



CALIFORNIA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

EXECUTIVE OFFICES

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July 12, 2018

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

Dear Chairman Barrasso:

The California Farm Bureau Federation (Farm Bureau) expresses its support of the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018. The Farm Bureau is California's largest farm organization, comprised of 53 county Farm Bureaus currently representing nearly 40,000 members in 56 counties. The Farm Bureau strives to provide a reliable supply of food and fiber through responsible stewardship of California's resources.

As the ESA approaches its 50th anniversary, it is clear the act is not working as well as it should. The past several decades have shown that the ESA has not been an effective tool to recover species. Instead, it is often used as a regulatory weapon against agricultural production. Since 1973, only 2% of 2,300 species listed as "Threatened" or "Endangered" under the ESA have been recovered and delisted. The fact is the ESA has become much more effective in promoting conflict than promoting recovery.

Rural communities in California have been significantly impacted by ESA conflict for decades. Beginning in the 1990s, timber wars over the Northern Spotted Owl brought extraordinary changes to rural communities dependent upon forest management. Despite timber harvest being a fraction of what it once was, the Northern Spotted Owl is in worse shape than ever due to natural competition from another owl species, not from timber harvest activities. Additionally, conflicts over salmon and smelt species have brought tremendous problems to water management throughout the state including the Klamath Basin and the Central Valley of California. After two decades of ESA based conflict, California's water deliveries have been significantly reduced with lasting impacts to farmers and rural communities.

For the benefit of both species and people, this must change. The ESA can and should be modernized in a way that will improve the efficacy and efficiency of the ESA without diminishing essential protections for imperiled wildlife. The Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018 are such an approach.

While there is broad recognition that the ESA could function better, figuring out how to make that happen is extremely difficult. Thankfully, the Western Governors' Association took on this task through an extensive and inclusive process resulting in bipartisan policy recommendations to modernize the ESA.

These recommendations, which we understand are the basis for the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018, were intentionally tailored to protect species more effectively and efficiently

without weakening the act itself. This foundation presents a rare opportunity to make meaningful changes based upon ideas discussed in an inclusive and nonpartisan process.

Fundamentally, the ESA needs to be less about conflict and more about species conservation. The Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018 would help accomplish this change by promoting transparency, enhancing engagement of impacted communities, and allowing for efficient allocation of limited resources.

A key lesson from the past several decades of conservation is that success depends upon the cooperation of local communities. The landowners where listed species exist must be part of the solution instead of the target of unproductive regulation. This requires ensuring the ESA provides opportunities for regulators and stakeholders to participate in collaborative conservation while minimizing the opportunities to expand conflict. The Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018 points us in that direction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jamie Johansson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Jamie Johansson
President