

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

August 1, 2018

Dear Chairman Barrasso:

We would like to express our support for the Endangered Species Act (ESA) Amendments of 2018.

Here in Florida, we have a great deal of interest for improvement and modernization of the ESA. In a ranking of listed species in each state, ours is ranked third highest with a total of 137 listed species. Upon review of USFWS information, five of the top ten states are in the Southeastern United States, Agriculturist in this part of the country have dealt with the complexities of staying in compliance with ESA for many years. Individuals involved in agriculture are often owners and/or land managers of large tracts of private property. It is on these properties that many listed species thrive, however since enactment of the ESA those providing the most habitat have had to bear the brunt of severe land and resource restrictions as well as countless lawsuits brought by environmental extremists and funded by taxpayer dollars.

According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, “the purpose of the ESA is to protect and recover imperiled species and the ecosystems upon which they depend.” While a laudable and important goal, data indicates that fewer than 2% of the species listed under the Act since its inception have been successfully recovered. What was originally intended to be a wildlife recovery program has instead become a toolbox of litigation-ready opportunities for agenda-driven outside groups and individuals to exert control over proper policy making. As a result, policies and mandates, often crafted by legal settlement rather than scientific data, have become the norm.

The Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018 give more power to state and local governments to make decisions based on their area’s unique landscapes, individual needs, and conditions on the ground. This emphasis on local involvement allows states such as Florida to consider our unique situations and develop sound recovery plans. Furthermore, locals are the best equipped to predict, assess, and quickly react to changing conditions for the benefit of species.

The undersigned appreciate the opportunity to provide input on behalf of our members, and the Florida Agriculture Industry (with it’s over \$160 Billion Impact to the Florida Economy). We respectfully request hasty passage of the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018.

Sincerely,

Florida Cattlemen's Association
Florida Farm Bureau Federation
Southeast Milk Inc.
Florida Forestry Association
Florida Strawberry Association
Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association
Florida Citrus Mutual
Florida Nursery, Growers & Landscape Association