

August 15, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Environment and Public Works Committee
U.S. Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
Environment and Public Works Committee
U.S. Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

I am writing on behalf of the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association, the National Stone Sand and Gravel Association and the Portland Cement Association to share our support for your efforts to modernize the Endangered Species Act (ESA) with the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018. We commend your thoughtful efforts to craft legislation that balances species protection with encouraging economic growth.

The stone, cement and concrete-related associations directly and indirectly employ hundreds of thousands of workers and contribute more than \$100 billion to the economy annually. Our member Associations represent businesses and talented workers in every state and congressional district. Stone, sand and gravel are raw materials found in every home, building, road, bridge and public works. These materials are needed to create portland cement, the fundamental ingredient in concrete.

The ESA is a well-intentioned effort by Congress to protect and recover our nation's native species from extinction. Our members support efforts to protect those species based on science with a balanced consideration for the mitigation measures. We believe the draft legislation would make necessary improvements to the law that would benefit species, manufacturers, and the public. Mainly, this legislation will improve the federal-state partnership that has been the cornerstone to many of our environmental laws with enhanced coordination, information sharing, and input from the Governors. Further, our members support measures contained within the bill that seek to ensure federal agencies list a species with the best available scientific data that has been independently peer reviewed or field tested. Lastly, the bill will provide federal agencies the power to prioritize listing petitions, reviews, and determinations.

Congress and the Administration have solicited ways to rebuild our infrastructure with scarce taxpayer resources. This legislation is one solution to do more with less. Federal permitting, particularly for the ESA, raises infrastructure costs needlessly. One jarring example is the construction of an interchange connecting Loop 1604 and State highway 151 in San Antonio, Texas. At the site, the Braken Bat Cave Meshweaver was discovered, an eyeless spider listed as endangered in 2000. The discovery of the spider raised construction costs from \$15.1 million to \$44 million to change the project from an underpass to an overpass. This legislation will set clear recovery goals and habitat objectives to ensure a listing is pragmatic, which was missing in the case of this spider. At a time when the federal government and states are having difficulty paying for necessary infrastructure maintenance and expansions, each dollar should be responsibly

spent. Making the common sense improvements to the ESA found within the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018 will help towards the more efficient use of funding and financing.

The undersigned organizations appreciate the opportunity to share our members' perspectives on legislation reforming the ESA. We stand ready to assist you while changes are still permitted to the underlying legislation so that modernizing the program may move forward. If there are any questions regarding these comments or if you would like additional information, please contact Rachel Derby at (202) 719-1986 or rderby@cement.org.

Sincerely,

National Ready Mixed Concrete Association
National Stone Sand and Gravel Association
Portland Cement Association