



## *Arizona Farm Bureau Federation*

325 S. Higley Rd, Suite 210  
Gilbert, AZ 85296

September 24, 2019

The Honorable Paul Gosar  
Chairman, Congressional Western Caucus  
2056 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Gosar,

The Arizona Farm Bureau Federation has long supported updating and modernizing the Endangered Species Act (ESA). As farmers and ranchers, we understand better than most the importance of a robust ecosystem and thriving biodiversity. As such, we support the ESA's species recovery goal.

But today, Arizona is home to more than 60 threatened or endangered species. Because farming and ranching requires land use and management, the presence of these species impacts working lands. Farmers and ranchers want to do their part to help preserve listed species and have a vested interest in implementing sustainable conservation efforts on their land. However, the ESA in its current form fails to provide meaningful landowner incentives for species conservation and instead imposes regulatory burdens that result in land use restrictions. Furthermore, the protections for 1,661 domestic species come at a cost of \$1.47 billion annually (FY 2016). The ESA is a costly and cumbersome law with effects well beyond its original intent.

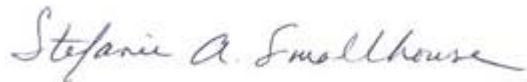
The ESA's costs are even less justifiable when one considers the lackluster results. After nearly four decades in existence, species recovery under the ESA has been dismal. In fact, only 3 percent of identified species have been successfully delisted in that time. These statistics indicate the critical need for meaningful reforms to the ESA, whose burdens far outweigh any real benefit.

Arizona Farm Bureau continues to be encouraged by the meaningful efforts being made to reform the ESA. This summer, through a fair and transparent process, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) made significant, fair, and unbiased reforms to the ESA's administrative rules. Thanks to the numerous comments and perspectives submitted and evaluated, the new rules ease the regulatory burdens on the American public while simultaneously ensuring the continued protection of plants and wildlife.

Though these rules were a huge step in the right direction, there is still a need for significant statutory changes to the ESA. We wholeheartedly support bills that seek to lessen burdens on land users, prevent listing decisions from dragging on into perpetuity, localize management decisions and authority, and ensure scientific accuracy in decision making. Western Caucus member bills including the LIST Act, PREDICTS Act, EMPOWERS Act, STORAGE Act, WHOLE Act, LOCAL Act, LAMP Act, the PETITION Act, the FISH Act, the Listing Reform Act and the SAVES Act, among others, are good pieces of legislation that look to make meaningful changes to the ESA. The Arizona Farm Bureau Federation supports the Western Caucus's efforts to move these and other positive measures forward, bringing us closer to the goal of an ESA that works for humans and animals alike.

Because our very livelihoods depend on the health of our environment, no one is a better conservationist than a farmer or rancher. We will continue to support the fight for an ESA that reflects that same rationale. We appreciate and support the reform efforts that seek to eliminate the ineffective burdens of the ESA

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stefanie A. Smallhouse".

Stefanie Smallhouse, President  
Arizona Farm Bureau Federation