



July 26, 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 Florida Cattlemen's Association would like to express our support for the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018. As an organization we represent 5000 ranching families with 1.7million head of beef cattle being managed on approximately 6.5 million acres in Florida of which is in excess of 97 percent is private land.

Our state is ranked third highest with 137 listed species, in fact upon review of the USFWS information 5 of the top ten states are in the Southeastern United States.

We have a great deal of interest in this region of the country for improvement and modernization of the Endangered Species Act.

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. As a result, policies and mandates, often crafted by legal settlement rather than scientific data, have become the norm.

Florida cattlemen are no strangers to dealing with endangered species. The Florida panther, an apex predator found across the state, is known to prey upon newborn calves. In some cases, cattle producers have suffered calf-crop losses as high as 20% when cats have crossed onto their private property, and unfortunately the livestock indemnity program that is in place to compensate livestock owners for their losses is extremely limited. I am aware of only one single claim being awarded for partial loss due to the predation of panthers. I also feel compelled to mention that many operations are not eligible to file claims because of restrictions in the LIP program administered through the United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency.

Because the panther is federally listed as endangered, landowners are forced to decide between complying

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with inflexible federal laws and operating a viable business to support their families.

The Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018 give 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 allows states such as Florida to consider our unique situations and

develop sound recovery plans. Furthermore, locals are the best equipped to predict, assess, and quickly react to changing conditions for the benefit of species.

The Florida Cattlemen's Association appreciates the opportunity to provide our input on behalf of our members. We respectfully request hasty passage of the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018.

Sincerely,

**Jim Handley**  
Executive Vice President  
Florida Cattlemen's Association

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