

Senator **Eli D. Bebout**

Senate President

Management Council & Senate Rules & Procedures, Chairman

Wyoming Senate **Senate District 26**

P.O. Box 112 • Riverton, WY 82501



business (307) 856-0375

email Eli.Bebout@wyoleg.gov

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The Honorable John Barrasso
United States Senate
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018 (Discussion Draft)

Dear Senator Barrasso:

As President of the Wyoming Senate, I am writing to express my strong support for the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018 that you have proposed. The bill would offer meaningful improvements and solutions to challenging issues surrounding the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

When Congress enacted the ESA in 1973, it did so intending for states to have a strong role in cooperatively implementing the ESA with the federal government. Over time, that cooperative role has eroded through regulatory interpretations and statutory amendments. The proposed bill will solidify and improve the role states play in considering whether to list threatened species. I support the proposed bill requiring the Secretary of the Interior to afford "greater weight" to comments submitted by states than comments received from any other person or entity, and I support the enhanced ability of states to consult regarding land acquisitions, experimental populations, and settlements and to offer feedback on the performance of Fish and Wildlife Service employees within each state. I also support the provisions that would delay judicial review of determinations to delist species until the monitoring period for that species has ended. This will allow states to focus on implementing their management plans and for those plans to be evaluated for success.

In addition, I agree with the use of recovery teams that impacted states can propose to establish, and that will include members of relevant state and local land and wildlife agencies. I also support the concept of limiting the number of federal representatives from exceeding the number of local and state representatives. For species that do not have recovery plans, it is imperative that states are empowered (as they are in the discussion

draft) to lead and implement recovery efforts. Doing so will reduce the Department of Interior's workload and better utilize local expertise in recovery efforts.

Ultimately, this proposed bill will allow states to organize efforts and implement plans like Wyoming's greater sage grouse implementation. Facing a possible listing, state and local leaders, industry representatives, wildlife and conservation groups, and scientists collaborated with each other and with the federal government to develop a plan that would avoid the need to list the sage grouse. Those efforts resulted in core area strategy that prioritizes conservation in some areas and development in others and obviated the need to list the sage grouse based on a reasonable expectation of success of that strategy. The proposed bill will afford states a robust array of options to manage species that are listed or are proposed to be listed.

I know that any congressional effort to amend the ESA will be complicated and potentially divisive, and it will elicit diverse opinions from all sides. I sincerely appreciate your work on this discussion draft and the collaborative nature you have taken to draft this proposed bill. I would welcome the opportunity to comment further on the proposed bill as it is introduced and considered in Congress. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance as the proposed bill progresses.

Sincerely,



Senator Eli Bebout
President
State of Wyoming Senate