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July 13, 2018

Honorable John Barrasso, MD  
Chairman, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-6175

RE: Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018

Dear Senator Barrasso:

This letter is to offer my support for your draft bill entitled the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018. If passed, this bill would bring the focus of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) back to the original Congressional intent of species recovery, led by the scientists and managers who know best about such recovery. Over the past decade, at least, I believe that there has been too much focus on simply putting plant and animal species on a federal list where they languish for decades without affirmative action. In contrast, the Congressional record makes it clear that simply listing a species was not the point of the ESA; rather it was recovery. However, there has not been a strong direction towards that recovery that included deadlines to ensure that recovery is not a listing "after thought." Admittedly, much of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) actions over the past decade have been driven by litigation, but with this legislation, the focus on recovery will no longer be swallowed up by "higher priorities" such as pushing out listing decisions and paying attorney fees.

The other important portion of this legislation I would applaud is that the recovery teams will be led by those state agencies that are truly the experts "on-the-ground." Under your proposal, the recovery teams are locally led. I believe that the state agencies located where the threatened or endangered species live are certainly the best equipped and have the knowledge to lead the recovery programs and efforts. After all, the species we are discussing live in the habitats across the nation and there is no one more knowledgeable about those habitats than local managers. Washington, DC was not meant to be the driver for all activities. This clearly is a "win" for the species because their recovery can be guided by local efforts who are directly impacted by the decisions they make.

Again, I offer to you my support for the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018. If there is any assistance I can provide in this effort, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Karen Budd-Falen  
Budd-Falen Law Offices, LLC

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