

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 7999

To direct the Secretary of the Interior to encourage and incentivize rescue, rehabilitation, and appropriate reintroduction of threatened and endangered animals by establishing a Wildlife Confiscations Network, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 15, 2024

Mr. GARBARINO (for himself and Mr. QUIGLEY) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of the Interior to encourage and incentivize rescue, rehabilitation, and appropriate reintroduction of threatened and endangered animals by establishing a Wildlife Confiscations Network, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Wildlife Rescue, Reha-
5 bilitation, and Reintroduction Act of 2024”.

6 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

7 It is the sense of Congress that—

1 (1) accredited zoos, aquariums, science centers,
2 wildlife sanctuaries, and similar facilities play in-
3 valuable roles in the rescue, rehabilitation, and re-
4 introduction of threatened and endangered species of
5 animals; and

6 (2) to the maximum extent possible, such activi-
7 ties, including the educational display and interpre-
8 tation of such species, should be encouraged, facili-
9 tated, and incentivized.

10 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

11 In this Act:

12 (1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Adminis-
13 trator” means the Administrator of the National
14 Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, acting
15 through the Director of the National Marine Fish-
16 eries Service.

17 (2) APPROPRIATE SECRETARY.—The term “ap-
18 propriate Secretary” means—

19 (A) the Secretary, with respect to a zoo,
20 aquarium, science center, wildlife sanctuary, or
21 similar facility that cares for animal species
22 over which the Director of the United States
23 Fish and Wildlife Service has jurisdiction;

24 (B) the Secretary of Commerce, acting
25 through the Administrator, with respect to a

1 zoo, aquarium, science center, wildlife sanc-
2 tuary, or similar facility that cares for animal
3 species over which the Administrator has juris-
4 diction; and

5 (C) the Secretary and the Secretary of
6 Commerce, acting through the Administrator,
7 acting jointly with respect to a zoo, aquarium,
8 science center, wildlife sanctuary, or similar fa-
9 cility that cares for animal species described in
10 both of subparagraphs (A) and (B).

11 (3) ASSOCIATION.—The term “Association”
12 means the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

13 (4) CITES SPECIES.—The term “CITES spe-
14 cies” means an animal species that is listed in one
15 of the Appendices of the Convention on International
16 Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and
17 Flora.

18 (5) COMMITTEE.—The term “Committee”
19 means the committee established under section
20 6(b)(3).

21 (6) CONFISCATED ANIMAL.—The term “con-
22 fiscated animal” means an individual of a CITES
23 species or a threatened or endangered species that
24 is—

1 (A) seized at or en route to or from a port
2 or border of the United States; and

3 (B) placed at a qualified zoological facility
4 to provide general animal care and welfare to
5 such individual.

6 (7) CONSERVATION RECOVERY SPECIES.—The
7 term “conservation recovery species” means a popu-
8 lation of a threatened or endangered species that is
9 cared for by a qualified zoological facility—

10 (A) for non-commercial purposes; and

11 (B) in direct support of recovery and re-
12 introduction efforts of a Federal agency for
13 such threatened or endangered species.

14 (8) NETWORK.—The term “Network” means
15 the Wildlife Confiscations Network established under
16 section 6(a).

17 (9) QUALIFIED ZOOLOGICAL FACILITY.—The
18 term “qualified zoological facility” means a zoo,
19 aquarium, science center, wildlife sanctuary, or simi-
20 lar facility—

21 (A) that, as of the date of the enactment
22 of this Act, provides care to an individual of a
23 conservation recovery species;

24 (B) with which the appropriate Secretary
25 has placed a rescued animal within the 5 years

1 preceding the date of the enactment of this Act;

2 or

3 (C) designated as such by the appropriate

4 Secretary under section 4.

5 (10) RESCUED ANIMAL.—The term “rescued
6 animal”—

7 (A) means an individual of a threatened or
8 endangered species that—

9 (i) is native to the United States; and

10 (ii) is removed from the wild because

11 of injury, or threats or impending effects

12 due to natural or human-induced activities,

13 including such an individual that is re-

14 moved from the wild by, or at the request

15 of, a Federal, State, or Tribal agency; and

16 (B) does not include an individual of any
17 species of sea turtle.

18 (11) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary”

19 means the Secretary of the Interior, acting through

20 the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife

21 Service.

22 (12) THREATENED OR ENDANGERED SPE-

23 CIES.—The term “threatened or endangered spe-

24 cies” means an animal species that is listed under

1 the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C.
2 1531 et seq.)—

3 (A) as a threatened species; or

4 (B) as an endangered species.

5 **SEC. 4. DESIGNATION OF QUALIFIED ZOOLOGICAL FACILI-**
6 **TIES.**

7 The appropriate Secretary shall designate as a quali-
8 fied zoological facility each zoo, aquarium, science center,
9 wildlife sanctuary, or similar facility that, as determined
10 by the appropriate Secretary—

11 (1) has an established record of providing exem-
12 plary care to—

13 (A) confiscated animals;

14 (B) rescued animals; or

15 (C) individuals of a conservation recovery
16 species; and

17 (2) follows accepted practices in animal hus-
18 bandry, including—

19 (A) compliance with the Animal Welfare
20 Act (7 U.S.C. 2131 et seq.);

21 (B) appropriate licensing and permitting;

22 and

23 (C) adherence to industry standards.

1 **SEC. 5. RESCUE AND RECOVERY GRANT PROGRAM.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consultation
3 with the Administrator, shall establish a grant program
4 to award amounts and technical assistance to qualified zo-
5 ological facilities to support the care of individuals of a
6 conservation recovery species, rescued animals, and con-
7 fiscated animals.

8 (b) APPLICATIONS.—To be eligible for a grant under
9 this section, a qualified zoological facility shall submit to
10 the Secretary an application in such form, at such time,
11 and containing such information as the Secretary deter-
12 mines appropriate, including a description of each eligible
13 activity the qualified zoological facility will carry out with
14 a grant awarded under this section.

15 (c) ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES.—A qualified zoological fa-
16 cility that is awarded a grant under this section may use
17 such grant to carry out the following activities with re-
18 spect to individuals of a conservation recovery species, res-
19 cued animals, or confiscated animals:

20 (1) Pay expenses related to—

21 (A) facility costs;

22 (B) food;

23 (C) veterinary care, including medicine and
24 life support systems;

25 (D) direct animal care staff;

1 (E) the transportation of an individual of
2 a conservation recovery species, rescued animal,
3 or confiscated animal for holding; and

4 (G) the reintroduction of an individual of
5 a conservation recovery species, rescued animal,
6 or confiscated animal into the wild.

7 (2) Design and construct facilities to support
8 the creation of a network of facilities qualified to
9 conduct rescue, recovery, and reintroduction efforts
10 for individuals of a conservation recovery species,
11 rescued animals, or confiscated animals.

12 (3) Develop rescue and rehabilitation tech-
13 nologies and procedures, especially such technologies
14 and procedures that are necessary to support the
15 rapid and safe reintroduction of individuals of a con-
16 servation recovery species, rescued animals, or con-
17 fiscated animals.

18 (d) GUIDANCE; CRITERIA.—The Secretary shall, in
19 consultation with stakeholders, including public and pri-
20 vate entities that are actively involved in the care, rescue,
21 rehabilitation, and reintroduction of any threatened or en-
22 dangered species, issue—

23 (1) guidance regarding the implementation of
24 the grant program established under subsection (a);
25 and

1 (2) criteria to award grants under this section.

2 (e) LIMITATION.—The Secretary, in consultation
3 with the Administrator, may not award a qualified zoolog-
4 ical facility more than \$1,000,000 under this section in
5 a fiscal year, except in the event of an unusual mortality
6 event, as determined by the Secretary in consultation with
7 the Administrator.

8 (f) MATCHING REQUIREMENT.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in para-
10 graph (2), the Federal share of an activity carried
11 out with a grant awarded under this section may not
12 exceed 50 percent.

13 (2) EXCEPTIONS.—

14 (A) CRITICAL ACTIVITY.—The Federal
15 share of an activity carried out with a grant
16 awarded under this section that is related to
17 the development of a facility, technology, or
18 procedure that is critical for the rescue and re-
19 introduction of individuals of a conservation re-
20 covery species, rescued animals, or confiscated
21 animals, as determined by the Secretary, may
22 not exceed 75 percent.

23 (B) WAIVER OF MATCHING REQUIRE-
24 MENT.—The Secretary may waive the applica-
25 tion of paragraph (1) in the case of an unusual

1 mortality event or other declared emergency, as
2 determined by the Secretary.

3 (g) PERMIT FOR QUALIFIED ZOOLOGICAL FACILI-
4 TIES.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after
6 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
7 shall issue a programmatic permit under section 10
8 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C.
9 1539) authorizing qualified zoological facilities to
10 conduct rescue, rehabilitation, and reintroduction ef-
11 forts for threatened or endangered species under this
12 section.

13 (2) CONTENTS.—The permit issued under para-
14 graph (1)—

15 (A) shall, to the maximum extent pos-
16 sible—

17 (i) encourage and incentivize the res-
18 cue, rehabilitation, and reintroduction of
19 threatened or endangered species; and

20 (ii) encourage and facilitate public
21 display of rescued animals and the off-
22 spring of such rescued animals in partici-
23 pating qualified zoological facilities for
24 educational purposes; and

25 (B) may not—

- 1 (i) regulate normal and accepted hus-
2 bandry practices, including breeding;
- 3 (ii) prohibit the display of rescued
4 animals for educational purposes; or
- 5 (iii) provide for Federal Government
6 ownership of a rescued animal, or the off-
7 spring of such a rescued animal, that is
8 placed in a qualified zoological facility for
9 long-term care, except for an individual of
10 a conservation recovery species.

11 **SEC. 6. WILDLIFE CONFISCATIONS NETWORK.**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall enter into an
13 agreement with the Association to establish a voluntary,
14 cooperative program to assist Federal wildlife law enforce-
15 ment agencies with the placement and care of confiscated
16 animals, to be known as the “Wildlife Confiscations Net-
17 work”.

18 (b) FUNCTIONS.—The Network shall—

19 (1) establish a cooperative and coordinated re-
20 sponse protocol for the care and welfare of con-
21 fiscated animals;

22 (2) create and maintain a database of qualified
23 zoological facilities and other organizations that are
24 members of the Network that can provide immediate

1 triage needs and long-term housing and care for
2 confiscated animals;

3 (3) establish a committee within the Network to
4 review and approve or reject applications for inclu-
5 sion in the Network submitted under subsection (c)
6 by entities listed in paragraph (1) of that subsection;
7 and

8 (4) act as the single point of contact for Fed-
9 eral wildlife law enforcement agencies to assist in
10 the placement and care of confiscated animals in
11 qualified zoological facilities.

12 (c) MEMBERSHIP.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—Each of the following enti-
14 ties may submit to the Committee an application to
15 join the Network:

16 (A) Universities with expertise in the care
17 of confiscated animals.

18 (B) Wildlife sanctuaries.

19 (C) Association-accredited zoos.

20 (D) Association-accredited aquariums.

21 (E) Animal rescue organizations.

22 (F) Nongovernmental organizations with
23 expertise in the care of confiscated animals.

24 (G) Qualified zoological facilities.

1 (2) CONTENTS OF APPLICATION.—An applica-
2 tion submitted under paragraph (1) by an entity
3 listed in that paragraph shall contain information
4 sufficient for the Committee to determine whether
5 such entity—

6 (A) has, as determined by the Committee,
7 the necessary credentials; and

8 (B) is an effective, responsible, and appro-
9 priate entity that is capable of assisting Federal
10 wildlife law enforcement agencies in the place-
11 ment and care of confiscated animals.

12 (3) DETERMINATION.—The Committee shall re-
13 view each application submitted under paragraph (1)
14 and approve or reject each such application.

15 (d) COMMITTEE.—

16 (1) MEMBERSHIP.—The Committee shall in-
17 clude 1 representative from each of the following en-
18 tities:

19 (A) The Association.

20 (B) The United States Fish and Wildlife
21 Service.

22 (C) A university with expertise in the care
23 of confiscated animals.

24 (D) A wildlife sanctuary.

25 (E) An Association-accredited zoo.

1 (F) An Association-accredited aquarium.

2 (G) An animal rescue organization.

3 (H) A nongovernmental organization with
4 expertise in the care of confiscated animals.

5 (2) INITIAL MEMBERS.—The Association, in
6 consultation with community stakeholders, including
7 public and private entities that are actively involved
8 in the care, rescue, rehabilitation, and reintroduction
9 of any threatened or endangered species, shall ap-
10 point each initial member to the Committee in ac-
11 cordance with paragraph (1).

12 (3) SUBSEQUENT MEMBERS.—Except for the
13 appointment of the initial members of the Com-
14 mittee under paragraph (2), each member of the
15 Committee shall be elected by a majority vote of the
16 members of the Committee through a call for service
17 and application process implemented by the Com-
18 mittee.

19 (4) TERM OF MEMBERSHIP.—

20 (A) INITIAL MEMBERS.—Of the initial
21 members appointed to the Committee by the
22 Association under paragraph (2), as determined
23 by the Association in consultation with the com-
24 munity stakeholders described in that para-
25 graph at the time of such appointment—

1 (i) 2 members shall be appointed for
2 a term of 1 year;

3 (ii) 3 members shall be appointed for
4 a term of 2 years; and

5 (iii) 3 members shall be appointed for
6 a term of 3 years.

7 (B) SUBSEQUENT MEMBERS.—Each mem-
8 ber of the Committee elected under paragraph
9 (3) shall serve on the Committee for a term of
10 3 years.

11 **SEC. 7. FUNDING.**

12 The Secretary, in consultation with the Secretaries
13 of Commerce, Agriculture, and State, shall identify exist-
14 ing authorizations and appropriations to implement this
15 Act, and not later than 12 months after the date of the
16 enactment of this Act, shall advise the Committee on Envi-
17 ronment and Public Works in the Senate and the Com-
18 mittee on Natural Resources in the House if any addi-
19 tional authorizations are necessary.

20 **SEC. 8. SAVINGS CLAUSE.**

21 Nothing in this Act may be construed to amend or
22 otherwise affect the John H. Prescott Marine Mammal
23 Rescue and Response Grant Program established under

1 section 408(b)(1) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act
2 of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1421f-1(b)(1)).

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