

**“The Endangered Species Act (ESA) can and should be a tool to keep agricultural production in balance with the land. It should not be used to criminalize farming. Actions by the Administration and during this Congress are helping to restore that balance and make ESA more collaborative between farmers, the agencies, and conservation groups,”** Jamie Johansson, President of California Farm Bureau Federation and olive farmer.

9/24/19 Statement Jamie Johansson, President of California Farm Bureau Federation and olive farmer

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) can and should be a tool to keep agricultural production in balance with the land. It should not be used to criminalize farming. Actions by the Administration and during this Congress are helping to restore that balance and make the ESA more collaborative between farmers, the agencies, and conservation groups.

There are positive examples of collaboration on working lands during the last two administrations as illustrated by actions taken for the California Tiger Salamander and California Red Legged Frog. In both examples, Fish and Wildlife Service recognized that ranches provided the bulk of habitat for these species, acknowledging that continued ranching saves land from being sold for development or being converted to more profitable crops. To incentivize continued ranching, the Fish and Wildlife Service adopted rules allowing take that occurs during ongoing and routine ranching activities for these two species.

The recent revisions to the regulations adopted by the Fish and Wildlife Service rescind the blanket rule under section 4(d) of the ESA, which should provide more opportunities to recognize the benefits that private actions can have for threatened species. We look forward to increased recognition of the benefits that private efforts can have on threatened species.

The ESA can work for both people and species. We need more willingness from the agencies to make that happen. More efforts should be focused on conservation to prevent the need for listing species.

As an example, we’ve been working to conserve Tricolored Blackbirds for more than a decade. Tricolors have adapted to the loss of wetland habitat by shifting their nesting onto grain crops grown as silage on dairy farms. Farm Bureau has partnered with conservation and agricultural organizations (Audubon California, Western United Dairymen, and Dairy Cares) to obtain funding through NRCS’s Regional Conservation Partnership Program to pay farmers who agree to protect nesting Tricolor colonies for the lost value of their crop. This effort has been successful in protecting Tricolors. The 2019 nesting season saw colonies on 14 dairies protected with an estimate of over 170,000 birds. This successful conservation effort was part of FWS’s recent decision not to list Tricolors under the ESA.

We believe voluntary partnerships with funding assistance should be the focus for successful species conservation efforts.