



National Cattlemen's
Beef Association



December 23, 2019

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

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Chairman Barrasso, and Ranking Member Carper:

The Public Lands Council (PLC), National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), and American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) support S. 3051, the America's Conservation Enhancement (ACE) Act. PLC is the only national organization dedicated solely to representing the roughly 22,000 ranchers who hold federal grazing permits and operate on federal lands. NCBA is the beef industry's largest and oldest national marketing and trade association, representing American cattlemen and women who provide much of the nation's supply of food and own or manage a large portion of America's private property. ASI is a federation of forty-five state sheep associations representing a diverse industry since 1865 and has been the national trade organization representing the interests of the 100,000 sheep ranchers located throughout the country who produce America's lamb and wool.

This legislation provides an array of benefits, not only to wildlife and the land but to the ranching families that work daily to conserve habitat, preserve open spaces, and maintain the land for future generations. Section 102 bolsters programs for livestock producers to be properly compensated for losses from federally protected species. Predators, both avian and mammalian, which are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), or Endangered Species Act inflict significant financial hardship on ranching families when they prey upon livestock herds. While the most financially viable solution for these small businesses is to avoid depredation altogether, adequate compensation should be afforded to producers when losses are incurred. Authorizing \$15 million in grants to existing indemnity and conflict-prevention programs is a significant step in the right direction.

The bill also allows for increased flexibility in the MBTA take permitting process. Black vultures (*Coragyps atratus*) and common ravens (*Corvus corax*) pose a particular threat during calving and lambing season. Oftentimes these avian predators will attack calves and lambs during parturition, killing the animal before the birthing process is complete. This represents a significant financial loss to the bottom line of ranching operations. By allowing greater flexibility in take permitting, livestock producers will be better able to protect their families' livelihoods from these airborne predators.

Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy, more commonly known as Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), is very concerning to ranchers—particularly those who operate on federal grazing allotments. This legislation represents a major step forward in addressing the issue of CWD in wild Cervidae nationwide. The proposed task force's leadership will be instrumental in determining the appropriate national response to stop the spread of CWD, ensure the pathology of this disease is adequately studied and understood, and share ideas between a broad array of wildlife management agencies.

PLC, NCBA, and ASI appreciate the opportunity to provide our input on behalf of our members – the nation's food and fiber producers. We urge passage of S. 3051, America's Conservation Enhancement Act.

Sincerely,

National Cattlemen's Beef Assn.

Public Lands Council

American Sheep Industry Assn.