

African Wildlife Foundation • American Bird Conservancy • Animal Defenders International • Animal Legal Defense Fund • Animal Welfare Institute • Bonobo Conservation Initiative • Born Free USA • Cascadia Wildlands • Center for Biological Diversity • Cetacean Society International • Cheetah Conservation Fund • Christian Council of Delmarva • Coastal Plains Institute • Conservation Council For Hawaii • Defenders of Wildlife • Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund • EarthAction • Endangered Habitats League • Endangered Species Coalition • Endangered Small Animal Conservation Fund • Environmental Center of San Diego • Environmental Investigation Agency USA • FOUR PAWS USA • Friends of the Earth U.S. • Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf & Wildlife • Great Lakes Wildlife Alliance • Great Old Broads for Wilderness • Heartwood • Howling For Wolves • Humane Society Legislative Fund • Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association • Inland Ocean Coalition • International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute • International Fund for Animal Welfare • International Student One Health Alliance • Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue & Protection • Marked By COVID • Mighty Earth • Natural Resources Defense Council • NY4WHALES • Ocean Conservation Research • Oceanic Preservation Society • One Health Commission • One Health Lessons • OneNature • Partners in Animal Protection & Conservation • PawPAC • Predator Defense • Public Citizen • Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) • R2H Action [Right to Health] • Resource Renewal Institute • RESTORE: The North Woods • Sanctuary Education Advisory Specialists SEAS • Sierra Forest Legacy • Southwest Environmental Center • The Humane Society of the United States • The Lands Council • The Rewilding Institute • Western Nebraska Resources Council • Western Watersheds Project • WildEarth Guardians • Wyoming Untrapped

March 19, 2021

Dear President Biden and Vice President Harris:

On behalf of our tens of millions of supporters across the United States, we, the undersigned organizations, write to request that the Administration adopt strategies and policies critical to addressing the increasing threat of zoonotic disease spillover into human populations. As our increasing population expands into and has more contact with natural habitats and wild animals, and as other current practices continue, our exposure to zoonoses, and potential new pandemics, increases as well. Some future outbreaks are likely to be more deadly than the current pandemic. Some may be more contagious. Some may be both. Without decisive action to strengthen capacity at the front-lines of health and conservation, and to create new and reinforce and improve existing institutional capacity, billions of us are likely to be threatened by another and more dangerous pandemic.

Our coalition, the US Wildlife and Health Alliance, includes diverse groups and perspectives, including conservation and environmental organizations, human and animal healthcare advocates, animal welfare and advocacy groups, and biological and biomedical scientists. We are committed to strengthening

relationships and building equitable partnerships with diverse stakeholders, to include the many voices working in pandemic prevention and recovery, climate response, conservation, child health, community health, anti-poverty, environmental justice, marginalized communities, tribal nations, and other Indigenous groups and advocates. These recommendations address the clear and compelling connections between human health and the role that our current mode of exploitation of nature plays in the spillover of zoonotic diseases and the rise of global pandemics.

The COVID-19 pandemic has already resulted in the loss of more than 500,000 lives in America alone, sickened millions more, and wreaked social and economic havoc worldwide. We are grateful that the Administration has committed to address this challenge as a top priority. An effective response to COVID-19 must include a strategy to prevent future pandemics; we cannot merely react when outbreaks flare. Our organizations are committed to partner in the massive public health, environmental, political, and socioeconomic response these crises demand, for now and for our future.

We know that the majority of emerging infectious diseases originate in and are transmitted from animals to humans, and that most of these zoonotic diseases originate in wildlife. U.S. response and recovery actions need to center on efforts to prevent zoonotic spillover events, and ensure that global health systems are prepared for and able to respond to disease outbreaks, and to prevent their progression to epidemics or pandemics. For these reasons, we urge the Administration to commit to and implement the following necessary actions:

1. Through Executive action, direct a whole-of-government One Health approach to pandemic prevention, that removes institutional silos, and as need be, creates new institutions, in order to tackle the root causes of zoonotic spillover, including the linkages between biodiversity loss, wildlife trade (legal and illegal), deforestation and habitat degradation, industrialized agriculture, global health, and issues related to extreme poverty, including food insecurity, poor sanitation, limited access to basic services, and food safety and security.
2. Ensure strong funding requests in line with the need to prioritize pandemic risk reduction as part of the Administration's FY22 Budget Request and supplemental appropriations requests to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, include funding increases for the following programs/accounts:
 - a. USAID Global Health Security programs;
 - b. USAID Biodiversity Conservation programs;
 - c. USAID Emerging Pandemic Threats and Spillover program, including the PREDICT project;
 - d. USAID Bureau for Resilience and Food Security;
 - e. US Forest Service International Programs;
 - f. US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) International Affairs Program;
 - g. USFWS Office of Law Enforcement;
 - h. US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) National Wildlife Disease Program;

- i. Seed funding for a G7 “Global Pandemic Fund” initiative, scaling to robust annual funding thereafter; and
 - j. State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) and USAID Combating Wildlife Trafficking Programs.
3. Provide \$2.5 billion or more to implement community-devised, country-owned plans to halt deforestation and biodiversity loss, including funds for conservation, healthcare, job training and for sustainable economic development alternatives to resource extraction in at least 500 locations within the most impoverished countries and communities worldwide. President Biden called for mobilizing \$20 billion for rainforest conservation; fulfilling this campaign goal should be a priority; it will help to stop outbreaks from happening.
4. Commit to funding multilateral agreements that support pandemic prevention programs grounded in bottom-up conservation and land use change, as well as strengthening health systems to meet WHO’s International Health Regulations, to contain outbreaks before they spread, in a minimum of 500 locations within developing countries.
5. Support funding for communities and countries to adopt conservation and preservation policies, verifying compliance in-country and at the customs level, and progressively phasing in U.S. trade restrictions on flora and fauna, including products and supply chain networks, related to overexploitation, fragmentation, and deforestation.
6. Use federal purchasing power to dis-incentivize trade in wildlife, parts, derivatives, or products thereof, as well as supply chains related to, supporting, promoting, or profiting through destructive exploitation, deforestation, or fragmentation, with the goal of phasing out as much as possible within 4 years, and completely ending U.S. sales of products with deforestation or irresponsible wildlife trade in their supply chains within 10 years. Support U.S. Customs enforcement, and fund an independent verification body of conservation stakeholders.
7. Reopen the Global Health Security office at the National Security Council. Appoint a Special Advisor on Pandemic Prevention responsible for examining all institutional capacity and policy areas relevant to pandemic prevention (e.g., wildlife trade, deforestation, agriculture and other land use practices, infrastructure development, carbon emissions, access to medicines and vaccines, and compliance with International Health Regulations), proposing necessary reforms, making policy recommendations to the White House, and working to implement these reforms alongside appropriate government agencies, as well as international partners and UN Agencies.
8. Join the 84 other nations, including many of our allies, as a signatory to the United Nations 2020 Summit on Biodiversity’s Leaders’ Pledge for Nature; develop and execute a National Biodiversity Strategy to implement the actions, commitments, and strategies needed to put biodiversity on the path to recovery and fulfill the Pledge.

The inextricable connection between the health and wellbeing of humans, nature, and our planet cannot be overstated. The only effective response to this global pandemic and to future pandemics, as well as to the climate and biodiversity crises, requires that we protect, conserve, restore, and safeguard human rights and equities, and the natural habitats, biodiversity, and ecosystems that support us all. We look forward to working with you and with our diverse coalition of partners and community advocates

over the coming months to craft and implement a robust strategy to prevent future pandemics and ensure a healthier future for all of us, for future generations, for our planet, and for all of its species.

Respectfully,

The US Wildlife and Health Alliance Members (in alphabetical order):

Animal Defenders International

Bonobo Conservation Initiative

Center for Biological Diversity

Defenders of Wildlife

Endangered Species Coalition

International Fund for Animal Welfare

Oceanic Preservation Society

R2H Action [Right to Health]

Western Watersheds Project

WildEarth Guardians

Also signed by:

African Wildlife Foundation

American Bird Conservancy

Animal Legal Defense Fund

Animal Welfare Institute

Born Free USA

Cascadia Wildlands

Cetacean Society International

Cheetah Conservation Fund

Christian Council of Delmarva

Coastal Plains Institute

Conservation Council For Hawaii

Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund
EarthAction
Endangered Habitats League
Endangered Small Animal Conservation Fund
Environmental Center of San Diego
Environmental Investigation Agency USA
FOUR PAWS USA
Friends of the Earth U.S.
Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf & Wildlife
Great Lakes Wildlife Alliance
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Heartwood
Howling For Wolves
Humane Society Legislative Fund
Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association
Inland Ocean Coalition
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
International Student One Health Alliance
Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue & Protection
Marked By COVID
Mighty Earth
Natural Resources Defense Council
NY4WHALES
Ocean Conservation Research
One Health Commission
One Health Lessons
OneNature
Partners in Animal Protection & Conservation
PawPAC

Predator Defense

Public Citizen

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER)

Resource Renewal Institute

RESTORE: The North Woods

Sanctuary Education Advisory Specialists SEAS

Sierra Forest Legacy

Southwest Environmental Center

The Humane Society of the United States

The Lands Council

The Rewilding Institute

Western Nebraska Resources Council

Wyoming Untrapped