



The Honorable John Barrasso, Chairman
Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

June 8, 2018

Dear Chairman Barrasso:

The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) would like to express our appreciation for your introduction of The Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018, a bill that would accomplish many of the recommendations found in the attached NASF Position Statement - Improving the Effectiveness of the Endangered Species Act and in the NASF Farm Bill Platform. NASF represents the heads of forestry agencies from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the US territories. Our focus is on promoting the protection and proper management of state-owned and privately-owned forests, but we are also regular collaborators in the management of federally-owned lands.

NASF continues to support the purposes of the Act originally adopted in 1973, we but have concerns as to the Act's effectiveness and some of its unintended consequences. Notably, when an endangered or threatened species listing places restrictive and/or financially difficult burdens on a landowner the end result could well be the disposal and conversion of that land to other uses. We feel that administration of the Act in the past has made many landowners, in fact, fearful that an endangered species may reside on their property. Hopefully, badly needed updates to this legislation could one day lead to landowners celebrating their ability to help a species at risk rather than dreading regulatory intervention.

We note a number of desirable amendments in the bill. Chief among those is expanding the role of states in all phases of administering the Act and giving clear guidance on the use of the best scientific and commercial data available. We also highly support the aim to simplify processes for entering into voluntary conservation agreements of all types, as well as clarifying the process and need for timeliness in any delisting. Broadening the role of interveners in legal actions will insure that all affected parties are fully heard. Providing direction on the need to prioritize agency activities around listing petitions and their subsequent requirements for review and determination is a needed change given the number of petitions that are being promulgated.

We would suggest that any changes brought on by the Act that are incumbent upon the US Fish and Wildlife Service to implement, be equally applicable to the National Marine Fisheries Service. The management of anadromous fisheries can have significant impacts on the management of forests in several states.

Again, thank you for the hard work that went into developing this important piece of legislation. NASF stands ready to assist you in this effort.

George Geissler
Washington State Forester and
President, National Association of State Foresters

