

Chairman Reince Priebus  
Republican National Committee  
310 First Street, SE  
Washington, DC 20003

August 11, 2014

Dear Chairman Priebus:

On behalf of the undersigned groups and organizations, representing millions of hunters, anglers, fish and wildlife professionals, and outdoor enthusiasts, we respectfully urge you to rescind the 2014 Republican National Committee's resolution "In Support of Western States Taking Back Public Lands."

Our organizations share an affiliation with the National Wildlife Federation, which was founded more than three quarters of a century ago by Republican conservationist Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling. Like President Theodore Roosevelt before him, Darling was part of a long line of Republican conservation leaders committed to the wise stewardship of our natural resources and the multiple uses of our public lands.

Following in their footsteps, many of our members and supporters are conservatives who hunt, fish and recreate on these public lands, contributing to the outdoor recreation economy. For decades we have consistently opposed the liquidation, disposal, or transfer of our federal public lands. Our 49 state affiliates voted to reaffirm that position at the annual meeting of the National Wildlife Federation on May 2 (see attached resolution). This unanimous statement illustrates the breadth and diversity of individuals and organizations that oppose efforts to take public lands out of public hands.

Our federal lands provide invaluable habitat for fish and wildlife, as well as tremendous opportunity for hunting, fishing, and other recreation. These lands help to grow America's economy by supporting an outdoor recreation industry that generates \$646 billion in economic benefit annually and supports 6.1 million jobs. Despite the economic importance of federal lands to wildlife and people, they remain under constant threat. In recent years, several state legislative proposals have called on the federal government to transfer ownership of public lands to the states, which in turn would pass them off to private interests in many instances. Not only are these proposals legally questionable and unlikely to pass constitutional review, the principle of discarding public lands opens the door to a multitude of unsustainable land management practices including unrestricted timber harvest, fossil fuel extraction, and mining.

Furthermore, the public at large does not support these proposals. The [2014 Conservation in the West Poll](#), a bipartisan survey by Colorado College, found that nearly two-thirds of Westerners consider themselves conservationists and 91 percent of voters in the Rocky Mountain region agree that public lands, like national parks, forests, and wildlife areas, are an *essential part* of their state's economy. These findings are significant because the states most determined to develop or dispose of public lands are in the West. But regardless of which state we call home, we feel that our public lands should be enjoyed by all Americans.

We urge the Republican National Committee to stay true to the party's deep conservation roots and rescind this resolution to ensure the continued protection of public lands that provide so much benefit to our communities and for all Americans.

Sincerely,

Arizona Wildlife Federation  
Arkansas Wildlife Federation  
Association of Northwest Steelheaders (OR)  
Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future  
Colorado Wildlife Federation  
Connecticut Forest & Park Association  
Conservation Council for Hawai'i  
Conservation Federation of Missouri  
Delaware Nature Society  
Environmental Advocates of New York  
Environmental League of Massachusetts  
Environment Council of Rhode Island  
Florida Wildlife Federation  
Georgia Wildlife Federation  
Idaho Wildlife Federation  
Indiana Wildlife Federation  
Iowa Wildlife Federation  
Kansas Wildlife Federation  
Kentucky Waterways Alliance  
Louisiana Wildlife Federation  
Michigan United Conservation Clubs  
Minnesota Conservation Federation  
Mississippi Wildlife Federation  
Montana Wildlife Federation  
Natural Resources Council of Maine  
Nebraska Wildlife Federation  
Nevada Wildlife Federation  
New Hampshire Audubon  
New Jersey Audubon Society  
New Mexico Wildlife Federation  
North Carolina Wildlife Federation  
North Dakota Wildlife Federation  
Planning and Conservation League (CA)  
Prairie Rivers Network (IL)  
Renewable Resources Coalition (AK)  
Sociedad Ornitológica Puertorriqueña Inc (PR)  
South Dakota Wildlife Federation  
Vermont Natural Resources Council  
Virginia Conservation Network  
West Virginia Rivers Coalition  
Wyoming Wildlife Federation