



June 13, 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,

Thank you for your leadership and commitment in introducing the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018 to get this critical legislation introduced allowing states to take a more formal, active and cooperative role in all aspects of ESA implementation. I would like to extend the support of the Arizona Game and Fish Department (Department) as Arizona's state wildlife management authority for this important legislation that will bring the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in line with Congress' original intent.

State wildlife agencies have come a long way since the enactment of the ESA in 1973, and its last amendment and authorization in 1988. State agencies have grown from early implementation and now have enhanced staff, greater expertise, improved habitat management techniques, better science, stronger relationships with public and private land managers and now the political support to realize these authorities such as under Section 6.

Wildlife action plans have allowed states to identify species of greatest conservation need and outlining key actions needed to conserve them. These changes will provide states with more flexibility and allow the ESA to become less of a regulatory tool and establish a more effective pathway to conservation.

In Arizona, following the 1969 designation of Apache Trout as endangered, the Department joined with the White Mountain Apache Tribe, US Fish and Wildlife Service and USDA Forest Service form the Apache Trout Recovery Team. Early conservation work and the successful efforts of the recovery team led to the downlisting of Apache trout in 1975 from endangered to threatened. Simultaneously, a special rule under the Endangered Species Act was adopted, allowing limited fishing of pure Apache trout in specific areas, bringing valuable angler support for the conservation of this species. To date, no fish species has been successfully recovered and removed from the endangered species list. After decades of cooperative protection and restoration efforts by the Apache Trout Recovery Team; anglers; and non-profit organizations, Apache Trout are fast approaching the recovery goal of 30 self-sustaining populations in their historic range.

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The Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018 has addressed the key provisions and concerns of the Department and I am confident this legislation will allow all state wildlife agencies to better undertake conservation activities with our local and federal partners that will prevent species listings, help recover listed species and allocate the resources needed to save threatened and endangered species. The Department stands ready to provide any assistance your office may need to ensure its passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ty Gray", is written over the printed name and title.

Ty Gray
Director