



July 13, 2018

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

Dear Chairman Barrasso:

The American Exploration & Production Council (AXPC) proudly supports the Endangered Species Act (ESA) Amendments of 2018 discussion draft. We appreciate your thoughtful approach to modernizing the ESA and believe this draft legislation would help improve species conservation while providing much-needed regulatory certainty.

AXPC is a national trade association representing 33 of the largest independent oil and natural gas companies in the United States. Dedicated to safety, science and technological advancement, AXPC members strive to deliver affordable, reliable, domestic energy to consumers while positively impacting the economy and the communities in which we live and operate.

Our members are committed to proactively protecting and conserving threatened and endangered species and their habitat. Working closely with federal and state agencies, as well as with private landowners, AXPC members regularly participate in voluntary conservation measures that include providing funding for research and restoration efforts, setting aside acres for land conservation, and implementing practices and policies to avoid, minimize or mitigate habitat and species impacts. We firmly believe that with reasonable and balanced federal policy, safe and responsible energy production can co-exist with species conservation.

The discussion draft addresses several important issues that would help update the law for the 21st century and would improve its implementation and effectiveness and reflect contemporary conservation practices. We support the draft legislation's emphasis on species recovery, which would restore the original intent of the ESA. Requiring recovery goals and habitat objectives, along with the creation of recovery teams that include federal, state, and local wildlife management agencies, would help ensure that conservation efforts are working and that species can be appropriately downgraded or delisted in a timely manner once goals have been met.

We also fully support the increased focus on transparency, the enhanced role of the states in species management, and providing increased regulatory certainty for landowners and stakeholders who participate in conservation and recovery efforts. These measures would improve implementation of the ESA and would help ensure that local economies and communities are not adversely impacted by listing decisions.

The draft legislation makes important strides towards improving the ESA for the benefit of species, communities, and our economy. AXPC looks forward to working with you and your committee on this important effort and to providing additional comments and feedback as this draft legislation works its way through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "V. Bruce Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "V." and last name "Thompson" clearly distinguishable.

V. Bruce Thompson

President

American Exploration & Production Council

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