



July 13, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso, MD
Chairman, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso:

The undersigned organizations wish to express our support for the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018. According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, “the purpose of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is to protect and recover imperiled species and the ecosystems upon which they depend.” While a laudable and important goal, data indicates that fewer than 2% of the species listed under the Act since its inception have been successfully recovered. What was originally intended to be a wildlife recovery program has instead become a toolbox of litigation-ready opportunities for agenda-driven outside groups and individuals to exert control over proper policy making. Policies and mandates, often crafted by legal settlement rather than scientific data, have become the norm.

This top-down approach is a key contributor to the ESA’s abysmal success rate and its burden on local communities and land managers. As a result, groups across the political and conservation spectrum have called for updates to the ESA aimed at solving these problems. The gold standard for tackling this challenge has been the Western Governors Association’s bipartisan resolution – passed after years of collaboration with impacted stakeholders including local governments, environmental interest groups, and industry leaders – calling on Congress to make the ESA work for the 21st Century by putting more decision-making authority in the hands of the locals who interact with species most frequently.

The Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018 takes a critical step forward in modernizing the ESA by doing just that – giving more power to state and local governments to make decisions based on their area’s unique landscapes, individual needs, and conditions on the ground. This emphasis on local involvement ensures that those with firsthand knowledge of a habitat area can provide critical insights to the creation of recovery plans. Furthermore, locals are the best equipped to predict, assess, and quickly react to changing conditions for the benefit of species.

As the nation’s largest non-governmental bloc of land managers, ranchers take great pride in their integral role in species conservation and recovery. For generations, livestock producers have been dedicated to improving the health of landscapes where wildlife call home. Over the years, they have grown frustrated by the lack of commonsense ESA implementation and being put on the sidelines while those decisions are made. This legislation will help bring them back to the table to craft recovery plans that are workable and produce favorable results.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to finding workable solutions that bring the ESA into the 21st Century. We urge swift passage of the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018.

Sincerely,

National Cattlemen's Beef Association
Public Lands Council
Alabama Cattlemen's Association
Arizona Cattlemen's Association
Arkansas Cattlemen's Association
California Cattlemen's Association
Florida Cattlemen's Association
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.
Idaho Cattle Association
Indiana Beef Cattle Association
Kansas Livestock Association
Louisiana Cattlemen's Association
Michigan Cattlemen's Association
Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association
Mississippi Cattlemen's Association
Missouri Cattlemen's Association
Montana Stockgrowers Association
Nevada Cattlemen's Association
New Mexico Cattle Growers Association
Ohio Cattlemen's Association
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
South Carolina Cattlemen's Association
South Dakota Cattlemen's Association
Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers
Utah Cattlemen's Association
Wyoming Stock Growers Association