



National Association of Conservation Districts

July 16, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman, Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Barrasso:

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) represents America's 3,000 conservation districts and the 17,000 men and women who serve on their governing boards. Established under state law, conservation districts share a single mission: to work cooperatively with federal, state and other local resource management agencies, and private sector interest groups to provide technical, financial and other assistance to help landowners and operators apply conservation to the landscape at the local level.

We thank you and members of the committee for all the hard work that went into writing the Endangered Species Act (ESA) Amendments of 2018. The ESA must be modernized, and voluntary conservation plays an important role in achieving this. Scientific consensus and peer-reviewed data needs to be the driving force behind the conservation of species. NACD supports requiring the federal government to coordinate with all public and private partners, including conservation districts and tribal governments, involved in managing the critical habitat for listed species.

We commend you for your efforts to make the ESA more incentive-based through its emphasis on voluntary conservation agreements. NACD appreciates your committee's efforts to strengthen programs to encourage species recovery on private lands. The importance of codifying safe harbor agreements and candidate conservation agreements with assurances will directly benefit listed species and private landowners. We strongly believe that local decision-making, rather than litigation, is the best way to address environmental challenges and achieve positive results for our threatened species.

NACD appreciates your efforts to bring the ESA into the 21st century and the public discussion you are creating with this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brent Van Dyke".

Brent Van Dyke
President, NACD