

Property Rights First

The Honorable Richard Pombo, Chairman
U.S. House Resources Committee

Dear Congressman Pombo,

As an American landowner, I believe in the American dream. Through hard work, I have improved my land, enriched my life, and helped make my nation stronger. However, today, Congress is considering reforming the Endangered Species Act, a fundamentally flawed law that makes landowners like myself the enemy.

This law was born broken not only because it penalizes property owners for creating desirable habitat, but also because it is based on the false premise that there is a balance in nature. In nature, like life, there is only one constant and that is change.

Currently, over 80 percent of all listed species are on private land, yet in more than 30 years fewer than 6 percent of the 1,800-plus species listed as endangered or threatened have been removed from the list. Most of those were removed because they were already extinct or wrongly listed. What the Act has accomplished is wasting billions of tax payer dollars and wiping out the livelihoods of thousands of hard working Americans.

If you truly believe species need to be recovered, then you would throw this law out. No amount of incremental changes, public/private partnerships, or sound science rhetoric can fix this law.

Congress needs to revisit the wisdom of our Founding Fathers who believed property must be secured for liberty to exist. Take that security away through environmental laws like the ESA and not only is liberty not secure, it's no longer possible. You only have to look at the past 30 years since the enactment of the ESA to see what it's produced - the dramatic erosion of property rights and the failure of species recovery.

Private property rights must come first, otherwise you have the tragedy of the commons. More species find their demise through the act of "shoot, shovel and shut up" because it inherently implies landowners are to blame and need to be penalized. Private property sets us apart from every nation in the world by creating wealth, engendering pride, feeding the nation, and providing habitat for all species. Reauthorizing a law that destroys wealth, creates disincentives, punishes honest, hard working individuals, and doesn't even accomplish what it purports to do, is totally inappropriate.

By regulating, you create antagonism with landowners and no incentive to protect species. By purchasing land, you are taking more private property out of the hands of the individual and putting into the hands of the government, the one thing our Founding Fathers knew would lead to tyranny. The very notion that man can save all endangered species by playing God is a false premise. Do the right thing and make the ESA a property rights bill first and private property will save endangered species.

Sincerely,

cc: U.S. Representative Greg Walden
U.S. Senator Mike Crapo
U.S. Senator Lincoln Chafee

(we will detach this portion before sending your letter to Congress)

Property Rights First

I want to help send the message to Congress that Property Rights must come first in ESA legislation.

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