

20 January 2010

Bobby Scott
Chairman
House Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security
1201 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Scott:

We are writing in support of the report recently released by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), *Giant Constrictors: Biological and Management Profiles and an Establishment Risk Assessment for Nine Large Species of Pythons, Anacondas, and the Boa Constrictor*. The undersigned scientists believe that this report is based on peer-reviewed and transparent science and the risk assessment model used in the report is reasonable and appropriate, notwithstanding claims made in a recent letter submitted to this subcommittee by the U.S. Association of Reptile Keepers (USARK) challenging the validity of the USGS report.

The USGS study is unbiased and was not developed to support a predetermined policy, as suggested by the USARK letter. The USGS report was written with the intention of informing future U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service management strategies, not to respond to or support policies that had already been developed or established. The report was requested by the agencies and specifically aimed to collect information on the risks of giant constrictor snakes on ecosystems, wildlife, and human safety.

USGS peer-reviews all work that receives agency funding. This particular report was reviewed by 20 experts associated with U.S. and international universities, agencies, and organizations. In fact, 18 of the 20 reviewers who scrutinized this study were from institutions or agencies outside the USGS, contrary to USARK's allegations that the report is not externally peer-reviewed.

While we understand the value of scrutinizing research models, results, and conclusions, we believe USARK's unsubstantiated allegations are unprofessional and undermine important efforts being made by the scientific community.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our professional perspectives. We hope that in considering legislation to regulate large constrictor snakes you will use the USGS report without reservation.

Sincerely,

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