

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 25, 2011

Director Dan Ashe
Fish and Wildlife Service
Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Ashe:

We are happy to see the United States Fish and Wildlife Service initiate a scientific review of chimpanzee conservation regulations to determine whether all chimpanzees should be listed as "endangered" under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). In order for the Service to meet its statutory duty to promote conservation and defend wildlife, captive chimpanzees must be consistently listed as endangered and afforded full protection under the law.

As the agency is undoubtedly aware, the current lack of ESA protection for captive chimpanzees facilitates rampant exploitation of chimpanzees in the United States, as pets, in the entertainment industry, and for invasive biomedical experiments. The U.S. is the only country (other than Gabon) that still permits biomedical research on chimpanzees. Approximately one thousand chimpanzees are kept in laboratories in the U.S., where many languish in social isolation for years on end and are subjected to painful and stressful procedures. Many even suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder – a cruel existence for the species most similar to human beings. In order to ensure that the Service meets its obligation to protect endangered chimpanzees, the agency must exercise its authority to curtail uses of captive chimpanzees that not only create gross incentives for research labs, but also undermine national and international efforts to save the species.

Furthermore, exploitation of captive chimpanzees in the U.S. causes western conservationists to lose political capital with citizens and policymakers in chimpanzee range countries in Africa. Rampant commercial use and frivolous depictions of chimpanzees in U.S. entertainment fuel demand for pet chimpanzees both domestically and abroad, contributing to poaching and trafficking of wild chimpanzees, which is a major threat to the species' continued existence. It is time for the U.S. to step up and be a leader in chimpanzee conservation by ensuring that our laws are consistent with those advocated by conservationists on the international level.

Populations of wild chimpanzees have declined by 66% in the last 30 years primarily due to habitat loss and related poaching, which is driven in part by U.S. exploitation of captive chimpanzees. We must do our part to protect these animals and ensure that they will have a long and enduring future on this earth. We urge the agency to find that upgrading the status of captive chimpanzees from "threatened" to "endangered" is warranted and to propose a rule implementing this finding.



Pete Stark

Sincerely,



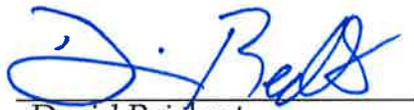
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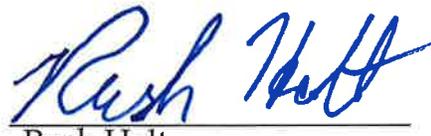

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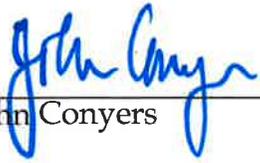

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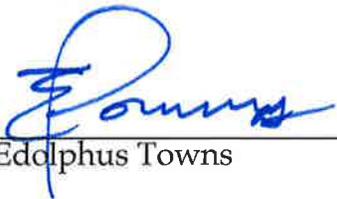

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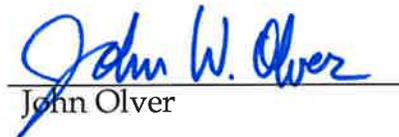

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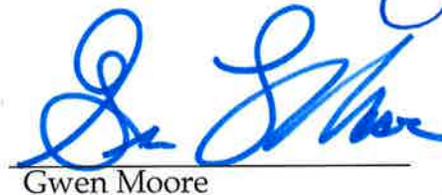

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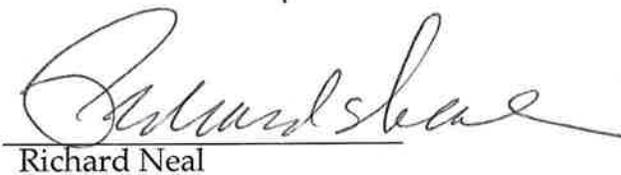

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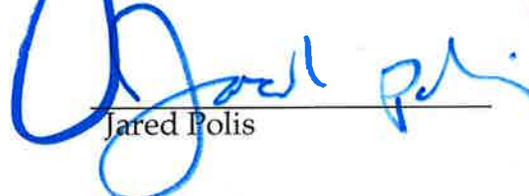

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