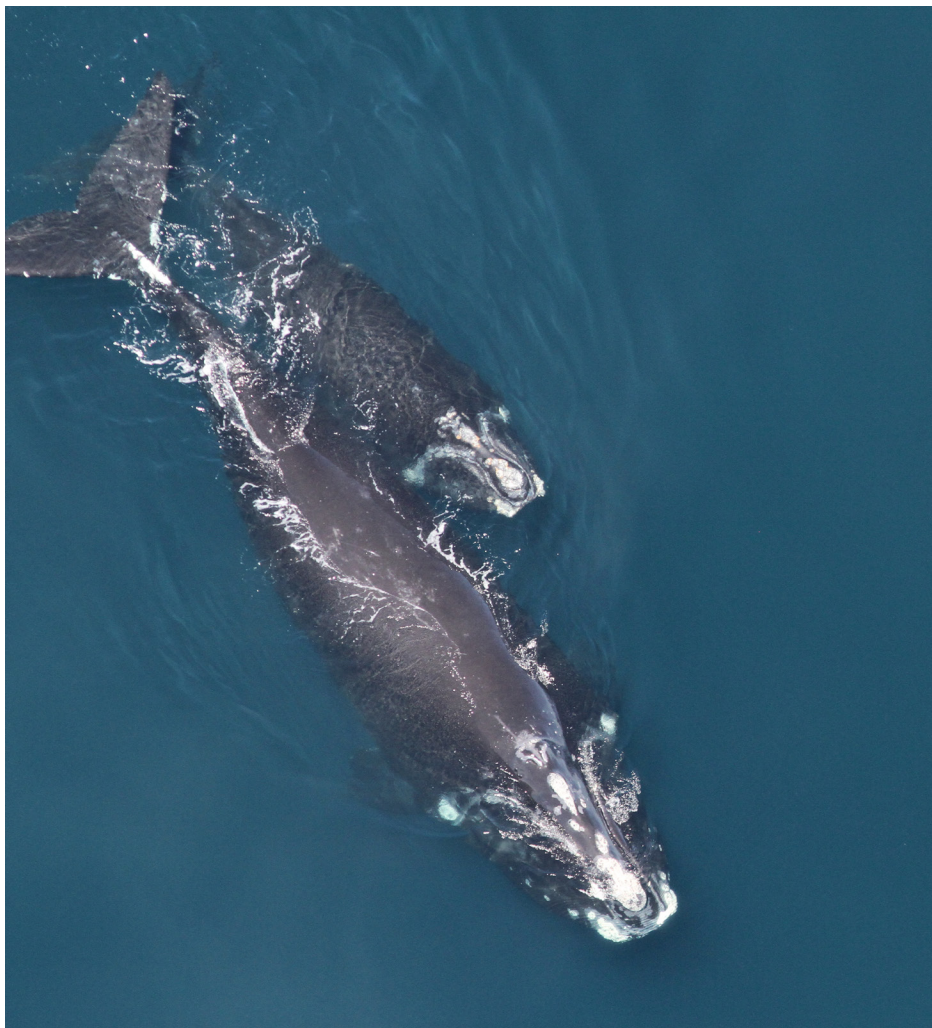


urgent **threats** & real **solutions**



ifaw

we can no longer ignore the **immediate** and **urgent** need

America can no longer ignore the immediate and urgent need to address the issues of climate change, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation that confront our nation and the broader global community.

From stronger storms and more intense wildfires to species extinctions and a global pandemic, human activities increasingly threaten our natural world. It is time for American leadership to take swift, bold action.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) recommends several priority actions that the presidential administration should take to fight climate change, restore the environment, support biodiversity and protect families here at home and around the world.



IFAW Senior Program Manager Jennifer Gardner approaches Panda, a senior dog who was injured and in need of care. The team was on an animal search and rescue assignment during the North Complex Fire in Butte County, CA when Panda ran towards the rescue vehicle.

immediate priorities

In the first 100 days following Inauguration Day, we urge the administration to demonstrate its commitment to conserving biodiversity, protecting wild places and mitigating the deleterious effects of climate change. While these are values that should be woven throughout the administration's policies and budget requests, we ask that the following actions be pursued immediately to signal strong support for environmental protection and conservation and move towards reestablishing the U.S. as a global leader on issues of critical importance to human health and well-being:

- ▶ Issue a statement on the importance of protecting and supporting biodiversity and U.S. global conservation leadership;
- ▶ Immediately rejoin the [Paris Climate Accord](#);
- ▶ Issue 12-month findings with concurrent proposed rules on listing all pangolins and giraffes as endangered under the [Endangered Species Act \(ESA\)](#) followed by expeditiously finalizing a rule;
- ▶ Reaffirm the executive order placing a moratorium on seismic testing along the East Coast;

- ▶ Ensure the president's budget contains robust requests for conservation funding including biodiversity programs within the [United States Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#), USAID sustainable landscapes programs, U.S. [Fish and Wildlife Service \(FWS\)](#) International Affairs, the FWS Office of Law Enforcement, USAID and [U.S. Department of State](#) combatting wildlife trafficking programs, the [Multinational Species Conservation](#) funds and ESA implementation;
- ▶ Review, pause and begin reversing recent agency actions undermining the ESA and the [National Environmental Policy Act \(NEPA\)](#), with the goal of ensuring the strongest protections under both laws; and
- ▶ Issue an executive order recognizing the need to prevent future zoonotic pandemics and establish an [interagency working group and presidential advisory council](#) to guide and inform the development of a new agency tasked with a holistic approach to addressing biodiversity and ecosystem health.



A herd of elephants drinking water at the Shire River in Liwonde National Park, Malawi.

conservation innovation

create a new agency to support human-animal-ecosystem health

America needs a holistic approach to handle the existential and interrelated threats of biodiversity loss, zoonoses and climate change and their impacts on human health and economic stability. The effects of environmental degradation are disproportionately borne by communities of color and the economically disadvantaged. Together, these threats undermine human health and safety, national and international stability, the global economy, social justice and individual and community wellbeing.

A new agency could **break down the siloed interests of existing agencies and apply a collaborative, cross-disciplinary approach to problem-solving** to replace of the current system through which agencies often compete for scarce resources. The new agency should **prevent problems before they occur**, by monitoring potential disease outbreaks and addressing the cascade of activities that can lead to disease, disaster and losses in a multi-disciplinary environment. The current emphasis on

preparing for and reacting to crises is insufficient and a more considered and complete prevention strategy is necessary to protect individual, state and national interests.

Creating an agency to employ a holistic approach to address biodiversity, human and ecosystem health would not only signal that the administration recognizes the importance and interrelatedness of these issues; it would **allow experts from diverse backgrounds to work collaboratively and innovatively to find solutions to the largest threats that face our nation—and our global community—today.**

resume international leadership in wildlife conservation

United States leadership within the global community is a **key driver in persuading other nations to protect endangered wildlife, combat poaching and trafficking, preserve habitats and mitigate the crippling effects of climate change.** U.S.-supported conservation programs not only protect natural ecosystems and wildlife, they are critical to our national security interests,

international economic prosperity, food security and disaster resilience. The administration should therefore:

- ▶ Elevate efforts to combat wildlife trafficking and conserve biodiversity to the highest levels of diplomatic engagement, especially focusing on range states in Africa and demand markets in Asia;
- ▶ Include strong environment chapters in all bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements with fully enforceable obligations for combating wildlife trafficking, preserving habitat, reducing marine litter, mitigating climate change and promoting conservation;
- ▶ Ratify the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- ▶ Ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and support efforts to conclude a comprehensive new treaty to protect biodiversity on the high seas; and
- ▶ Ratify the Convention on Migratory Species.

increase domestic and international conservation funding requests

Conservation must be a priority and funding requests for both domestic and international conservation programs should reflect its importance. **We all rely on well-functioning ecosystems for clean air, potable water and nutritious food.** Healthy native wildlife populations are a critical and necessary component of those healthy ecosystems. Prioritizing species protection, habitat protection and restoration and enforcement of environmental and conservation funding will improve human health and safety and will increase our resilience to natural disasters.

imperiled species

restore and support bedrock conservation laws

► **Endangered Species Act (ESA):**

The ESA is one of our nation's most important conservation laws, responsible for the recovery of such iconic species as the bald eagle. Unfortunately, the original goals of the ESA have been eroded. The administration should reverse recently instituted regulations that: undermine the importance of critical habitat to recovery; allow for economic concerns to be taken into account during listing decisions that historically have been based purely on science; and otherwise interfere with the recovery of imperiled species and their habitat.

► **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):**

The administration should reverse regulatory revisions that weaken implementation of NEPA, including the final rule published at 85 Fed. Reg. 43,304 (July 16, 2020). NEPA is a critical tool for engaging the public in natural resources management decisions. Weakening its implementing regulations threatens wildlife and habitat while disenfranchising individuals and groups who may be impacted

by or concerned with federal actions.

► **Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA):**

The MMPA has been highly effective in protecting several marine species. However, as populations of species like seals and sea lions begin to rebound, there are increasing calls to allow take permits to protect fish stocks. Sea lions and seals are an important part of healthy ocean ecosystems. Moreover, dams, pollution, overfishing and the introduction of non-native fish species are key contributors to declining fish populations. Allowing take permits for marine mammals will have a potentially catastrophic cumulative impact on marine mammal species and will not significantly benefit fish populations. The administration should revoke extant take permits and decline any future permit applications for take under the MMPA.

► These bedrock conservation laws are critical because **human activities have led to the extinction or imperilment of numerous species and without these protections more species will undoubtedly disappear.**

Given the severity of the growing extinction crisis



Pangolins are the most trafficked and illegally traded mammal in the world due to the exploitation of their scales and body parts. In the last decade, more than one million pangolins were poached, and in 2019 alone, more than 80 tonnes of pangolin scales were confiscated worldwide.

and the irrevocable and often unforeseen consequences of losing species from their ecosystems, the administration should oppose any and all exemptions from the [ESA](#), [NEPA](#)

and the [MMPA](#) and should implement the most restrictive thresholds for any take permits.

halt the construction of the US-Mexico border wall

The U.S.-Mexico border includes some of the continent's **most biologically diverse regions, including forests, grasslands and salt marshes and is home to more than 1,500 native animal and plant species.**

Federal plans to complete a continuous wall along the U.S.-Mexico border will negatively impact critical habitats, protected areas and imperiled species' ranges. Specifically, a recent study demonstrated that at least 78 U.S. federally endangered and threatened species have ranges that are within the construction zones of the existing and proposed border wall. Among these 78 species, 51 are listed as endangered and 27 are threatened.

The physical barrier imposed by a wall that traverses nearly 2,000 miles prevents or **discourages migratory species from accessing food, water, mates and other resources that are critical for the species' conservation and survival.** Disrupting annual or seasonal migration and dispersal routes, threatens national biodiversity, disrupts multinational conservation efforts and imperils another 16 species categorized by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as threatened, endangered, or critically endangered species on Mexico's side of the border.

act on endangered species petitions

The administration should prioritize review of pending petitions of species proposed for protection under the [Endangered Species Act \(ESA\)](#).

enhance protections for critically endangered North Atlantic right whales

Advance and finalize rules to protect North Atlantic right whales from harm caused by entanglement in fishing equipment, ocean noise, ship strikes and other threats to the critically endangered species. Support the [National Marine Fisheries Service's \(NMFS\)](#) ongoing research, development and conservation activities related to protecting critically endangered North Atlantic right whales, including ropeless fishing gear testing, implementation and expansion. Provide financial and technical support to foster adoption of ropeless technology within the U.S. lobster fishery.

78

U.S. federally endangered and threatened species have ranges that are within the construction zones of the existing and proposed border wall. Among these 78 species, 51 are listed as endangered and 27 are threatened.



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With approximately 360 individuals remaining, the North Atlantic right whale (NARW) has joined a growing list of animals on the brink of extinction and is now officially classified as 'Critically Endangered.'

animal health

reform Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) operations

► APHIS-Animal Care:

The administration should enhance enforcement of the [Animal Welfare Act](#) and decisively and expeditiously cite and revoke licenses from violators, for example, by promoting rigorous and consistent inspection and enforcement of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) licensed exhibitors.

► APHIS-Wildlife Services:

The administration should reform [Wildlife Services'](#) (WS) practices to reflect sound science, principles of humane wildlife management and the input of the American public (not only the small portion of the population that WS has historically viewed as its "customers"). WS should: end its use of wildlife poisons including sodium cyanide and sodium fluoroacetate; dramatically reduce or eliminate its use of body-gripping traps and snares; require that producers seeking WS' wildlife control services demonstrate reasonable and verifiable efforts to prevent wildlife damage; implement lethal wildlife control measures only as a last resort, thoroughly documenting attempts at and

outcomes of nonlethal alternatives; take decisive action in cases of documented misconduct by WS personnel; and otherwise modernize WS' operations. In addition to substantially changing program practices and decision-making processes, WS should substantially increase the transparency of its operations. The program has been insulated from accountability to the public for far too long.

update natural disaster policy

Incorporate wildlife and domestic animals into federal disaster planning and response activities. Federally licensed, inspected or managed facilities should be required to maintain detailed disaster response and animal evacuation plans. Accounting for all species during natural disasters protects animals and people alike. Request additional funding for APHIS to host national and regional disaster response exercises to practice animal rescue and management coordination among states during natural disaster responses to improve preparedness for these ever-increasing and deadly events.



IFAW responder Diane Treadwell pets a rescued horse while deployed with IFAW during the 2020 North Complex Fire in Butte County, CA.

federal lands

manage public lands for all Americans

Federal public lands should be managed based on sound science and the precautionary principle with a presumption against extractive use and development for the benefit of all Americans.

Public lands management decisions should reflect thorough evaluation of short- and long-term considerations including climate change, natural disaster models, habitat connectivity, public health and safety, non-economic values, equity and environmental justice and needs of non-consumptive users. Public lands development projects should not be exempted from compliance with NEPA, the ESA, or any other environmental review, wildlife protection, or wildlands conservation laws.

The perspectives and priorities of native communities should be given substantial weight in resource management decisions, as should the voices of marginalized groups and those who have been historically underrepresented in public lands management decisions.

return wildlife refuges to their original intent

National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs) are intended to be “a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.” Certain NWRs have been opened to consumptive uses that jeopardize the ability of other users to enjoy them. Specifically, the use of body-gripping traps to capture and/or kill wildlife is an inappropriate activity on NWRs; in addition to inhumane and inconsistent with the stated mission of the NWR system, they threaten non-target wildlife species and companion animals. Wildlife refuges should be just that—refuges for wildlife.

prioritize wildlife corridors in land management plans

Creating and protecting habitat connectivity, wildlife corridors and wildlife crossings will improve human health and safety and safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem health. Among other



Family of brown bears playing in the water at Katmai National Park, Alaska.

things, the administration should: establish, maintain and support domestic and international wildlife corridors which provide habitat or ecological connectivity and allow for fish, wildlife, or plant movement; install structural elements like underpasses, culverts, overpasses, animal detection systems or crosswalks to allow wildlife to avoid road traffic; remove obsolete fencing and upgrade and mark extant fencing to improve connectivity for migratory species.

ban toxic lead ammunition on federal lands

We have recognized that lead is toxic since the 19th century and removed it from products like

paint and gasoline in order to protect human health and safety. However, toxic lead ammunition and fishing tackle remain sources of potential lead poisoning. Anyone who consumes animals taken using lead ammunition is at risk for lead poisoning. Spent lead shot and fishing tackle can also be consumed by foraging wildlife, causing both immediate harm and downstream poisonings as carcasses are consumed by predators. Lead from shot and tackle can also contaminate groundwater. The administration should issue a directive to require nontoxic ammunition and fishing tackle on FWS-managed lands.



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