

# 20 Members of Congress Tell Interior Secretary to Suspend Billion-Dollar Plan to Kill Half a Million Barred Owls

*Representatives Andrew Garbarino & Adam Gray lead bipartisan letter from 10 Republicans & 10 Democrats calling to scuttle plan to kill over 450,000 barred owls*

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, May 22, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- U.S. Representatives Andrew Garbarino, R-N.Y., and Adam Gray, D-Calif., led a letter signed by 20 members of Congress to Interior Secretary Doug Burgum asking him to scuttle a \$1.35 billion U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service plan to kill 450,000 native North American barred owls. The plan, spanning forest habitats in California, Oregon, and Washington, seeks to dramatically reduce barred owl numbers to reduce their competition with look-alike spotted owls. The proposal, known to locals as a "hoot and shoot," would allow killing of owls in 17 national forests and 14 units of the National Park Service, including Mount Rainier, Olympic, Crater Lake, Redwoods, and Yosemite national parks.



Barred Owl photo by USFWS

The lawmakers, including Reps. Val Hoyle, D-Ore., Ranking Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee's Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries, whose district is within the proposed kill zone, and David Valadao, R-Calif., whose district would also be affected, asked Secretary Burgum to defund the plan and "suspend the issuance of take permits," which the USFWS plans to give out for killing barred owls, a species that has been protected under federal law for more than a century. The [letter can be found here](#).

"Even if executed perfectly, the plan could not hope to achieve its aim of reducing barred owl populations in the area, because millions of barred owls occupy the surrounding forests (including in Canada, where USFWS cannot manage them)," wrote the lawmakers, including range-state lawmakers from California and Oregon. "The plan fails to explain why barred owls from those surrounding areas would not be attracted to the same nesting sites and simply fly in to replace the culled owls."

According to an estimate by [Animal Wellness Action](#) and the [Center for a Humane Economy](#), the barred owl kill plan may have a price tag of \$1.35 billion. The organizations sued the USFWS in



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*Wayne Pacelle, president of  
Animal Wellness Action*

U.S. District Court in Seattle (Case No. 2:24-cv-1796), alleging it violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by failing to properly analyze the impacts of the strategy. Because of that lawsuit and the change in Administration, the kill plan, originally set for implementation this spring, has been delayed. A briefing schedule agreed upon by the parties extends into late 2025.

"At a time when the Administration is seeking to cut wasteful government programs, this one deserves to be at

the top of the list," added the lawmakers from across the country, who said they "wish to associate ourselves with concerns raised by 19 of our colleagues who wrote to you on March 7, 2025, about a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) plan to kill more than 450,000 barred owls across 24 million acres in the Pacific Northwest over the next three decades." That original letter is available [here](#).

"We expect that the Trump Administration to nullify this billion-dollar scheme to shoot nearly half a million North American native barred owls, obviating the need for a protracted legal battle in federal court and sparing these two look-alike owl species from a hail of gunfire," said Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy. "There appears to be no congressional support at all for this budget-busting 'hoot and shoot.'"

The two bipartisan congressional letters follow a January letter to the DOGE from four rural Oregon state lawmakers in opposition to the owl-killing plan. The former two-term Washington State Public Lands Commissioner also came out against the proposal.

"The Fish and Wildlife Service has obscured the costs and sidestepped the immense logistical challenges in conducting this unprecedented mass kill plan of range-expanding owls who have been protected for 100 years under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act," Pacelle said.

The Center and Animal Wellness Action have built a coalition of more than 300 organizations opposing the USFWS barred owl kill plan. That coalition includes about 25 local Audubon society organizations and owl protection and raptor rehabilitation centers.

Signers to the May 21 letter include co-leads Andrew Garbarino, R-N.Y., and Adam Gray, D-Calif., with Vern Buchanan, R-Fla., Tim Burchett, R-Tenn., Earl "Buddy" Carter, R-Ga., Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick, D-Fla., Jim Costa, D-Calif., Cleo Fields, D-La., Lance Gooden, R-Texas, Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., Glenn Grothman, R-Wis., Val Hoyle, D-Ore., Sydney Kamlager-Dove, D-Calif., Laurel Lee, R-Fla., Nick LaLota, R-N.Y., Nancy Mace, R-S.C., Linda Sanchez, D-Calif., David Scott, D-Ga., Shri Thanedar, D-Mich., and David Valadao, R-Calif.

The March 7 letter was co-led by Troy Nehls, R-Texas, and Sydney Kamlager-Dove, D-Calif., with 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.

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