

**Congressional Western Caucus
Endangered Species Modernization Legislative Rollout Roundtable
Washington, DC
September 24, 2019
Comments of Big Game Forever**

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. My name is Bill Simmons and I am here representing Big Game Forever. Big Game Forever is a non-profit established to address threats to both wildlife populations and sportsmen's rights. The mission of Big Game Forever is to unite sportsmen in addressing the most pressing threats to wildlife, hunters' rights, and America's outdoor heritage. Big Game Forever has approximately 105,000 members, including members who are active hunters and conservationists in western states.

To promote its members' interests, Big Game Forever engages in legislative and regulatory strategies to address the most complex and challenging issues threatening wildlife populations and the North American Model of user-based conservation. Big Game Forever engages with state and local governments to protect diverse wildlife populations and participates in other activities—including reviewing and commenting on proposed federal rules such as this delisting—to further its organizational and associational interests.

Big Game Forever generally welcomes and supports the common-sense changes to the Endangered Species Act contained in the legislative package before us today. We believe that wildlife populations are best managed through collaboration with local stakeholders and with principal jurisdiction given to the States.

Moving beyond single-species focus, entire-ecosystem management by states allows for healthy populations of wildlife to thrive in modern environments. Correct application of proven management tools and techniques can develop, maintain and manage healthy ecosystems.

We applaud the great work of Chairman Paul Gosar and the Members of the Western Caucus. We would also like to publicly thank Congressman Rob Bishop for his leadership that has been vital to helping bring about greater state control over sage grouse and wolves.

Our nation's wildlife will benefit greatly by enacting the proposed legislative package before us that will lead to modernizing the ESA. As sportsmen, we understand the need to conserve and protect wildlife populations and their habitats, as well as improve and increase opportunities for the American public to enjoy hunting and recreational shooting opportunities on our lands. We have worked very closely with many Western States to help assure that they have the proper tools to manage their wildlife habitat and populations.

With adoption of these legislative proposals, Congress will provide modern mechanisms and processes to the Department of the Interior, the states and the public to improve the conservation status of species. It is the feeling of Big Game Forever that implementation of these common sense and strongly needed changes will streamline the ESA to allow finite resources to be focused where they will make the most difference – to conserve and recover species in greatest jeopardy to assure success.