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July 3, 2018

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

RE: Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018

Dear Chairman Barrasso,

Imperial Irrigation District writes in support of the "Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018." This bill proposes changes that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the ESA by way of increased transparency, improved state-federal consultation and resource prioritization.

As an irrigation district, it is vital to provide affordable and reliable water supplies as this affords economic, environmental and water security benefits. As we move toward balancing the needs of irrigated agriculture with conservation, it is important to recognize the ESA, although well intended, has resulted in increased litigation and fragmented interpretation by federal agencies. As a result, rural communities such as those in Imperial County have experienced unintended effects.

The proposed amendments to the ESA include improvements that will strengthen conservation decision-making. A series of workshops led by the Western Governors' Association, in consultation with the Family Farm Alliance, have led to identification of best practices in species management, increased state participation and improved methods to implement the ESA. Each of the ideas identified as a result of the workshops are reflected in the proposed bill. By engaging local government, landowners and stakeholders, we can encourage improved conservation under ESA Title II.

Making practical improvements to the ESA that increase transparency and optimize conservation through resource prioritization will enhance conservation. For these reasons, we support the draft "Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018."

Sincerely,



Antonio Ortega
Governmental Affairs Officer

cc: The Honorable Juan Vargas
The Honorable Raul Ruiz