



The Honorable Pete Ricketts
Chair
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, and Water
Senate Committee on Environment and Public
Works
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Adam Schiff
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, and Water
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Dear Chair Ricketts, Ranking Member Schiff, and members of the subcommittee,

The Wildlife Society (TWS) represents professional wildlife scientists and managers dedicated to advancing science-based conservation, including the effective implementation of the Endangered Species Act. We offer a practitioner-informed perspective on this foundational environmental legislation. Effective ESA implementation depends on rigorous science, skilled wildlife professionals, and collaboration across public and private sectors. Protecting habitats, responsibly using new technologies, and ensuring adequate staffing are essential to recovering endangered and at-risk species while safeguarding the public trust.

We have provided key points as well as questions we believe are important to ask during the hearing

1. Decisions under the ESA must be transparent and based on rigorous analyses of the best available scientific data, considering the weight of evidence available, including data provided by states and tribes. Species are recovered in landscapes that are constantly changing due to shifts in climatic and anthropogenic variables. Understanding how habitat and conditions may change and impact species recovery is an important part of rigorous analyses that promote sound conservation investments. Economic considerations should support/drive proactive conservation to prevent listing, but should have no part in the listing decision under the Endangered Species Act.

Ask: How should listing decisions account for land use changes, climate change, and shifting anthropogenic pressures?



2. Advances in technology, including genetic techniques, mitigating technological advancements, and improved monitoring, have an important role to play in supporting recovery and opening up opportunities to make a real conservation impact. By investing in the professional development of our state and federal wildlife professionals in areas such as genetics, engineering, and computer science, we are equipping experts in the biology and ecology of these species with new tools to promote their recovery. However, these tools are not a replacement for habitat protections or on-the-ground wildlife professionals who keep a finger on the pulse of endangered and threatened species recovery. It is a complement to risk reduction, but species rely on maintaining the ecological conditions and habitats suited to those species.

Ask: What role does emerging technology play in recovering species? What are the biggest barriers in species recovery to date?

3. The use of expedited authorities and rollback of legislation to expand domestic energy and mineral production without considering the impact on the cost of conservation and the stability of public trust resources is irresponsible. Short-term efforts to expand extraction can shift significant ecological and financial burdens onto future management and recovery efforts. Responsible extraction of public resources should require accounting for these externalities so the public is not forced to bear the burden in the future.

Ask: Use of actions to circumvent science-based management of wildlife by trained professionals has grown more frequent, including the use of the Congressional Review Act to challenge agency decision-making and Executive Orders that expand expedited authorities. How might these actions affect recovery efforts through the Endangered Species Act both now and in the future?

4. Private landowners and industry partners are an important part of the recovery of listed species and conservation of at-risk species. The United States is a mosaic of working landscapes and seascapes, and meaningful conservation progress requires trust and collaboration with those deeply entrenched in those ecosystems.

Ask: How has appropriations uncertainty impacted landowner and private sector engagement in endangered species conservation?



5. Conserving endangered species efficiently and effectively cannot occur without the necessary staff and funding of wildlife professionals in the appropriate agencies. Significant cuts to staffing have hampered the progress of conservation and created barriers to success. We have the opportunity to rehire/hire professionals who can expand the skillsets applied to endangered species management to ensure its success into the future.

Ask: Are current budgets and staffing levels adequate to support necessary expertise? What additional resources, if any, are needed for improved ESA implementation?

Resources:

[The Wildlife Society Technical Review: Practical Solutions to Improve the Effectiveness of the Endangered Species Act for Wildlife Conservation](#)

[The Wildlife Society Issue Statement on the U.S. Endangered Species Act](#)

[How could federal cuts affect endangered species?](#)

[To protect endangered species, public lands aren't enough](#)

[Impact of proposed changes to ESA](#)