



COLORADO

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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October 1, 2018

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

Re: Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018

Dear Senator Barrasso:

The Board of Mesa County Commissioners ("Board") is in strong support of the *Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018*.

With less than 2 percent recovery of the total listed species (approximately 2,100) under federal protection, the enactment of the Endangered Species Act has failed to meet intended recovery for imperiled species. Furthermore, the stringent and overregulated timelines and socioeconomic controls continue to impact communities negatively. The much-needed proposed amendments modernize the administration of the Act and achieve a quicker recovery for listed species.

Our Board strongly supports the amendments because they aim to protect threatened and endangered species while working with stakeholders, including local governments, to craft solutions that would benefit rural counties with distressed economies, like Mesa County. Locally developed solutions give species the best chance for recovery while taking into account the needs of communities.

The Board would like to offer the following comments for your consideration:

- I. **Involvement of State and Local Governments:** The Board appreciates your bipartisan work with the Western Governors Association and believes it is imperative to include input from state and local governments when making decisions regarding species protection. A team recovery approach that includes state and local jurisdictions is a common sense method. More importantly, the Board strongly supports the requirement for a well-vetted species recovery plan with identified, quantifiable goals as a component of any listing decision.
- II. **Threatened vs. Endangered:** The Board urges the Committee to refine the Act to acknowledge there should be a graduated regulatory difference between the listing for species that are threatened and those that are endangered. Protections should be identified on a per species basis rather than in an all-encompassing vacuum.
- III. **Best Available Science and Transparency Required:** One significant change needed for successful administration of the Act is a return to requiring reproducible, best available science for all listing decisions. It is imperative that the decision to list a species that will likely have an enormous socioeconomic impact on a community and its citizens be based on sound, reproducible science rather than a less informed judgment call. Further, the Board urges the

Committee to refine the bill to require compliance with the Information Quality Act by explicitly requiring that all data, metadata, computer code, input parameters and assumptions used in predictive models be fully documented and made available in a publicly accessible archive. This would ensure reproducibility, as well as facilitate independent review and analysis.

- IV. **Periodic Check-in Required:** We urge the Committee to consider a requirement that the Services periodically review (e.g., every five years) and test the reliability of population models and threat predictions against empirical data, before a listing decision on candidate species and during 5-year status reviews of currently listed species.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to this legislative measure moving forward to benefit our communities and wildlife.

Sincerely,



John Justman, Chair
Board of County Commissioners



Rose Pugliese
Commissioner



Scott McInnis
Commissioner

cc: Frank Whidden, County Administrator
Patrick Coleman, County Attorney
Peter Baier, Administrator of Operations for Public Works