

Testimony of the Izaak Walton League of America Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs

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March 16, 2010

The Izaak Walton League of America appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning appropriations for fiscal year (FY) 2011 for various agencies and programs under the jurisdiction of the Subcommittee. The League is a national, nonprofit organization founded in 1922. We have nearly 38,000 members and more than 260 local chapters nationwide. Our members are committed to advancing common sense policies that safeguard wildlife and habitat, support community-based conservation, and address pressing environmental issues.

As the Subcommittee develops its fiscal year 2011 bill, we write to express our strong support for the president's request for \$716 million for international family planning and reproductive health assistance. We urge the Subcommittee to provide at least this amount, which will be an important step toward the broader goal shared by public health, women health, conservation, and other groups of investing \$1 billion in these critical programs.

In addition, we request that you strengthen the statutory guidance to United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which has been included in previous appropriations bills, that family planning and reproductive health funds be targeted "in areas where population growth threatens biodiversity or endangered species." We also request that the legislation direct USAID to target funds to areas where demographic trends "exacerbate human vulnerability to the effects of climate change." This provision was included in the Senate's bill last year and was referenced in the joint explanatory statement of the conference; however, it was not included in the statutory language of the omnibus spending bill. Inclusion of this additional statutory guidance to USAID concerning natural resources and climate change adaptation will help to improve the lives of countless women and children in some of the most impoverished parts of the world and enhance existing protections of the environment.

To tackle burgeoning environmental problems and ensure a more sustainable future, it is important for Congress to invest in effective international family planning programs. The success of USAID's population, health, and environment program (PHE) demonstrates that increased access to voluntary family planning slows population growth, reduces destruction of wildlife habitat, and offers important lessons that apply to climate change adaptation and resilience of local communities to climate change.

U.S.-funded population and reproductive health programs have proven to be one of the most effective ways to help countries reduce population pressures on natural resources, including loss of habitat and wildlife. Currently, more than 1 billion people live in ecological hotspots – areas that are both rich in plant and animal diversity and highly

threatened by human activity. While these areas comprise just 12 percent of the Earth's land surface, they hold nearly 20 percent of global population and are experiencing population growth that is nearly 40 percent faster than the rest of the world. Voluntary population and reproductive health programs funded by the U.S. are critical to giving couples the information and supplies to plan the number and timing of their children, thereby creating healthier families, slowing population growth and easing pressure on finite natural resources.

The cumulative impact of a growing global population demanding more resources and unsustainable patterns of consumption degrade the most basic foundations of life – air, water, croplands, forests and fisheries – and contribute to climate change. By providing at least the level of funding requested by the president, the Subcommittee will help address these challenges and support a more sustainable future for our world.