



The *Minnesota State*
Cattlemen's Association
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7/11/2018

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

Dear Chairman Barrasso:

On behalf of the members of the Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association, we would like to express our support for the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018. Minnesota is home to 16,000 beef producers that generate \$4.9 billion dollars of economic activity in the state. Minnesota is also home to the largest population of grey wolves in the lower 48 states.

Prior to December of 2014, the state of Minnesota implemented a proven wolf population control program. A minimum population of 1,600 wolves had been set as the benchmark before re-enlisting them into the Endangered Species Act. The current estimated population jumped 25% in 2017 to nearly 3,000 wolves, well above this established number and proof that the grey wolf has recovered and further proof that the current ESA process need reforming.

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 we agree that this is an 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 an arena for outside groups and individuals to take control over proper policy making.

As a result, groups across the political and conservation spectrum have called for updates to the ESA aimed at solving these problems. The gold standard for tackling this challenge has been the Western Governors Association's bipartisan resolution – passed after years of collaboration with impacted stakeholders including local governments, environmental interest groups, and industry leaders – calling on Congress to make the ESA work for the 21st Century by putting more decision-making authority in the hands of the locals who interact with species most frequently.

The Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018 takes a critical step forward in modernizing the ESA by giving 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



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local involvement ensures that those with firsthand knowledge of a habitat area can provide critical insights to the creation of recovery plans. Furthermore, local governments are the best equipped to predict, assess, and quickly react to changing conditions for the benefit of species.

For generations, Minnesota farmers and ranchers have been dedicated to improving landscapes where livestock and wildlife can co-exist. These same farmers and ranchers have grown frustrated by the lack of commonsense ESA implementation, and having to deal with the consequences that result when outside interests who are not directly impacted the rapid growth of poorly managed wildlife populations push policy without sound science. Minnesota has demonstrated it can effectively administer recovery plans that are workable and produce favorable results.

The Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association thanks you for your time. As a group of cattlemen who are directly impacted by the failed ESA system, we urge swift passage of the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018.

Sincerely,

Krist Wollum
President, Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association