



NATIONAL ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT
REFORM COALITION

1050 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW, 6th Floor
Washington, DC 20007
tel. 202.333.7481 fax 202.338.2416
www.nesarc.org

**STATEMENT OF JORDAN A. SMITH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NATIONAL ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT REFORM COALITION**

“Western Caucus Endangered Species Act Member and Stakeholder Roundtable”

September 24, 2019

Good Afternoon Representative Gosar and Members of the Western Caucus.

My name is Jordan Smith, and I serve as Executive Director of the National Endangered Species Act Reform Coalition, known by many as NESARC. On behalf of our Coalition, I am here today to commend the members of the Caucus for developing this important package of legislative improvements to the Endangered Species Act. These bills speak directly to the longstanding need to address problems with the ESA, a law that has not been substantively updated in over three decades.

NESARC is the country’s oldest broad-based, national coalition dedicated solely to achieving improvements to the ESA and its implementation. Our membership includes agricultural interests, cities and counties, conservationists, electric utilities, energy producers, farmers, forest product companies, home builders, oil and gas companies, ranchers, realtors, water and irrigation districts, and other businesses and individuals throughout the United States. Our membership represents real people -- private landowners, small businesses owners and many others who care about the well-being of communities in the West and throughout the nation.

NESARC and its members are committed to promoting effective and balanced legislative and administrative improvements to the ESA that support the protection of fish, wildlife, and plant populations as well as responsible land, water, and resource management.

The bills unveiled today would make significant improvements to the ESA that are critical to the success of the law’s intent -- to protect and recover imperiled species and the ecosystems upon which they depend.

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NESARC Statement to Western Caucus
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These bills are consistent with many of NESARC's underlying principles.

- They promote and encourage pre-listing voluntary conservation efforts by creating new avenues for States, local governments, and private property owners to proactively work to protect species before the ESA is invoked.
- They recognize and better integrate State and local governmental programs.
- They leverage modern data gathering and analytical tools that increase the accuracy and quality of science considered. Today's science and best practices for species conservation simply were not available when the statute was crafted in 1973 or last authorized in 1988.
- They codify important regulatory revisions to ESA Sections 4 and 7 in order to address uncertainty and lack of predictability in listing, critical habitat designation, and consultation processes under the law.
- And, they improve the ESA recovery planning process by requiring meaningful and enforceable delisting criteria, streamlining the downlisting and delisting process, and ensure that species can be removed from the list when recovery is achieved.

We have learned many lessons since the ESA was enacted over 45 years ago, and we need to make sure that this important law recognizes, accommodates and encourages innovative and proactive efforts by private property owners, States and local governments to recover species.

NESARC and its members thank the Western Caucus for its leadership in pursuing these critical improvements to the ESA and its implementation, and look forward to working with the bill sponsors and other supporters of these measures as they move through the legislative process.

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