

January 28, 2020

The Honorable Susan Collins
The Honorable Angus King
The Honorable Chellie Pingree
The Honorable Jared Golden
United States Congress
Washington, DC

Dear Senators Collins and King and Representatives Pingree and Golden:

As religious leaders we write to you today unified in our support for the protection of God's precious and good creation and in particular the Endangered Species Act. This bedrock piece of conservation law has been extremely effective in preventing species from becoming extinct. Specifically, we urge you to counter measures to weaken the Endangered Species Act and support the Protect America's Wildlife and Fish In Need of Conservation Act (PAW and FIN Conservation Act). This critical legislation would restore vital protections for our nation's most imperiled species by repealing the recent regulations that gravely weaken the Endangered Species Act.

Our Scriptures are filled with messages about taking care of Creation. In those passages, we are reminded that the world belongs to God and we are instructed to be stewards of God's earth. The story of Noah's ark sets forth an example for us to follow as we care for creatures great and small. God's covenant with Noah and his descendants as well as with the entirety of Creation makes it clear that God views Creation, both human and non-human, as valuable and as being in relationship with one another.

The Endangered Species Act is our nation's most effective tool for protecting species threatened with extinction. Given the unprecedented threats to these species, we need a fully funded and actively enforced Act now more than ever. The recent regulatory rollbacks undermine the Endangered Species Act by making it more difficult to extend protections to newly-listed threatened species and allowing economic considerations to factor into decisions about whether a species should be protected under the Act. Further, the regulations make it easier for companies to advance industrial projects in critical habitat areas that are essential to species' survival and more difficult to protect imperiled species that are most impacted by climate change.

Because of our strong conviction that God entrusted the care of Creation to us, including the most vulnerable species, religious denominations over the years have released policy statements urging that we, as a nation, uphold our duty to steward God's creatures.

The PAW and FIN Conservation Act helps us in our work to protect God's creation and some of God's most vulnerable species. We urge you to support this vital piece of legislation and join us in stewarding God's creation.

Sincerely,

Art Bell, First Parish Congregational Church UCC, Yarmouth

Rabbi Bill Siemers, Congregation Beth Israel, Bangor

Rev. Rich Killmer, retired Presbyterian Minister

Laurie Osher, President, Maine Interfaith Power & Light

Wendy Schlotterbeck, Quaker Yearly Meeting, Auburn

Anne D. Burt, Religious Society of Friends, Edgecomb