



March 4, 2024

Chairman Bruce Westerman
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Raúl Grijalva
House Natural Resources Committee
1332 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Cliff Bentz
House Natural Resources Committee -
Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries
Subcommittee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Jared Huffman
House Natural Resources Committee -
Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries
Subcommittee
1332 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 2051

Dear Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Grijalva, Chairman Bentz, Ranking Member Huffman, and members of the House Natural Resources Committee - Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries Subcommittee,

Since the Endangered Species Act became law five decades ago, most species listed under it have avoided extinction. Only a tiny fraction of listed species, however, have ever recovered and come off the list. The vast majority remain at risk, not quite plunging over the cliff to extinction, but not backing away a safe distance from the edge either. The key challenge in the Endangered Species Act's second half-century will be to dramatically boost the rate at which endangered and threatened species recover.¹

The Property and Environment Research Center (PERC) is the national leader in market solutions for conservation, with over 40 years of research and a network of respected scholars and practitioners. Through research, law and policy, and innovative applied conservation projects, PERC explores how aligning incentives for environmental stewardship produces sustainable outcomes for land, water, and wildlife. We have emphasized the importance of making species an asset rather than a liability and the dire consequences for wildlife when we get the incentives wrong. PERC has also studied how policies

¹ See "[A Field Guide for Wildlife Recovery](#)," PERC Report (September 2023).

can encourage collaboration between federal and state wildlife agencies, private landowners, and conservation organizations—or can create endless and counterproductive conflict if done wrong.

The America's Wildlife Habitat Conservation Act (H.R. 7408) is an important proposal to promote recovery by fostering collaboration between these stakeholders. It recognizes the necessary role of states, tribes, and private partners in conserving wildlife. This bill pairs \$1.6 billion in additional funding for state and tribal wildlife conservation efforts with policy reforms that would improve incentives for habitat restoration and species recovery efforts. These improvements include:

- Incentivizing proactive habitat restoration by rewarding progress toward a species' recovery with incremental regulatory relief.
- Removing duplicative and unnecessary red tape that delays forest restoration and leaves wildlife habitat at risk of catastrophic wildfire.
- Authorizing the Fish and Wildlife Service to partner with states, counties, and tribes to restore habitat in national wildlife refuges.
- Codifying several existing U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service policies that have helped encourage voluntary species recovery efforts on private lands.

When it comes to wildlife, we can and should do better. With wildlife conservation, the "how" is just as important as the "how much." By improving incentives for proactive species recovery and habitat restoration, America's Wildlife Habitat Conservation Act contains several smart ideas for making conservation dollars go further for wildlife. These policy reforms have also been supported by Republican and Democratic administrations, as well as a large number of conservation organizations.²

Amidst so much conflict over wildlife policy, this bill is a real, substantive, and serious solution that addresses real conservation challenges. It is an important step to improving the future of species recovery. Congress should take this opportunity to support the future of wildlife conservation with the America's Wildlife Habitat Conservation Act.

Sincerely,

The Property and Environment Research Center

² See Jonathan Wood, "[America's Wildlife Habitat Conservation Act, Explained](#)," (February 2024).