



TENNESSEE WILDLIFE RESOURCES AGENCY

ELLINGTON AGRICULTURAL CENTER
P. O. BOX 40747
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37204

August 8, 2018

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

Re: Endangered Species Act – Proposed 2018 Amendments

Dear Chairman Barrasso:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your efforts to improve implementation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Tennessee is one of the most biodiverse states in the nation. Currently, there are more than 325 species of fish, 89 mammals, 61 reptiles, 70 amphibians, and 340+ birds known to inhabit or migrate through Tennessee. The number of invertebrate species, many of which are endemic to Tennessee, is equally impressive with 256 land snails, 99 aquatic snails, 120+ mussels, 77 crayfish, and a multitude of insects. Tennessee supports and values the ESA as an important and effective tool for protecting and recovering species that are at risk of extinction.

The 2018 amendments that you propose to the ESA are reflective of and consistent with Tennessee's views on how Congress could improve the ESA. The amendments ensure more effective and consistent conservation and protection of species, ensure natural resource professionals make ESA decisions, and incentivize private landowner participation in ESA implementation. The proposed changes also provide more opportunity for the Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency to utilize our expertise in ESA implementation to focus on management actions that will recover species to the point of no longer needing protections under the Act.

Your proposed amendments provide Tennessee with an increased role in ESA implementation, which we fully support. However, we also recognize that state and federal agencies will need more financial resources to successfully implement all of these proposed changes. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H.R. 4647) offers an opportunity for proactive, dedicated stateside funding unto such ends. We are hopeful that this legislation will continue to gain momentum.

Tennessee is supportive of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' letter to you dated July 16, 2018. We sincerely appreciate the opportunity afforded by your draft legislation for Tennessee to play an integral role in ESA implementation and to be treated as equal partners and leaders with the Federal government in species management and recovery. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue, please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide additional information or support.

Sincerely,

Ed Carter
Executive Director

The State of Tennessee

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