



# ARIZONA CATTLE GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

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AGGA

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

July 3, 2018

Dear Chairman Barrasso:

The Arizona Cattle Growers' Association (ACGA) would like to express our support for the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018. ACGA is the only state organization dedicated solely to representing Arizona's beef producing families, most of which hold federal grazing permits and operate on federal lands.

According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, "the purpose of the 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. Although there are currently 64 plant and animal species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA in Arizona, one species which weighs heavily on the minds and wallets of Arizona's ranchers is the Mexican grey wolf. Forty-two years after being listed as endangered and 20 years into a federal recovery plan, the government has already spent millions of dollars with little to show for their efforts. This broken program is marred by a long-standing tradition of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's failure to work with individuals who live on and manage the land. The Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018 lay out critical species-specific recovery teams designating the states as the lead on species recovery. The Arizona Game and Fish Department has already proven far more adept at working to manage wolves and the landscape while also collaborating with those who live and work on the ground. It is time that the broken process laid out by the ESA be amended and the control of our state's species be placed in the hands of locals who have proven track records in achieving successful management of wildlife populations.

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.

ACGA appreciates the opportunity to provide input on behalf of our members. We urge swift passage of the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Whetten", with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Jay Whetten  
President