

The Honorable Tom McClintock
Chair, Subcommittee on Federal Lands
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Colleen Hanabusa
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Public Lands
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

November 3, 2017

Dear Chairman McClintock and Ranking Member Hanabusa,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing to express our support for H.R. 3979, the “Keep America’s Refuges Operational Act,” and request that a hearing is scheduled on this bill as soon as possible.

Located in every U.S. state and territory, our National Wildlife Refuge System provides exceptional opportunities to enjoy outdoor recreation. This remarkable network of public lands and waters includes more than 850 million acres of habitat dedicated to the conservation of fish and wildlife. Over 40 million people visit refuges each year, which generates \$2.4 billion in revenue and 35,000 jobs for local economies.

But refuges could not continue to operate without the contribution of dedicated volunteers. Last year alone, roughly 40,000 volunteers donated 1.4 million hours to maintain refuges and preserve critical habitats. Volunteers work side-by-side with refuge staff to conduct fish and wildlife population surveys, fight invasive species, lead tours and educational activities, maintain trails, and operate visitor centers.

By reauthorizing the National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer, Community Partnership, and Education program, H.R. 3979 will mean that present and future generations of Americans can continue to visit wildlife refuges for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation. We therefore urge you to hold a hearing on and favorably consider this legislation before the Subcommittee on Federal Lands without further delay.

Sincerely,

American Fisheries Society
American Sportfishing Association
Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation
Defenders of Wildlife
Ducks Unlimited
Izaak Walton League of America
Marine Conservation Institute
National Audubon Society

National Wildlife Federation
National Wildlife Refuge Association
The Corps Network
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
The Nature Conservancy
The Wilderness Society
The Wildlife Society
Trout Unlimited

cc: The Honorable Rob Bishop, Chairman, House Natural Resources Committee
The Honorable Raul Grijalva, Ranking Member, House National Resources Committee