

Remarks of Matthew H. Mead, Governor of Wyoming  
Before the  
United States Senate  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water, and Wildlife

**Endangered Species Act Reform**

Chairman Sullivan, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and Members of the United States Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water and Wildlife, my friend and fellow governor, Governor Steve Bullock and I thank you for the opportunity to give remarks. We are honored to be here. We are happy to answer questions you may have.

I am Governor of the State of Wyoming. I was re-elected in November 2014 and am now serving my second term.

At the end of June, I was elected Chairman of the Western Governors' Association (WGA), which represents governors of 19 western states and 3 US-flag islands. I will serve as Chairman for one year. Governor Bullock serves as WGA Vice Chairman. The WGA has provided written remarks today on behalf of Western Governors as a group and these remarks are ancillary to that submission.

The West is a vast, varied place and each western state has its own specific concerns and viewpoints. Yet western states share challenges, goals, and opportunities regarding natural resources – for example, in the areas of water, wildlife, forests and energy development. Western Governors, through the WGA, seek areas of commonality where we can reach consensus to find solutions, act cooperatively, and benefit all our states. The WGA is a dynamic organization.

Each incoming WGA Chairman designates an initiative – an area of focus during that governor's tenure as Chairman. Recent initiatives, prior to mine, have included drought and getting outdoors in the West. My initiative is the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and it is aimed at reforming and improving the ESA. There is much room for improvement and in the coming year, after the WGA has studied the ESA and received public input, Western Governors will be able to make recommendations to improve it.

By any measure, the ESA is broken. Since 1973, less than one percent of the 2,280 species listed has been removed from the list. Either listing has not led to recovery or recovered species have been kept on the list.

The gray wolf is an example of a recovered species that remains on the endangered species list, diverts valuable resources from other wildlife work and causes unnecessary

economic burdens that impact states, citizens and businesses. The grizzly bear is another example of a recovered species that remains on the list.

Last week the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decided not to list the Greater sage-grouse. This shows a success and reflects a bright future for the Greater sage-grouse in Wyoming and in the West. Wyoming had been a leader in the conservation effort over the past decade. The goal is not listing although listing upon listing does seem to be the goal of some environmental groups.

My Chairman's initiative is designed to foster a regional dialogue in which states, federal agencies, and interested others can share case studies and best practices in species conservation. The initiative will involve an examination of the ESA to determine what is working and what is not working. It will consider means by which states resources – including state data, science, analyses and manpower – can be better leveraged for species conservation.

The initiative will be a bipartisan regional conversation. Governors are particularly well-suited to exert leadership in this area, given state obligations to manage wildlife and western states' outstanding conservation record. We care about wildlife in the West, manage it well, and need a system that works.

We stand ready to work with the Committee and Congress, with federal agencies and others to reform and improve the ESA. Thank you again for your time today.