

October 24, 2023

Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives,

We write to express our opposition to H.R. 5504, To require the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to withdraw proposed rules relating to the Endangered Species Act of 1973, and for other purposes.

Over the past five decades, the ESA has been remarkably successful: the vast majority of species protected under the Act have not gone extinct. At the same time, we are facing a global biodiversity crisis. Human activity has put [over a third](#) of the plants and animals in the U.S. at risk of extinction and biodiversity loss is [occurring at an unprecedented pace](#). The biodiversity crisis means fewer pollinators for agriculture, depleted fisheries, and disappearing places like old-growth forests and wetlands that provide a long-term, low-cost source of clean air, water and carbon storage. The Endangered Species Act is the best tool we have to stop extinctions and fight the biodiversity crisis, and it is vital that we fully implement it.

In June of this year the Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service proposed three draft regulations that respond to President Biden's direction that the agencies review three 2019 regulations that weakened implementation of the ESA. Harmful provisions in the 2019 rules included allowing for economic considerations in ESA listing decisions, contrary to statute, and removing common-sense, default protections for threatened species upon listing by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

This legislation attempts to force the Services to leave the 2019 rules in place and would leave us with weaker ESA regulations at a time when we must be doing everything in our power to fight the biodiversity crisis and recover species from the brink of extinction. This bill aims to take decisionmaking authority away from federal biologists and experts, and to prevent them from taking critical steps to strengthen ESA implementation. This bill is also a distraction from the real challenges that we face in fully realizing the potential of the Endangered Species Act, including a lack of the necessary funding to support listing and recovery of imperiled species.

We urge you to oppose this harmful bill.

Signed,

American Bird Conservancy
Animal Legal Defense Fund

Animal Welfare Institute
Buffalo Field Campaign
Center for Biological Diversity
Coastal Plains Institute
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice
Endangered Species Coalition
Environmental Investigation Agency
Environmental Protection Information Center- EPIC
FOUR PAWS USA
Friends of Blackwater, Inc.
Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf
Great Lakes Wildlife Alliance
Humane Society Legislative Fund
IFAW - International Fund for Animal Welfare
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
Kalmiopsis Audubon Society
Kettle Range Conservation Group
League of Conservation Voters
Los Angeles Audubon Society
National Parks Conservation Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
New Hampshire Audubon
North Central Washington Audubon Society
NY4WHALES
NYC Plover Project
Ocean Alliance
Ocean Conservation Research
Oceana
Oceanic Preservation Society
Resource Renewal Institute
Sanctuary Education Advisory Specialists SEAS
Save the Manatee Club

Sierra Club
Southern Environmental Law Center
The Conservation Angler
The Humane Society of the United States
The Urban Wildlands Group
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Voices of Wildlife in NH
Western Watersheds Project
Wild Fish Conservancy
World Wildlife Fund
Wyoming Untrapped