

Republican and Democratic Lawmakers Call on Interior Secretary to Nix Barred Owl Kill Plan

19 lawmakers call on the Interior Department to prevent the killing of more than 450,000 barred owls

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, March 10, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- U.S. Representatives Troy E. Nehls, R-Tex., and Sydney Kamlager-Dove, D-Calif., penned a letter with 17 of their House colleagues to Interior Secretary Doug Burgum asking him to scuttle a Fish and Wildlife Service plan to oversee the shooting of nearly half a million barred owls over the next 30 years across California, Oregon, and Washington to reduce social competition with spotted owls.



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“In the spirit of fiscal responsibility and ethical conservation, we urge you to halt all spending on this plan to mass kill a native, range-expanding North American owl species,” wrote the 19 members of Congress. “Up to this point, there has been no Congressional oversight of this project, and the Final Environmental Impact Statement from USFWS was devoid of any meaningful cost estimates. The report also lacks any sufficient detailed description of how such a project would be carried out over an area spanning 24 million acres—from the Bay Area, California, to the Canadian border.”

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*Wayne Pacelle, president,
Animal Wellness Action*

In addition to Nehls and Kamlager-Dove, Reps. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., Troy Carter, D-La., Scott Perry, R-Pa., Josh Harder, D-Calif., Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., Lance Gooden, R-Texas, Lois Frankel, D-Fla., Jeff Van Drew R-N.J., Steve Cohen, D-Tenn., Gil Cisneros, D-Calif., Andy Ogles, R-

Tenn., Deborah Ross, D-N.C., Scott Fitzgerald, R-Wis., Don Davis, D-N.C., Tony Wied, R-Wis., Anna Paulina Luna, R-Fla., and Summer Lee, D-Pa., also signed the letter to Secretary Burgum.

According to [Animal Wellness Action](#) and the [Center for a Humane Economy](#), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's barred owl kill-plan may have a price tag of \$1.35 billion over the 30 years. In December, the organizations called on President Trump's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) to examine and terminate the plan, which was given final approval in the form of a [Record of Decision](#) for barred owl management on September 6, 2024. In making the plan final, the agency said it would begin issuing permits to kill thousands of owls this spring.

"These lawmakers span the entire ideological spectrum, and we thank them for coalescing to urge the Interior Department to unwind the largest raptor slaughter ever conceived by any nation," said Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy, which are leading opposition to the kill plan. The groups noted that Secretary Burgum had an outstanding record on animal welfare as governor, fighting a plan by the National Park Service to round up and remove immensely popular wild horses at Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

"At a time when President Trump is working hard to stop wasteful spending, it's time to terminate a potentially billion-dollar outlay of federal dollars for killing forest owls protected under federal law for a century," said U.S. Representative Nehls, R-Texas. "This overreaching Biden-era plan just cannot work, and it is inhumane and wrong on so many levels."

The bipartisan congressional letter follows a January letter to the DOGE from four Oregon state lawmakers—Reps. Ed Diel, R-Linn and Marion counties, David Gomberg, D-Lincoln and Western Benton/Lane counties, Virgle Osborne, R-Douglas County, and Senator Bruce Starr, R-Yamhill and Polk counties—asking the department to scrap the owl-killing plan.

In November, the Center and Animal Wellness Action filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Seattle to block the overreaching and unworkable plan targeting a species protected for a century by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The plaintiffs allege that the USFWS has violated the National Environmental Policy Act by failing to properly analyze the impacts of their strategy and improperly rejecting reasonable alternatives.

The organizations are asking the Interior and Justice departments to seek the district court's approval to take a voluntary remand for reconsideration of the barred owl rule. Separately, the organizations are also asking the agency to claw back "take" permits for barred owls that have been granted but not yet utilized.

"The Fish and Wildlife Service has obscured the costs and sidestepped the immense logistical challenges in conducting this unprecedented mass kill plan of owls who have been protected for 100 years under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act," added Pacelle. "The plan is doomed to fail because surviving owls will fill the vacuum and claim nesting areas purged of owls by the

shooters. The plan, if it is not stopped, will put the agency on a never-ending treadmill of owl killing.”

The organization also highlighted that the USFWS plan calls for opening up 14 units of the National Park Service to owl shooting and killing. The units include Crater Lake, Mount Rainier, Olympic, Redwoods, and Yosemite national parks.

Eric Forsman, the dean of forest owl biologists and a former federal wildlife biologist whose studies were instrumental in triggering major habitat protection plans to preserve spotted owls, also panned the barred owl kill plan in recent comments to the Cascadia Daily Times in Washington state. “It doesn’t give me any satisfaction at all to say this, but trying to control barred owls is largely a waste of time,” Forsman said. “That genie is out of the bottle.”

The Center and Animal Wellness Action have built a coalition of more than 280 organizations opposing the USFWS barred owl kill plan. That coalition includes about 25 local Audubon society organizations and owl protection and raptor rehabilitation centers.

ABOUT

Animal Wellness Action is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) whose mission is to help animals by promoting laws and regulations at federal, state and local levels that forbid cruelty to all animals. The group also works to enforce existing anti-cruelty and wildlife protection laws. Animal Wellness Action believes helping animals helps us all. X: @AWAction_News

The Center for a Humane Economy is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(3) whose mission is to help animals by helping forge a more humane economic order. The first organization of its kind in the animal protection movement, the Center encourages businesses to honor their social responsibilities in a culture where consumers, investors, and other key stakeholders abhor cruelty and the degradation of the environment and embrace innovation as a means of eliminating both. The Center believes helping animals helps us all. X: @TheHumaneCenter

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