

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 17, 2007

Dr. Peter O. Thomas
Special Assistant to the Deputy Assistant Director
International Affairs
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
U.S. Department of the Interior
4401 N. Fairfax Drive
Room 760
Arlington, VA 22203

Dear Dr. Thomas:

On July 11, 2007, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) announced that the listing of ten penguin species “may be warranted” under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and initiated a status review of these species. 72 Fed. Reg. 37695 (July 11, 2007).

Accordingly, the FWS has solicited comments on the listing of these ten species, the emperor penguin, southern rockhopper penguin, northern rockhopper penguin, fiordland crested penguin, erect-crested penguin, macaroni penguin, white-flipped penguin, yellow-eyed penguin, african penguin and humboldt penguin. With the exception of the Emperor penguin, each of these penguin species is already recognized as vulnerable or endangered by the World Conservation Union (“IUCN”) and BirdLife International. We write in support of the listing of these ten species of penguins and a comprehensive and transparent status review of these imperiled wildlife species.

Over half of the world’s 19 penguin species are in danger of extinction due to a variety of threats such as industrial over-fishing, direct take, and habitat loss and degradation that is resulting from global warming. Rising concentrations of carbon dioxide and other heat trapping gases are causing global average temperatures to increase, with greater increases near the poles, such as in the Antarctic and the Southern Ocean, where many of these penguins are located. Penguins such as the Emperor penguin breed on pack ice and are extremely vulnerable to ongoing and accelerating effects of global warming.

Earlier this year, a scientific study utilizing data from National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) estimated that the Antarctic ice sheet is losing approximately thirty-six cubic miles per year. Many species of penguins are dependant upon Antarctica, the Sub-Antarctic Islands, the Southern Ocean and adjoining ecosystems. This massive type of habitat destruction and alteration stemming from global warming, in conjunction with other cumulative threats to the ten penguin species, is precisely the type of threat that the FWS must analyze pursuant to the listing factors in ESA Section 4. 16 U.S.C. § 1533.


In addition, the increasing acidification of the ocean as a result of global warming is another serious threat facing these penguin species. As the level of carbon dioxide in the

atmosphere increases, the amount of carbon dioxide that is absorbed by the oceans also increases, leading to chemical reactions which reduce the availability of calcium carbonate needed by marine organisms to build shells and skeletons. An increasingly acidic ocean could impair the ability of a type of plankton called the pteropod, which forms the base of the food chain for penguins, to grow or maintain its shell. The effects of ocean acidification on this plankton could have grave consequences for the entire food chain, including penguins.


Scientific experts tell us that global warming will put 30 percent of the world's plant and animal species at risk of extinction if temperatures continue to increase. The extensive, and in some cases rapid, ongoing harm to these ecosystems due to global warming represent one of the most pervasive and dangerous threats to penguins. The United States needs to take bold action to address this climate crisis in order to ensure that we avoid the most catastrophic effects of global warming on penguins and on countless numbers of species worldwide

Thank you for the consideration of these comments. We remind the agency of its clear legal duty to utilize the "best available science" in making its decision on whether to proceed with a proposed rule to list these ten species of penguins under the Endangered Species Act. Politics should not, indeed must not, enter into the final decision. We appreciate your serious attention to this important matter.

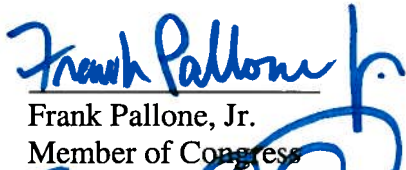
Sincerely,



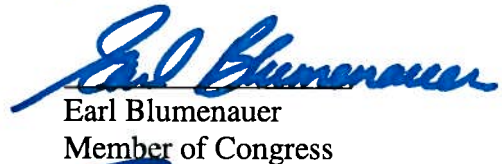
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Member of Congress



Jay Inslee
Member of Congress



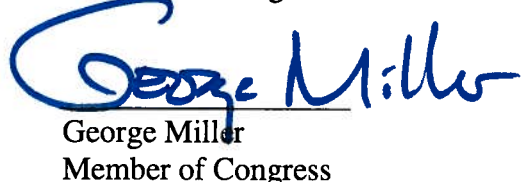
Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



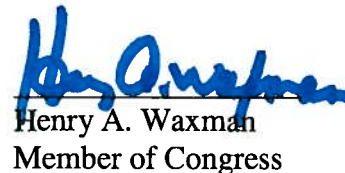
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Peter A. DeFazio
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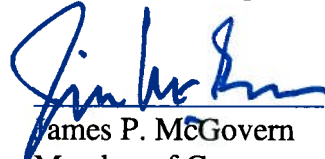
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Member of Congress



Sam Farr
Member of Congress



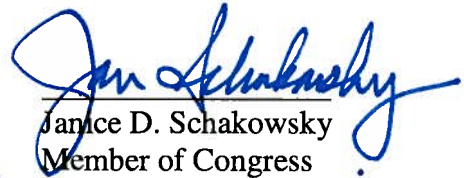
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



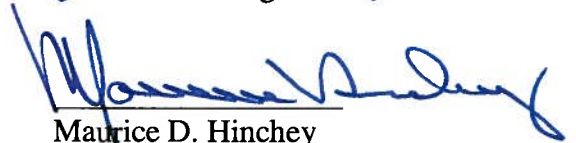
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