



March 6, 2024

The Honorable Cliff Bentz  
Chair  
Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and  
Fisheries  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and  
Fisheries  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bentz, Ranking Member Huffman and Members of the Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries:

On behalf of Associated Builders and Contractors, a national construction industry trade association with 68 chapters representing more than 23,000 members, I write today to thank you for holding a legislative hearing on H.R. 7408, America's Wildlife Habitat Conservation Act. ABC is thankful for the subcommittee's continued examination of how the Endangered Species Act is implemented by federal agencies, its practical impacts on the American people, how litigation is driving ESA decision-making and how success is defined under the ESA.

ABC supports the ESA's purpose of protecting species threatened with extinction and recognizes the need for science-based, data-driven actions that conserve those species and the habitats on which they depend. ABC believes that reforms to modernize the ESA, including efforts to make the act's consultations more efficient and effective, are needed as the Biden administration implements over \$1 trillion in federal spending for critical infrastructure, energy and technology projects throughout the country.

The AWHCA would require the federal government to establish objective, incremental recovery goals for species listed under the ESA and provide relief from regulations when those goals are met. By investing \$320 million annually in grant funding to states for wildlife habitat conservation, this bill gives states a more active role in regulating species, allowing them to better develop their own recovery strategies that may become the governing regulations for these species. This creates a path toward state management of at-risk species when federal goals are met, leading to more efficient delisting of species that no longer require federal protections. Additionally, the bill provides \$20 million in funding for habitat restoration projects and forest management on tribal lands and encourages private partners to conserve listed species.

ABC understands that a collaborative effort among states, tribes, private landowners and the federal government will lead to a more efficient ESA designed to better serve our nation's communities and endangered species. By providing these partners with the proper tools and incentives, the AWHCA will streamline the ESA, reduce regulation and remove unnecessary permitting hurdles that a one-size-fits-all federal government approach has proven incapable of doing. ABC hopes that the AWHCA will lead to better outcomes for species and, in turn, reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens on our nation's builders and contractors and their construction services clients.

ABC encourages the consideration of H.R. 7408 and further efforts to improve and modernize the ESA. ABC members stand ready for the opportunity to build and maintain America's infrastructure to the benefit of the communities that it will serve and appreciates your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

Kristen Swearingen  
Vice President, Legislative & Political Affairs

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