

**American Rivers * Center for Biological Diversity * Clean Water Action *
Defenders of Wildlife * Friends of the Earth * League of Conservation Voters *
Natural Resources Defense Council * Oceana* Physicians for Social Responsibility *
Population Action International * Public Citizen * Sierra Club *
The Trust for Public Land * The Wilderness Society**

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

July 6, 2011

Dear Mr. President:

As the debt limit talks enter a new and critical stage, we are writing to you on behalf of our millions of members and supporters, to emphasize the need to include revenues in any debt limit agreement. A decision to deal with the deficit without raising significant additional revenues is quite simply a decision to dismember vital programs on which the public depends, including those that protect health and the environment and provide for conservation and recreation.

We understand that difficult decisions will need to be made to balance the budget in the coming years, and virtually all programs will have to make sacrifices to get us on a sounder fiscal footing. But the entire budget should not and must not be balanced solely through cuts in non-security, discretionary programs, which provide essential services and account for a relatively small share of overall federal spending. These programs are not the reason for the escalating national debt, and they are not the solution to it. If it is to be fair, reasonable, balanced and in the public interest, a debt limit agreement needs to address all spending – military as well as civilian, mandatory as well as discretionary – and revenues. Discretionary programs must not be consigned to a prolonged period of hollowing out through unrealistic long-term spending caps or by ignoring the primary sources of our national debt.

In the environmental area, the consequences of such an extended era of decay could include the decline of our national parks, the deterioration of water quality as sewage system and drinking water funds dry up, and dirtier air and water and less safe food as enforcement is throttled back. Far less severe cuts in earlier periods led to notable declines in the stewardship of our lands and wildlife as well as the quality of our environment.

There is simply no reason to offer Americans such a bleak future. Revenue measures could start with eliminating tax expenditures that harm the environment and run counter to the public interest, such as the subsidies now provided to the oil and gas industry – exceedingly wealthy enterprises that require no public incentives to continue to drill.

We know that reaching an agreement on the debt limit will be an arduous task, but we also understand how much is at stake. A debt agreement must not only lead to a balanced budget, but

also to a balanced policy that continues to protect our air, water, lands, wildlife and food. No agreement that excludes revenues can meet that criterion.

Sincerely,

William P. Lee, Vice President of Government Relations
American Rivers

Kieran Suckling, Executive Director
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Michael Brune, Executive Director
Sierra Club

Will Rogers, President and Chief Executive Officer
The Trust for Public Land

William H. Meadows, President
The Wilderness Society

cc: The Honorable Harry Reid

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
The Honorable John Boehner
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi