

# U.S. House of Representatives

## Committee on Natural Resources

Washington, DC 20515

March 14, 2023

The Honorable Martha Williams  
Director  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Williams:

We write to receive information and answers from your agency regarding your decision to conduct “Acknowledging Ecogrief and Developing Resilience” counseling sessions for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) employees. These blatantly partisan ideology sessions are a misuse of taxpayer dollars and extremely tone deaf, particularly when USFWS is carrying out policies that negatively impact our constituents and species conservation.

*The Washington Times* first reported on February 15, 2023, that the USFWS Southwest Region is offering workshops to employees who “seek to normalize the wide range of emotional responses that conservationists experience while empowering participants to act while taking care of themselves.”<sup>1</sup> Included in the workshop are ways to “define ecological grief and eco-resilience” and “examine common emotional reactions associated with ecological grief.”<sup>2</sup> We are deeply concerned that this kind of meaningless pandering is a colossal waste of taxpayer funding, does nothing to further the purpose of the USFWS, and diverts important resources away from critical agency functions.

Instead, USFWS should reverse their alarming series of rulemakings that will harm the American people. Some of the most concerning recent examples include listing the Lesser Prairie Chicken<sup>3</sup> and Northern Long Eared Bat<sup>4</sup> as endangered species, limiting access to sportsmen and women on National Wildlife Refuges through banning lead ammunition and fishing equipment, and proposing the reintroduction of predator species into areas outside of their historic range. These policy actions will have negative impacts on proactive conservation, agriculture, energy development, and the construction of vital infrastructure. We and many of our constituents are

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<sup>1</sup> Dinan, S. (2023, February 15). *A world of hurt: Workshops aim to help federal employees cope with 'ecogrief'*. The Washington Times. Retrieved February 16, 2023, from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2023/feb/15/ecogrief-interior-department-pays-help-employees-d/>

<sup>2</sup> Doerr, M., Kalous, T., & Foxx, J. (n.d.). *Acknowledging Ecogrief and Developing Resilience*. Virtual .

<sup>3</sup> Endangered and Threatened Species: Lesser Prairie-Chicken; Threatened Status with Section 4(d) Rule for the Northern Distinct Population Segment and Endangered Status for the Southern Distinct Population Segment. 87 FR 72674

<sup>4</sup> Endangered and Threatened Species: Northern Long-eared Bat. 87 FR 73488

appalled to see our tax dollars funding “ecogrief” workshops instead of science-based, environmentally-sound policies.

Given the egregious nature of these workshops, please provide documents and related information as soon as possible, but not later than March 28, 2023.

1. A document and related emails sufficient enough to describe the origin of these trainings. This information should include the approval and decision-making process that went into the approval of these workshops, including names of individual employees.
2. A document sufficient enough to give a detailed description of the cost of these workshops. This document should include which line item in the USFWS budget will be used to pay for these workshops.
3. A document sufficient enough to describe how many of these workshops will be offered and where they will be offered.

The USFWS should immediately divert the funding for these workshops to activities that further the mission of the agency, like habitat conservation and species recovery. Anything beyond this goal will prompt swift oversight from the Republican House majority.

Sincerely,



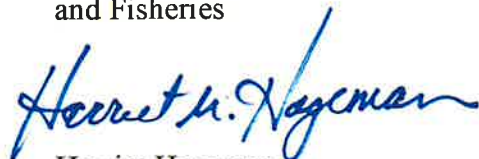
Bruce Westerman  
Chairman  
House Committee on Natural Resources



Cliff Bentz  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife,  
and Fisheries



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.  
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