



**Written Statement of
Peter T. Jenkins, Director of International Conservation
Defenders of Wildlife
1130 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036
(202) 772-0293 – Pjenkins @defenders.org**

**LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON H.R. 1497
To amend the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 to extend its protections to plants illegally harvested
outside of the United States, and for other purposes (Legal Timber Protection Act)**

**BEFORE THE
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans
Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives
October 16th, 2007**

Madam Chairwoman and members of the subcommittee, I am writing on behalf of Defenders of Wildlife (“Defenders”) regarding the legislative hearing on H.R. 1497 to amend the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 to extend its protections to plants illegally harvested outside of the United States, and for other purposes (“Legal Timber Protection Act”). Defenders endorses the testimony provided by Alexander von Bismarck of the Environmental Investigation Agency (“EIA”) on the above Act, and would like to present additional background information to support this position.

Defenders of Wildlife was founded in 1947 and is a national non-profit organization with more than 500,000 members and supporters dedicated to the protection and restoration of all wild animals and plants in their natural communities. The major cause for the current decline in biodiversity is habitat loss and fragmentation. Defenders is working to protect important habitats and keystone species, with the understanding that the protection of these species is vital to the health and stability of the greater ecosystem and other species.

Global forests represent critical habitats for a variety of species, and are under threat worldwide by unsustainable harvesting and illegal logging. Curbing the trade in illegally sourced wood and wood products is vital in protecting species that rely on intact and unfragmented forest habitat.

Wildlife are affected by illegal logging primarily through the loss and fragmentation of habitat, but also through a subsequent rise in illegal hunting and trade in meat products, through increased human-wildlife conflict, and by the heightened risk of emerging diseases transferred between humans and wildlife. On a broader level, illegal logging affects people and wildlife worldwide through the loss of ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and the regulation of climate and rainfall. As documented in the Stern Report in 2006, deforestation causes 24% of global carbon

dioxide emissions and 18% of global greenhouse gas emissions, amounting to more emissions than all transport worldwide.

The following are examples of species under threat largely because of deforestation. These species would benefit directly from increased protection through the passing of H.R. 1497:

Borneo and Sumatra—Home of the Orangutan:

Orangutans require a large home range. Bornean forests generally support no more than one to three orangutans per square kilometer, and Sumatran forests at most six or seven. Indonesia is undergoing some of the most rapid deforestation in the world, and is likely to lose all of its primary forest by the year 2012. By 2022, Sumatra and Borneo are likely to lose 98% of their remaining forest. A report published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2007 declared a state of emergency for the orangutan, predicting the species to go extinct within the next 20 years. Approximately 80% of timber exported from Indonesia is believed to be illegally sourced.

The Congo Basin—Apes, Bushmeat and Emerging Diseases:

The Congo Basin constitutes the world's second largest forest, and is home to a rich diversity of plants, animals, and indigenous peoples. Due to poor local legislation and law enforcement and often backed by international financial institutions and foreign-owned banks, illegal logging remains a large problem. In addition to the obvious problems associated with habitat loss and fragmentation, the illegal timber trade in this region is also associated with the illegal trade in wild meat, or bushmeat, including gorillas and chimpanzees, and other protected species. This carries not only risk of extinction for local ape populations, but also poses a serious disease risk to the local human population, as documented by repeated outbreaks of the Ebola virus and other zoonotic diseases associated with the handling and consumption of bushmeat.

Russia's Far East—Habitat of the Amur Leopard and Siberian Tiger:

Illegal logging does not merely affect tropical species. In the Russian Far East, approximately half of all timber harvested is done so illegally, and contributes to lasting corruption within state forest management and the timber industry. The Amur leopard is the rarest felid species on earth, with only 25-34 individuals currently remaining in the wild. Though also critically endangered, the Siberian tiger fares slightly better with up to 520 remaining individuals in the wild. A report by the World Wildlife Fund in 2002 linked the future risk of extinction for the Amur leopard and the Siberian tiger to illegal logging.

Amazon Basin—Mahogany:

Illegal logging of mahogany is not only detrimental to the survival of the species and to the ecosystem at large; it also constitutes a grave threat for several indigenous peoples that have been living in chosen isolation in the Peruvian Amazon, through forced labor in indentured servitude, exposure of novel diseases, and direct violent conflict with representatives of the illegal logging industry. In 2005, 83% of all mahogany exporters from Peru were involved in the trade in illegally-sourced mahogany, in direct violation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES). Mahogany represents a species that is difficult to regenerate.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated above and in the EIA testimony, we endorse an amendment to the Lacey Act as proposed in H.R. 1497.