To Whom It May Concern:

I've been asked to write an endorsement of the Health & Ecosystems: Analysis of Linkages (HEAL) initiative. I have spent my career focused on the relationships between poverty, food security, health and the environment. I must commend the Wildlife Conservation Society and Dr. Osofsky for continuing to push on the leading edge of efforts aimed at reconciling the needs of a growing human population with the need to secure a future for wild nature, for the diversity of ecosystems that underpin our very survival as a species. Our economies, our climate, our food systems and our health all tie directly and indirectly back to the state of the natural world. The HEAL approach, focused on understanding and quantifying the public health values of ecosystem integrity, is long overdue. HEAL is the type of policy-relevant, interdisciplinary initiative that may well help us get to a societal 'tipping point' in terms of how we think about and manage the world around us.

Over the course of my public health career, from my time at ODA to my role at DFID, to my work with WHO and more recently with my UN roles for pandemic influenza preparedness as well as for mitigation of the global food security crisis, I have seen over and over again that we often find ourselves treating "symptoms and not the primary disease," that we are often working too far downstream in the lifespan of a problem- because we have not as a community been able to integratively address the foundational causes of many of the development challenges we face. Could we develop more cost-effective, equitable 'upstream' approaches to global challenges such as childhood diarrhea, malnutrition, and emerging infectious diseases, for example? I believe we can, but it will take a new mindset, an earnestly sustainable, resilient approach that brings environmental, health and social science disciplines together to more holistically understand the drivers of today's crises, so that tomorrow there will ideally be fewer of them.
It's clear to me that Health & Ecosystems: Analysis of Linkages is about using the best available science to expedite the kind of holistic, intersectoral policy thinking- and action- that is long overdue in our increasingly complex world. I urge those interested in addressing both global environmental and public health problems to support the HEAL consortium so that this vitally important 'One Health' work can get fully underway as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

David Nabarro